



WITCHCRAFT BELIEFS AND PRACTICES: PERCEPTIONS OF TOBACCO GROWERS IN LUPA AND NGWALA VILLAGES, TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the findings of the study on tobacco growers' perceptions on witchcrafts beliefs and practises in the growing of tobacco. The study was conducted in two villages namely; Lupa and Ngwala from Chunya and Songwe districts respectively. Leaders from Lupa AMCOS and Ngwala AMCOS made the key respondents with a back-up of ordinary growers. It was necessary to study 'witchcraft beliefs and practises' in the study area not only for adding to the knowledge base on the topic but also for looking on the solution to the reportedly conflicts due to accusation of witchcraft beliefs and practises among tobacco growers. The study employed qualitative methods of data collection, in which interview and focused group discussion were used. The collected data were analysed qualitatively through thematic analysis. The findings revealed that in the surveyed communities witchcraft beliefs and practises existed and its impacts were stated in duality as negative and positive impacts. The negative impacts involved inharmonious relationship among tobacco growers as well as fear of prospective tobacco growers to join such business for the fear of being bewitched. The positive impacts included the increase of tobacco productivity. Various reasons for the persistence of witchcraft beliefs and practises were mentioned, where geographical location and unstructured information and communication infrastructure, lack of schooling for a formal education and poverty were among the perceived factors for the persistence of such beliefs and practises in the study area. Therefore, the conclusion has been that witchcraft beliefs and practises persisted in the study area and its impacts were perceived in duality as having both positive and negative impacts. The recommendations has therefore been provided that stakeholders in tobacco growing are urged to provide proper education for transforming these societies and increase tobacco growing otherwise the production will be falling on the yearly basis.

Keywords: *Witchcraft beliefs, Witchcraft practises, Tobacco growers, Tobacco growing and Tanzania*

Paper type: *Research paper*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Witchcraft is described as the use of supernatural and socially unacceptable techniques or magical powers to influence events (Varine, 2019; Russell and Lewis, 2020; Nwatu, Ebue, Iwuagwu, Ene, and Odo, 2020). However, witchcraft is one of the systems of indigenous knowledge; the other systems include traditional dances, rituals, language, traditional medicine and healing knowledge. At a time all these systems has been considered very important in influencing decisions and development of societies

(Russell and Lewis, 2020). Thus, some countries have been for long establishing some initiatives and efforts to manage some of this knowledge. In Tanzania as a case, in 2002 the government under Parliamentary Act No. 23 of 2002 (The Traditional and Alternative Medicines Act) established the Traditional and Alternative Health Practises Council for managing traditional medicine and healing knowledge through registering all traditional healers and their core business. It is therefore important to understand that each system of indigenous knowledge have its own advantages and disadvantages, for example traditional medicine and healing is for the restoration of human and animal health, language is for sharing ideas and understanding, some rituals like that of rainfall making for improving agriculture, witchcraft with some of its aspects like sorcery, magical and supernatural powers is for ensuring big results at a very small resources used (Iwata and Hoskins, 2017a).

Furthermore, witchcraft beliefs and practises is a global phenomenon, thus, not only practised by the Africans, and has been a part of everyday life by an individual or a community all over the world (Rio, MacCarthy and Blanes, 2017; Eboiyehi, 2017; Russell and Lewis, 2020). Evidence shows that witchcraft has been practised in Europe, America, and Asia, as Mbondo (2006) observes that existence of beliefs and practises of witchcraft and sorcery in Britain, have been since thousand years after the birth of Christ. British authorities condemned such practises then and the practitioners were excluded from the court and all other social places. This means that witchcraft has been a way in which many people explain and react to evils or misfortune and to strange or extraordinary things. In other words, witchcraft is an ideology for daily living (Varine, 2019). However, most scholars including Gbule and Odili (2015) and Nwatu, *et al.*, (2020) who observe it as an aspect of African indigenous religion and that in most African societies, possessors of this power are the most feared. According to Gbule and Odili (2015) there are two kinds of witches (i.e. the black and the white); the black witchcraft is evil while the white witchcraft is harmless. It is in this premises that many black (African) cultures and religions are viewed as believing in supernatural forces including spells, invisible forces, ancestral spirits and medicine with magical powers (Mufuzi, 2014; Eboiyehi, 2017).

