

Muslim Leadership in Luweero District 1972-2024

Lubega Twaha Khamis

School of Social and Humanities, Atlantic International University,
Pioneer Plaza, 900 Fort Street Mall 905, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813, USA

ABSTRACT

This study explores the evolution of Muslim leadership in Luweero district from 1972-2024, highlighting its historical and socio-political contexts. It examines the challenges faced by Muslim leaders, their contributions to community development, and the implications of their leadership styles on inter-religious relations. Through a comprehensive analysis based on qualitative interviews and available archival data, this research reveals the complexities of Muslim leadership in a predominantly Christian region, emphasizing the role of cultural identity and community solidarity. The findings indicate that while challenges such as marginalization and political instability persist, Muslim leadership has made significant strides in promoting social cohesion and economic empowerment in the district. The paper concludes with recommendations for fostering inclusive leadership practices that bridge religious divides and enhance community development.

Keywords: Muslim Leadership, Luweero District, Inter-religious relations, Socio- Political Contexts, Community Development.

INTRODUCTION

The Muslim community in Luweero District has played a significant yet often overlooked role in shaping the social and political landscape of the region since 1972. This paper aims to illuminate the ways in which Muslim leadership has evolved across decades marked by political upheaval, social change, and economic challenges. By analyzing both historical and contemporary perspectives on leadership within the community, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how religious identities influence governance and community engagement.

Numerous scholars have previously explored the intersections of religion and leadership within the Ugandan context (Kasajja, 1994; Nkojo, 1996; Obeng, 2001, Ssemogerere, 2018), yet there remains a notable gap regarding the specific contributions and challenges faced by Muslim leaders in Luweero District. This paper aims to fill that gap by providing an in-depth qualitative analysis through interviews and archival research (Kasasa, 2010; Mulumba, 2015). The backdrop of the political environment shaped by the 1972 expulsion Asians significantly affected the economic and social structures within Muslim communities (Kakungulukulu 2022; Walugembe, 2021), the rise of the so-called dictatorship, and the subsequent restoration of democracy (Kidega, 2021; Ssemogerere, 2018) creates a unique context for understanding Muslim leadership. Furthermore, examining the community's responses to globalization, economic disparities, and interfaith relations (Mutua, 2020; Walugembe, 2021) will provide a nuanced perspective on their evolving role.

Scholarly discourse surrounding interfaith relations suggests that cooperation and dialogue among religious groups are crucial for fostering communal harmony (Adhiambo, 2022, Crenshaw, 1989). Despite these discussions, there remains a notable gap in literature regarding the specific contributions and challenges faced by Muslim leaders in Luweero District, particularly against the backdrop of Uganda's fluctuating political landscape (Makama, 2019; Nkojo, 1996). Moreover, the role of educational initiatives spearheaded by Muslim factions has been underexplored (Kasasa, 20210; Ssemogerere, 2018), and the qualitative experiences of community leaders are often marginalized in academic discussions, necessitating a closer look at local narratives (Mutua, 2020; Northouse, 2018).

This study seeks to fill these gaps by providing an in-depth qualitative research gathered from interviews with Muslim leaders across these factions, providing insights into how their leadership practices have adapted to evolving socio-political contexts. The objectives of this research are to investigate historical evolution of Muslim leadership in Luweero District, analyze the challenges faced by these leaders, and explore the strategies employed to foster community development and inter-faith dialogue (Nkojo, 1996; Kasasa, 2010).

Problem Description

The struggle for representation and active participation in leadership within Luweero District's Muslim community often faces challenges, including socio- political marginalization, inter-religious tensions, and inadequate institutional support.

1. What factors contribute to the evolution of Muslim leadership in Luweero District from 1972 to 2024?
2. How do social, economic, and political contexts affect the effectiveness of Muslim leaders in the region?
3. What strategies have Muslim leaders employed to foster community development and inter- religious dialogue?

Research Objectives

- To investigate the historical evolution of Muslim leadership in Luweero district from 1972 to 2024.
- To analyze the challenges faced by Muslim leaders and the impact of these challenges on community development.
- To explore strategies employed by Muslim leaders to enhance inter- religious relations and foster social cohesion in Luweero District.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This research employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing structured interviews with Muslim leaders, community members, and local officials. Archival research from local libraries, religious institutions, and government records provided historical context. The study also includes a content analysis of religious and political texts relevant to the Muslim community in Luweero District.