Literature including Forsyth (2016) reveals that witchcraft in many of the developing world is at the core of human rights issues because millions of people are victimised for bogus, non-rational and non-scientific reasons. Nwatu, *et al.*, (2020) opines that witchcraft beliefs have commonly resulted in persecution, social rejection, discrimination and violence toward those who are believed to be or who identify themselves as witches. Similarly, sorcery and witchcraft beliefs and practises today generate a wide range of development-related problems in many parts of the world. The most visible of these are violent exorcisms, banishment, torture, and killing inflicted upon those accused of practising sorcery and witchcraft in many parts of the global south, particularly India, Nepal, South Africa, Tanzania, Angola, Nigeria, Indonesia, Congo and even China. It is further assumed that societies (including those engaging in tobacco growing) which believe in witchcraft and magic are socially unhealthy and that there is greater degree of fear, tension disorder and immorality among them than among those who do not have this believes (Mufuzi, 2014; Gershman, 2020; Atreya, Aryal, Nepal, and Nepal, 2021).

After independence of Tanzania mainland (Tanganyika) in 1961, the independent government declared agriculture as the backbone of the nation's economic development (Iwata and Hoskins, 2017b; Theuerkauf and Allen, 2010). With diversification of weather and geographical location in various regions in Tanzania, people in various societies identified some crop(s) as the main for their economic development. Although, in Songwe and Chunya districts people engage in other economic activities including animal husbandry, fishing, forestry activities and bee-keeping, the major cash crop in these two districts is tobacco (Jackson, 2010). Over the past 30 years of being raised in the areas of Chunya and Songwe specifically in Lupa, Ngwala and Gua where tobacco has for a long been produced, this author

have become increasingly aware of the beliefs and practises of witchcraft in varying degrees of many tobacco growers in the area. Most tobacco growers usually subject unusual events (among them, poor harvest, accidents and even conflicts) with witchcraft. Presently, this author's family members (siblings, nephew, grandparents and other relatives) are living in these areas where the growing of tobacco is taking place, and the beliefs and practises of witchcraft is very active.

The author of this article have frequently been told about growers who have quitted tobacco growing because they believed to have been bewitched or have come in contact with unusual events. Sometimes tobacco growers in the area of this study attached their success, increased productivity or failure with witchcrafts beliefs and practises. Their beliefs in these things are strong enough that need to be researched. More interestingly is that some tobacco growers who are accused as believers and practitioners of witchcraft are Christians, and it is openly known that Christianity is against the practise of witchcraft. The Bible depicts the same in Deuteronomy 18:11-12 (New International Version) that "11...or casts spells, or who is a medium or spirits or who consults the dead. 12 Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord; because of these same detestable practises the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you". Exodus 22:18 adds that "Do not allow a sorceress to live".

Furthermore, in an informal conversation with agricultural extension officer, he commented that witchcraft beliefs and practises in the study area were very strong. He said such beliefs influences improper cultivation and handling of tobacco which in turn not only reduces the quality of the product but also the falling of production on a yearly basis. The agricultural extension officer continued, "I even decided to establish farm-field classes known as 'shambadarasa' in Kiswahili to help growers change their attitudes and learn proper technology and modern ways of tobacco growing. But it is unfortunate, that even in such situation still there were no changes on the beliefs and practises".

Therefore, the main argument in this article is that witchcraft beliefs and practices present paradoxes and dilemmas in tobacco growing. Although literature including Theuerkauf and Allen (2010) are of the view that tobacco productivity in Tanzania is still very low, largely due to inadequate access to inputs, technology and microfinance, high production costs, poor agri-business management skills, poor infrastructure and environmental factors, but prevalence of witchcraft beliefs and practises may also be seen as the reason for the poor performance and fall of tobacco productivity. Hence, the foregoing questions are 'how has such system been perceived by growers in tobacco growing? What roles have been played by witchcraft beliefs and practices in the growing of tobacco? How far has the modern religious societies which in this context refers to Christianity (the dominant region in the surveyed areas) have played the roles in intervening the much dependence on witchcraft in the growing of tobacco? Why witchcraft beliefs and practises have been persistent in the tobacco growing areas? These are some of the salient questions, which the study sought to address.

This study is significant in bringing a clear picture of the perceptions that tobacco growers attach to witchcraft beliefs and practises and their impacts in the growing of tobacco. Hence, the article is useful in understanding the practise and in consolidating the knowledge base on the topic. Also, the findings of this study were considered to provide a helping hand to policy makers in the formulation of evidence based policy for increasing tobacco productivity in the surveyed areas. By highlighting the perceptions and impacts of witchcraft beliefs and practises, social institutions including religion and agricultural offices will be in a good position to evaluate their participation in the process. Also, the reasons for the persistence of such beliefs among tobacco growing communities were established. In the context of this study, the term 'perception' is used to refer to the process by which a person attaches meanings, interpretations, values and aims to a thing or action to produce a meaningful experience of the real world (Qiong, 2017). Hence, perception may be affected by past experience, one's personality traits and

motivation. In this context, it is assumed that the interaction between the past experiences of witchcraft practises is what maximises the sustainability of such beliefs in tobacco growing.

This study was informed by the 'social conflict theory' because it comprises a number of concepts that are useful in describing the idea of social change. The social conflict theory was mostly identified in the writings of German philosopher and sociologist Karl Marx (1818–1883). The main argument of this theory focuses on the conflict between two primary classes that individuals and groups in different social classes within a society interact on the basis of conflict through various forms rather than consensus. According to Marx's conflict theory, more powerful groups will tend to use their power in order to retain privileges, power, status, social position and exploit groups with less power. Whereas the lower class, in contradiction to the higher class has very different interests, they do not have specific forms of capital that they need to protect; all they are interested in is in gaining access to the resources and capital of the higher class. Social conflict theory view conflict as an engine of change, that conflict produces contradictions which are sometimes resolved, creating new conflicts and contradictions in an ongoing dialectic.

A basic premise of social conflict theory is that it focuses on the competition or conflict between groups within society over limited resources; it sees society as divided into classes. Also, the theory views social and economic institutions as tools of the struggle between groups or classes, used to maintain inequality and the dominance of the ruling class. The inharmonious human relationship and interaction between these two groups may result into changes or revolutionary in the society either negatively or positively. Thus, if witches are the beneficiary will tend to maintain those structures as a way of retaining and enhancing their tobacco growing power whereas the non-practitioners will find the way to fight and remove them. If happens in that ways then there is a great possibility of the society to undergo positive changes but if this does happen then society should expect negative experiences in tobacco growing. Social institutions such as religion and schools are the tools expected to facilitate social change in terms of ending witchcraft beliefs and practises in crops production among growers and make them follows the cultivation and crops handling guidelines.

Therefore, in this context social change refers to the social progress or socio-cultural evolution of which mean the society moves forward by involving alteration of the social order of a society and socio-economic structure including changes in social institutions, social behaviours and social relations (Sablonnière, 2017). In this study, the 'social conflict theory' has been used to provide theoretical lens for analysing the tobacco growers' perceptions on the persistence and impacts of witchcraft beliefs and practises among tobacco growing communities. Specifically, the framework has been used to provide lens on tobacco growers' experiences and perceived reasons on the continued witchcraft beliefs and practises in tobacco growing. Hence, establishing the factors as to why witchcraft as a social order in the surveyed societies has not been changed even in the presences of modern religions and technological advancements.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Lupa and Ngwala areas in Chunya and Songwe districts respectively whereby Lupa Agricultural Marketing Co-operative Society (AMCOS) and Ngwala AMCOS were the host institutions. These areas were chosen because the major cash crop produced in this area is tobacco. Also, in this area there are increasingly belief and practises of witchcraft in varying degrees among tobacco growers. More importantly, the area of this study is the home root of this article's author. Hence, it was easy for the author to access respondents.

In the conduct of this study, a qualitative research approach specifically the narrative research approach was employed. According to Bhandari (2020) qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data for the purpose of understanding concepts, opinions, or experiences. Hence, narrative research examined the told stories in understanding of how participants perceive or make sense of their experiences on witchcraft beliefs and practises in the growing of tobacco. The primary sources of data were the only sources consulted for the first-hand information. These sources involved AMCOS leaders and ordinary growers. AMCOS leaders were regarded as key informants with required information on the topics of this study. The additional information was sought from ordinary growers who also participated in the growing of tobacco. Interview and focus group discussions were the data collection methods used for this study. While interview was conducted with ordinary growers in a personal mode of asking people questions in one-on-one conversations, the focus group discussion was conducted by asking questions and generating discussion among the group of AMCOS leaders. The advantages of qualitative research approaches in this study relied on its flexibility that the data collection and analysis process can be adapted as new ideas or patterns emerge. Also, data collection for qualitative study occurs in real-world contexts or in natural settings (Bhandari, 2020). Furthermore, the detailed descriptions of people's experiences, feelings and perceptions can be used in designing, testing or improving the situation (Bhandari 2020; Neuman, 2014). More importantly, with open-ended responses in a qualitative research, the researchers can uncover novel problems or opportunities that they would not have thought of otherwise (Bhandari, 2020).