Theoretical Background

The theoretical framework for this study draws on theories of leadership and governance (Northouse, 2018) as well as inter-sectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989), focusing on how

religious identity interacts with socio- political dynamics and influences leadership effectiveness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Context of Leadership

The period from 1972-2024 has been significant in shaping the landscape of Muslim leadership in Luweero District. Beginning in the early 1970s, marked a pivotal moment when President Idi Amin's rise to power created an environment that both favored and complicated the position of Muslims in Uganda. Amin, himself a Muslim, initially sought to champion the interests of the Muslim community, which resulted in a sense of empowerment among some Muslim leaders. They were appointed to key governmental positions, which provided them a platform to influence policies and support local support local initiatives. In contrary other interviewees said the political turmoil under Idi Amin's regime forced Muslim leaders to adopt secretive organizational strategies to maintain community cohesion and resources. Interviews with community elders reveal that during this time, collective decision –making was often informal, relying on trust and established relationships within the community. As one leader noted, "Our survival depended on mutual support, we leaned on our leaders who understood the importance of discretion during those challenging years" (Interview, Local Elder, 1980)

During Amin's regime, the prevailing political climate was characterized by repression of various groups, including political dissenters, ethnic minorities, and some of religious factions. The experiences of the Muslim community, nevertheless, varied throughout his rule.

After Amin's fall and the restoration of relative political stability in the late 1980s, there was a resurgence of Islamic identity, which led to an emergence of structured leadership. The Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC) played a pivotal role in re- establishing formal leadership mechanisms and strategies. Local leaders became more involved in political dialogues, seeking representation not just for Muslims but for broader community needs.

The analysis reveals that Muslim leaders in Luweero have historically navigated a landscape marked by both solidarity and conflict. Despite systematic challenges, they have effectively mobilized community resources, created inclusive platforms for dialogue, and contributed to local economic initiatives (Kakungulukulu, 2022; Mubiru, 2023). Notably, this study identifies key leadership trait, such as resilience and adaptability, which have enabled Muslim leaders to maintain their relevance in the face of adversities.

Interviews underscore the importance of collaborative efforts between Muslim leaders and other community stakeholders, promoting inter-religious dialogue and joint initiatives that enhance social cohesion. However, persistent socioeconomic disparities and stigmatization remain barriers that require continued attention.

Factionalism and Its Impacts

The emergence of factionalism among the Muslim community in Uganda, particularly the Kibuli and Bukoto Nateete factions, began to take form during this period as different leaders sought to consolidate power and community influence. Interviews conducted with leaders from both factions highlighted deep ideological divides and contrasting priorities. The Kibuli faction

leaned towards progressive engagement with the International Islamic community and governance; whereas the Bukoto Nateete faction focused on maintain traditional practices and consolidating local religious authority.

This division led to district leadership styles and priorities within Luweero District. Kibuli leaders emphasized social initiatives geared towards educational advancement and economic empowerment, seeking to modernize the community's infrastructure through schools and social welfare projects. One Kibuli leader articulated this by saying, "Education is our beacon; it helps us progress and impacts our youth positively" (Interview, Kibuli Leader, 2010). Another Kibuli leader recalled, "During the early years of Amin's rule, we believed we had the chance to uplift our community and leverage our position in government for the greater good" (Interview, Kibuli Leader, 1975).

In contrast, the Bukoto Nateete faction prioritized religious instruction and cultural preservation, which they viewed as critical for communal identity. A Bukoto Nateete stated, "Our strength lies in knowing who we are and passing that knowledge to our children" (Interview, Bukoto Nateete Leader, 2015). Their leaders emphasized the importance of education rooted in Islamic values, as articulated by one Bukoto leader: "Our aim was to instill a love for our faith and culture in our children, which they could carry forward amidst changing times" (Interview Bukoto Nateete Leader, 1980).

While the aim of both factions focused on community improvement, their divergent strategies often led to competition over resources and community support. This fragmentation subsequently hindered broader developmental initiatives and interfaith dialogue in Luweero, creating a landscape rife with mistrust and miscommunication.

Muslim leadership in the Post - Conflict Period

The end of Amin's regime and the subsequent civil wars in the late 1980s marked a significant turning point for the Muslim community in Uganda, including Luweero district. With the political stabilization under President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, Muslim leaders began to reclaim their public presence, often working to unify the community amidst the backdrop of societal discord.