Purposeful sampling technique was employed in recruiting participants into this study. AMCOS leaders and ordinary growers were confined in this study purposively because they were thought to have in-depth and detailed information about witchcraft beliefs and practises in the growing of tobacco (Creswell, 2014). Thus, the two selection criteria were used in confining participants to the study: (a) one was supposed to be a leader in either Lupa AMCOS or Ngwala AMCOS and (b) the participant must be the one engaging/engaged in tobacco growing around the study area. The two Agricultural and Marketing Co-operative Societies (AMCOS) such as Ngwala and Lupa AMCOS were purposively involved as focal points because such societies dealt with tobacco growing.

A total of 25 tobacco growers in the distribution of four ordinary growers, two from each village, and 21 AMCOS leaders (who were also involved in the tobacco growing activities) in the distribution of 11 from Ngwala AMCOS and 10 from Lupa AMCOS were confined to the study. The participants were recruited on the basis of their easily accessibility and readiness to participate in the study. Thus, the inaccessible ones and those who stated to have no time were not recruited. Hence, convenience technique was used as the means to confine individuals in the study. The collected data were thematically analysed for the purpose of identifying and interpreting patterns and themes in qualitative manner. The analysis involved preparing and organising the collected data, examining the collected data for patterns or repeated ideas that emerge. Developing a thematic data system and aligning data to the respective theme. This was done by going through each participant's responses and tagging them in a related theme, and finally identifying recurring themes and making a presentation of non-numeric data (Neuman, 2014; Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Tobacco growers' perceptions on the application of witchcraft in tobacco growing

Tobacco growers were asked to state if there were any perceived relationships between witchcraft and tobacco growing. The question aimed at clarifying the existence of such beliefs and understanding the perceptions of tobacco growers on witchcraft beliefs and practises in tobacco growing. One of the respondents during focused group discussion from the AMCOS 1 had this to say:

"...It is common that, anywhere where developments seem to sprout, emergence of various things like witchcraft is also common. Since our village is not in isolation, even now if we tell you that, in our village such beliefs are not in existence for sure we will be lying. We are having some of our members who still believe and practise witchcraft in the growing of tobacco. To them, without witchcraft and magic nothing could be achieved. It is from this context, as leaders of the AMCOS sometimes we have been facing a lot of challenges from our members who believe in witchcraft. There is a scenario where one of our growers chased us when we visited him for looking after his farming progress and advice when necessary. He said we were not allowed to pass through his yard, he accused us that we went there for the purpose of bewitching his farm and taking his products magically...."

Another leader from the same AMCOS added that:

"...In last three years, with our normal programme of visiting growers to see their farming progress, we visited one of our members who had a very big tobacco yard; before we reached his home one of our members felt to go for a short-call and he did. When the yard owner saw it, he became very furious claiming that we just went to bewitch his farm. We tried to please him and explain our intention but he couldn't accept although he knew us very well. He further told us to go out of his yard because we were not allowed to pass through it..."

This observation from members in AMCOS 1 was also supported by another member in leadership position at AMCOS 2 who stated that:

"...You know, it has been our common practise that as AMCOS leaders we should pay visit to our growers during farming season for the purpose of evaluating their farming progress and providing advice for improvement (if any). However, this has been a challenge to our side when we pay a visit to some of our members who associate our visitation with the witchcraft attitudes that we bewitching their farms. Also, as we all know that in our AMCOS there is a regulation that once tobacco harvesting and grading is over, at least one of the AMCOS leaders should be present before tobacco is parked in to a bell, but this has not been practised because some of our growers have been rejecting as they involve some magical issues in parking...."

The presented responses are an indication that during the conduct of this study, beliefs and practise of witchcraft existed among the tobacco growing communities of Lupa and Ngwala. And tobacco growers in the field believed and practised witchcraft in their production. Furthermore, it was stated that there were no way out that such belief could have been practised without bringing-up conflicts among individuals or group in the society. This is in line to Nwatu's *et al.*, (2020) and Eboiyehi's (2017) who observe that such beliefs have commonly resulted in persecution, social rejection, discrimination and violence towards those who are believed to be or who identify themselves as witches. Hence, the perception people hold on witchcraft is what makes them fear, hate and wish to eliminate from society those suspected or accused of it (Mufuzi, 2014). This finding also supports the Marxist theory of social conflict that individuals and groups in different social classes within the society interact on the basis of conflict in various forms. The presented responses show that in the study area tobacco growers had conflict due to the beliefs and practises of witchcraft in the growing of tobacco.

When respondents were asked to state the memorable witchcraft-related scenarios they had been witnessed during their time in tobacco growing, a respondent from AMCOS 2 narrated that:

"...I remember one day, one of our neighbours accused another neighbour for witchcraft practises. This neighbour stated that the accused had been using supernatural and magical powers to take products from other neighbour farms to add to his products. The accuser stated that this has been a reason why the accused had a very small yard but harvested more than the neighbours who had a very big farm. It was funny that the accuser decided to remove the things from the yard of the accused, but that night was very

longer to the accuser because before it was morning, he did find himself having no private parts. The situation which made him asks the assistance from the council of village local leaders early at the morning. When traditional leaders arrived, they took the things from the accuser, they warned the accused and asked him to return back the private parts of the colleague, and the man did it..."

Also, another ordinary tobacco grower who was a member of AMCOS 1 narrated another scenario portraying the smell of witchcraft in tobacco growing. This grower stated that:

Another scenario which still blinking in my mind is that, a friend of mine harvested his tobacco very well; he parked his products in to the tobacco bells and decided to store it in his store room. It was like a surprise that before he had to close the door for the store room, we saw a very big snake trying to get in to the store room through the door. The door was open but the snake failed to get in. Surprisingly, after a very long struggle without success of getting-in the snake killed itself right at the door without any spray or a single beat. Then, that friend of mine told me that it was not a normal snake, it has killed itself because was sent to pick my tobacco magically, but my power is stronger than his master.

These scenarios were almost the same as the one narrated by one of the leaders in AMCOS 2. This leader had this description:

"...We had a grower who claimed that he experienced an unusual thing to his tobacco. He stated that every day after having graded his tobacco, he arranged it somewhere to his store room, but he was surprised that, in every morning he could not find the same arrangement except unusual one. He decided to tell his brother who was a magician about that experience. His brother told him to go and ask the neighbour to come and help him to make a proper arrangement. This young brother did as he was directed and the neighbour accepted to help him in making a proper arrangement. I tell you since that time nothing went wrong to the tobacco of this young-man, and the neighbour couldn't get enough products again. And since then, this poor neighbour decided to left tobacco growing activity. This shows that the neighbour was the witch and his power was overhauled by my friend's magician brother..."

The presented scenarios justify the presence of witchcraft beliefs and practises in the study area. The findings show that basing on the scenarios provided it is true that witchcraft beliefs and practises existed, persisted and are very strong in the study area. This findings concur with Forsyth (2016) who opines that in some society belief in witchcraft is very strong that the believers are continually use on their guard against certain acts on their part or on the part of others that would cause them to come under the influence of witchcraft. This also relate to the observation by Mbondo (2006) who argues that some people spend lots of money on consulting witchdoctors to obtain counter attack, or to protect themselves. On the other hand, this is what Marx's conflict theory view that among the conflicting classes, the more powerful groups will tend to retain privileges, power, status, social position and exploit groups with less power whereas the lower class, in contradiction to the higher class are interested in gaining access to the resources and capital of the higher class. Although, Lupa and Ngwaladiffers in geography, tribes, and in some cultural practises, however, they all shared some commonalities on the perceptions about witchcraft in the growing of tobacco.