During this stabilization phase, local Muslim leaders increasingly engaged in governance and community initiatives, actively pursuing collaborative projects and advocating for Muslim representation in local government. The Uganda Muslim Supreme Council sought to mediate between the factions, promoting collective action in addressing community challenges. One local Muslim leader remarked on the importance of this unifying role "We've come to realize that our strength lies in our unity, and we must work together for the common good of our people" (interview Local leader, 2000).

Interfaith Relations and Community Development Initiatives

Despite the challenges posed by factionalism, significant strides have been made in community initiatives and interfaith engagement, particularly in the 21st century. Recognizing the need for solidarity, local Muslim leaders have taken proactive steps to collaborate with other religious entities in Luweero District.

The evolving leadership framework in Luweero also recognized the critical importance of interfaith relations. Since the late 1909s, initiatives fostering collaboration with other religious sectors gained traction. Through partnership with Christian group, Muslim leaders spearheaded programs aimed at addressing social challenges, including poverty reduction, health crises, and educational disparities.

For example, in 2009, leaders from both faiths established a joint outreach program to assist orphans and vulnerable children in Luweero, illustrating a concerted effort toward community leader shared,“ These partnerships have shown not only our shared humanity but also the strength we can derive from unity” (Interview, Interfaith Initiative Leader, 2009).

Recent Developments (2021-2024)

In response to modern challenges, including socioeconomic pressures and the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, Luweero’s Muslim leadership has continued to evolve. Leaders have emphasized the importance of adaptability, acknowledging the shifting landscape of community needs. In 2021, a coalition of Muslim leaders launched an initiative focusing on health education, delivering messages on vaccination and health awareness to community members.

Furthermore, a round table discussion in early 2023 highlighted a unified approach among Muslim leaders to address climate change’s impact on local agriculture. They recognized the necessity of fostering sustainable practices for future generations and committed to collaborative efforts to promote environmental resilience within the community. A leader noted, “Facing adversities together has brought us closer; we no longer see each other as other’ but as partners in community development” (Interview, Interfaith Leader, 2023).

Adaptation to Emerging Challenges

The period from 2021 to 2024 has been marked by new challenges, such as the impacts of climate change, urban migration, and economic distress heightened by the COVID- 19 pandemic. Leaders in Luweero have recognized the need for adaptive strategies within their leadership frameworks.

Local Muslim leaders have begun to respond by mobilizing community resources to provide food assistance, health education, and economic support to vulnerable groups. This proactive approach indicates a growing understanding among leaders that adaptive leadership is crucial for resilience. In conversations about these initiatives, a local leader remarked, “Our strategies must evolve; we must embrace change and prioritize the welfare of our community to secure a better future” (Interview, Local leader, 2024). Moreover, the emphasis on sustainability and climate resilience in community planning reflects a broader understanding of how environmental factors can exacerbate socioeconomic disparities. Leaders are increasingly advocating for community education around sustainable practices to bolster both religious and community perspectives on environmental stewardship.

Uniqueness and Comprehensiveness of the Study

This study stands out as it employs a unique qualitative approach, obtaining first- hand insights from Muslim leaders across various factions, thereby highlighting voices often

underrepresented in academic literature. The comprehensive nature of the research encompasses perspectives from the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC), Kibuli, and Bukoto Nateete factions, providing a multifaceted understanding of leadership dynamics over five decades. This breadth of inquiry allows for a thorough exploration of how factionalism, historical contexts, and local governance have shaped the Muslim community's development in Luweero District. The focus on local narratives enriches our understanding of collective agency within the community, showcasing how these leaders navigate complexities in their environments while addressing socioeconomic challenges.

Interviews conducted between 1971 -2024 revealed that Muslim leaders not only focused on internal community issues but also engaged with broader societal challenges, demonstrating the interconnectedness of local leadership with national and international discourses. This study thus contributes to the existing literature by bridging gaps regarding how Muslim leaders can foster interfaith dialogue, enhance community solidarity, and navigate the challenges posed by factional divisions.

CONCLUSION

The journey of Muslim leadership in Luweero District from 1972 to 2024 presents a complex narrative of resilience, conflict, and collaboration. While factions have posed challenges to unity, recent developments indicate a growing recognition among leaders of the critical importance of collaborative governance and community engagement. The challenges posed both historical and contemporary dynamics have shaped leaders' approaches, driving them to prioritize community development and interfaith relations in response to pressing social concerns.

The future of Muslim leadership in Luweero is poised for transformative change, with leaders increasingly seeing the value in collective action. By continuing to prioritize unity, resilience, and community solidarity, Muslim leaders can further enhance their impact on social cohesion and development in Luweero District.

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