3.2 Perceived impacts of witchcraft believes and practises in tobacco growing

Respondents were further asked to give their well-thoughts responses on the impacts of witchcraft beliefs and practises in the growing of tobacco. One of the ordinary growers was also a member of AMCOS 2 affirmed that:

"...Witchcraft is a powerful instrument for those who believe, to them, it is like a stimulus for serious working and confidence builder to growers who believe it. Also, such beliefs have an educational function as it helps in keeping the working/farming norms and values of society alive. More importantly, witchcraft beliefs teach a powerful lesson that non-conformity to the working ethics is dangerous. Thus,

witchcraft acts as a strong stimulus for working while observing the ethics. This means that sometimes witchcraft beliefs teach people to adhere and accept social norms and being serious with work...

This narration is an indication that tobacco growers believed that in one side witchcraft is one's stimulus and morale creator which a grower get by the way of obtaining traditional medicines from the witchdoctors. To some people even if the medicine does not work but it is a means of increasing morale and motivation. However, the dark side of such beliefs is very huge and it was stated as a discouragement factor as a respondent from AMCOS 2 commented that:

"...Witchcraft holds nothing good; no one can benefit from it in any way. If it were to happen that witches prospers without working, the presence of witchcraft would be suspected advantageous, but it is unfortunate that in our community those who are said to be witches their prosperity are not encouraging and seem to decline in everyday basis, and their produce are poor as well. To them, the reasons for the decline in their production can be explained in different ways but the truth is that they are not following the professional advice. We really have noticed that those who follow experts advise produces more and quality than those who do not follow..."

This respondent continued by saying "whenever this very poor believer of witchcraft gains from his effort have to be shared with his/her witchdoctor". Another perceived impact was also provided by an ordinary grower from AMCOS 2 who provided that:

"...Many people do not like to live with the fear of being bewitched, therefore, with witchcraft beliefs in tobacco growing, this kind of people could not participate in the tobacco growing for the fear of witchcraft, hence fall of production. This means that witchcraft beliefs demoralise people to take part in tobacco growing. In our village for example some people fear about witchcraft have changed their status from owning a tobacco farm, to sustain their lives, and now they are labourers to people who do not fear witchcraft..."

The responses under this section is an indication that the perceived impacts for witchcraft beliefs and practises happens in the duality that cutting-across the whole edges that such beliefs had both positive and negative impacts. The positive impacts relied on the increased morale and motivation (Nwatu, *et al.*, 2020). While some members perceived it as having some positive impacts, others were against. When respondents were required to explain as to why for their response, the former group of respondents who had the views that such beliefs and practises were used as a morale booster or motivation in farming because such beliefs influences conformity to the working ethics. However, this group lacked justification for the continuity of such beliefs and practises as nothing was even stated in a scenario form to justify the claim.

The latter group who had negative views on such beliefs, they had the reasons that it was among the key reasons for the decline in tobacco growing. That, some believers will not properly follow the cultivation guidelines and proper methods of handling the produce for the increased tobacco productivity waiting for witchcraft to work. This in turn led to the discouragement for the poor harvest and the dependant in witchcraft will think that have been bewitched by other powerful witches. Subsequently, this will lead to the increased poverty among those who practises witchcraft because they will end-up sharing what they have earned paying witchdoctors for nothing. This thinking is based on Marx's conflict theory which states that the more powerful groups will control and exploit the groups with less power. Meaning witchdoctors will control the poor tobacco growers who depend on witchcrafts. Additionally, the group with negative views on application of witchcraft in tobacco growing had the views that witchcraft created fear to new members who would like to join in the production. This findings correspond to Gbule and Odili's (2015) study on 'socio-missiological significance of witchcraft belief and practise in Africa' that

some people living in urban centres or outside their immediate villages, dread going to their home towns for fear of being bewitched.

3.3 The role of religion and agricultural offices as social institutions in witchcraft beliefs

In these context Agricultural offices entails the offices of agricultural extension officers who work to help growers improve their production in tobacco by teaching growers about proper method of cultivation and handling the produce. In this study respondents were requested to establish the responses of religion and agricultural offices towards witchcraft beliefs and practises among tobacco growers. Specifically they were required to openly state how was religion been involved in influencing the application of witchcraft beliefs in tobacco growing. Their responses show that religion through their varied programme was against witchcraft beliefs and practises as one of the ordinary growers from AMCOS 2 stated that:

“...Religious priests are always against witches and witchcraft. This means that churches is against the practises of witchcraft and magic in the growing of tobacco. For your information churches consider witchcraft as the darkness side of life which stays away from light. Our priest has always insisted this by saying Christ is the light of the world, we do not need witches who are still in darkness, to him practising evil things including witchcraft and magic in any form at any of your activity means that you are living in darkest world...”

A member of leadership position in AMCOS 2 added that, religion through their various programmes were against witchcraft. Hence, this respondent was asked to state the role of religion in the beliefs and practises of witchcraft among tobacco growers. This respondent had this to say:

“...Religion especially Christianity is not involved in witchcraft beliefs and practises among tobacco growers, instead it is for years now church leaders have been battling against witchcraft. What I know, religion and their leaders, belief that witchcraft is against God and orders of the church, thus practising it is contravening God's will...”

All these responses shows that tobacco growers were of the views that religion were always against witchcraft beliefs and practises. However, a respondent during focus group discussion from AMCOS 1 stated that “this does not mean that tobacco growers who practises witchcraft in their tobacco growing activities does not belong to any religion no, they belong somewhere either to Christianity or Islamic, and some are the church leaders”. This happens when a person has accepted Christianity while still believe that there is power to influence things vested in witchcraft and magic. These findings conform to Mbondo (2006) findings that the very Christians who are involved in Church activities are engaged in various forms of traditional practises, which Christianity condemns. Christianity is completely against the practise of witchcraft as earlier stated. However, one would want to know if that is the case, why the saved ones are still in their dark side of their lives. The answer to that question is very clear as affirmed by Mbiti (1969) that the converted Africans to Christianity in Africa still believe in witchcraft because Christianity seems not to meet their immediate social, religious, and cultural dilemmas. Additionally, for Nwatu, et al. (2020) witchcraft from the foregoing is rooted in primitive society where fear and ignorance plays a powerful role in its growth and development. Hence, despite modernity and religious efforts for social change, findings suggested that the beliefs and practises of witchcraft are alive and well Gbule and Odili's (2015). All these does not justify that religion accept witchcraft, instead the truth is that religion was against witches and witchcraft.

Furthermore, respondents were asked to describe the role of agricultural extension officers in the application of witchcraft beliefs and practises in tobacco growing. The response was that agricultural extension officers played no role than provision of education in its varied topics. Specifically, the

agricultural extension officers focused their education delivery on proper methods of boosting tobacco productivity while increasing food security, improving households' livelihoods and promoting tobacco farming as an engine of pro-poor economic growth. Although tobacco growers did not recognise the role of agricultural extension officers in the fight against witchcraft beliefs and practises in the growing of tobacco but these professionals were really working for it. It is the naked reality that providing education on proper methods of cultivation and handling tobacco is for itself the means to influence social change on what should be the focus for improving tobacco productivity than the dependence on witchcraft. This also conforms to Atreya, *et al.*, (2021) and Gershman, (2020) that relying on witchcraft beliefs have several times led to conflicts among society members.

The findings therefore are exactly informed by the Marx's theory of social conflict specifically when conflict is viewed as an engine of change. That conflict in the society can produce contradictions which are sometimes resolved, or create new conflicts and contradictions. Which in this case there is conflict between practitioners and non-practitioners of witchcraft. When tobacco growers' mind-set changes, there is possibility for social change either in a positive or negative ways. While positive changes entails the conflicts has been resolved, the negative ones happens when the new conflicts and contradictions have been created. Also, since the theory views social and economic institutions as tools of the struggle between groups or classes in maintain inequality and the dominance of the ruling class, in the tobacco producing areas of Ngwala and Lupa wards, religion and agricultural officers are used as the means to bring harmonious human relationship and interaction between tobacco growers. Hence, social institutions such as religion and schools as a tools to facilitate social change has been playing their roles in terms of ending witchcraft beliefs and practises in tobacco growing. Therefore, these institutions are urged to increase effort and make sure that the cultivation and handling crops follows proper guidelines and methods for the increased productivity.

3.4 Reasons for the persistence of witchcraft in tobacco growing communities

Respondents were asked to explain the reason(s) as to why witchcraft is still rampant in tobacco producing areas. Responses show that geographical location was one of the reasons, together with poverty and failure to meet production expenses among tobacco growers, and lack of schooling among people in the surveyed community. A respondent during a focus group discussion conducted with leaders in AMCOS 1 stated that:

"...All the factors mentioned by my colleague are the reasons for the persistence of witchcraft but the main two are: one our community is located in a rural area having poor information and communication networks as mentioned by my friend. Our geographical location is dominated with people of the same cultural practises. Since in this district there is no mixture of people from varied tribes, and most people in this community having a very low level of education, it is obvious that there is very close link between lack of education and poverty. Therefore, the poverty level of most people in our community results into the failure to meet production expenses among tobacco growers. Hence, people engage in witchcraft beliefs and practises hopping for the immediate solutions for the problems associated with tobacco growing..."

Another respondent from the same AMCOS (AMCOS 1) added that:

"...Lack of education and unstructured communication systems normally causes social stress among people, and therefore to others the only means to solve challenges brought by such situation is to apply witchcraft. Or when expectations are not met, some growers resort to witchcraft beliefs and practises as a means of seeking answers or as a shortcut to their expectations. Poverty that persists in our community

and lack of people with higher education levels are among the attributes for the increased witchcraft beliefs and practises among tobacco growers..."

On the persistence of witchcraft in tobacco producing areas, various reasons were provided including the geographical location, that the location had poor communication networks and mostly dominated by indigenous people, poverty and failure to meet production expenses among tobacco growers was also among the constraining factor. Limited access to capital and too many challenges to deal with were also the reasons behind for the persistence of beliefs in witchcraft. These results implies that the marginalisation of the area in terms of having unstructured information and communication infrastructure, lack of schooling, and the concentration of the same tribe in a geographical location contributed to the activation of witchcraft beliefs among tobacco growing communities. A study by Gbule and Odili (2015) in Nigeria found that Nigerians living in urban centres or outside their immediate villages, dread going to their home towns for fear of being bewitched. Thus, it is likely that the elevated levels of witchcraft beliefs among Lupa and Ngwala villages reflected the direct impact of the past undeveloped rural areas and experiences on the culture of their ancestors. Regardless of the education provision initiatives by agricultural extension officers, poverty played an instrumental role in the persistence of witchcraft beliefs and practises within the surveyed communities.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

The findings of this study have highlighted the growers' perceptions on witchcraft beliefs and practises among tobacco growing communities. The conclusion is made that tobacco growers were of the views that witchcraft beliefs and practises existed in the tobacco growing communities of Ngwala and Lupa villages. While respondents were of the views that the perceived impacts of witchcraft beliefs and practises were in duality having both positive and negative impacts in the growing of tobacco, however, all the respondents ended up condemning the practises of such beliefs in the growing of tobacco and other agricultural products. Hence, beliefs and practises of witchcraft were perceived negatively by most of the respondents as it is one of the factors for the increased poverty and fall of productivity among practitioners as compared to non-practitioners. That growers who thought to have been bewitched in their production decided to quit from tobacco growing to other crops; and the prospective tobacco growers decided not to join the production due to the fear of being bewitched. The role of religion and agricultural officers were also highlighted, of which the respondents stated that while religion was against witchcraft in its generality, the agricultural extension officers played a role of teaching growers about proper methods of growing tobacco and not otherwise. The reasons for the persistence of witchcraft beliefs and practises even in the presence of religion and agricultural officers were also provided.

4.1 Recommendations

On the basis of findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations have been made: Since it was found that there is a great persistence of witchcraft beliefs and practises in tobacco growing areas, the government and other stakeholders are urged to conduct a national-wide research on the impacts of such beliefs and practises in the production fields. If results will support the findings that there are many positive impacts, then the evidence-based policy on knowledge management that focuses on witchcraft should be formulated. Such policy should encourage and guide the use of important aspects of witchcraft for increased productivity, development and creation of social harmony. In the formulation of such policy all stakeholders including practitioners, non-practitioners, social workers and educators should participate in a discussion to express how the practises affects development and social harmony, the ways of prevention and how to seek redress.

The government and other non-governmental bodies (social workers) should take up the duty of raising awareness on the important aspects of witchcraft for social change and development while informing the public on the negative impacts and the erroneous aspects of such beliefs and practises. Religion and agricultural offices as social institutions should continue to discourage bad practises of witchcraft and encourage the promotion of scientific methods of cultivation and produce handling. Also, the social workers (i.e. religious preachers and agricultural extension officers) should help and influence the government to formulate right policies in order to reduce social conflicts among community members.

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