

**THE IMPACT OF RAGGA MUSIC ON THE POLITICS OF KYADONDO COUNTY,
UGANDA.**

BY

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL
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AUGUST, 2026

DECLARATION

I Kasagga Shafic Reg. No: 23/U/09108/PS, do hereby declare that this dissertation entitled;

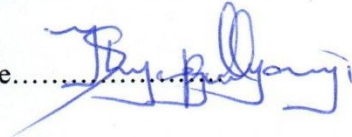
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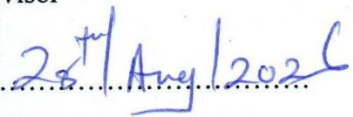
APPROVAL

This is to certify that this research project written by Kasagga shafic was under my supervision and I recommend it for presentation to the board of examiners in partial fulfillment of the requirements to award of Bachelor of Arts in music of Makerere University.

Signature.....

Mr. Polycarp Kyagulanyi

Supervisor

Date.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research project to Pastor Kasibante Charles, Miss Apio Ester, Mr Ssempijja Nicholas, and Mr. Nsereko Nicholas for your unwavering support, encouragement, and sacrifices throughout my academic journey. Your guidance and prayers have been my source of strength.

I also dedicate this work to my friends and colleagues who have continuously inspired and motivated me to strive for excellence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Almighty God for granting me life, strength, and wisdom throughout the course of this work.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my supervisors, Mr. Polycarp Kyagulanyi and other lecturers, for their continuous guidance, support, and valuable advice during the preparation of this study. Their commitment and encouragement greatly contributed to the successful completion of this work.

Special thanks go to my family and friends for their moral, emotional, and financial support. Their encouragement kept me motivated throughout this journey

Finally, I appreciate Mr. Monnedde Herbert, my fellow course mate, who guided me, instructed me, and facilitated me during the writing of this research project.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of ragga music on the political landscape of Kyadondo County, Uganda, focusing on its role as a tool of mobilization, civic awareness, cultural identity, and political expression.

Ragga music, popularized by artists such as Bobi Wine, has transcended entertainment to become a powerful medium of political communication. Through lyrical content, performances, and grassroots engagement, ragga music has mobilized youth participation, raised consciousness about governance and social justice, and fostered a sense of cultural pride within political discourse.

However, its influence is double sided, while it has empowered marginalized communities and expanded democratic participation; it has also contributed to political polarization, oversimplification of complex issues, and provoked state repression against artists and audiences.

Using case studies from the Kyadondo East by-election and subsequent political developments, this research highlights ragga music as both a catalyst for political transformation and a contested space of resistance.

The findings underscore the dual nature of music as a socio-political force, offering insights into how it shapes political identity and participation in Uganda.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study investigates the impact of ragga music on the politics of Kyadondo County. It also aims at examining how ragga music has influenced the politics of Kyadondo County and examines its role in shaping politics in Kyadondo County, focusing on ragga musicians that reside in Kyadondo County.

1.2 Background of study

Ragga music is often referred to as raggamuffin, a genre that originated in Kingston, Jamaica during the 1980s at the same time when electronic dance music's popularity was increasing globally. It is a sub-genre of dancehall and reggae music, which themselves grew out of Ska and rocksteady.

Ragga, also known as ragamuffin music, is a subgenre of dancehall and reggae that emerged in Jamaica during the 1980s. It is characterized by its heavy use of electronic instrumentals, digital production, sampling, fast-paced, and rhythmic vocal styles often delivered in Jamaican Patois. Unlike earlier roots reggae, which emphasized acoustic sounds, spiritual themes, and PanAfrican unity, ragga tends to focus on urban life, materialism, social issues, and energetic dance elements.

It should be noted that many Scholars and sources provide varying emphases on its origins, often tying it to technological shifts, socio-economic conditions, and cultural re-appropriations:

In Uganda, ragga music was introduced by Indian immigrants who influenced the local Musicians. Musicians therefore blended ragga with traditional and Western styles to come up with afro ragga. In the early 1990s, ragga music gained mainstream acceptance in Uganda; artists incorporated local languages, instruments and rhythms.

The Uganda ragga music's included Ziza Bafana, Bobi wine, Beebe cool, ragga dee, Jose chameleon, Steve jean, Menton summer, Ras khan, kid fox, Messe, Shanks vivid and Ugandan ragga producers included Paddy Man, Nessim, Washington, Kays, among others.

Ragga music became popular after the immigrant Indians came and settled in Kyadondo county, bringing their cultural traditions, melodies and socially conscious lyrics Appel to the youth.

In Kyadondo County, Uganda, Ragga music has become increasingly popular, sounding a lot in youth, and this has changed the lives of many notable people which has influenced many young people to engage in it. Ragga musicians in Uganda have long used their music as a powerful tool for political commentary and activism to address social injustices, inequality, and political freedom, inspiring the young generation of Uganda to demand change.

Therefore, politics in Uganda has been disseminated using music, especially ragga music. For example, Bob Wine composed songs like "*Tuliyambala Engule*" against the government and regime of President Museveni rise, among others.

1.3 Statement of the problem.

Despite the growing popularity of ragga music in Uganda, particularly in Kyadondo County and the use of music in shaping the political landscape, according to the research I carried out before coming up with the topic to carry out research on, I discovered that ragga music has played a vital role in the politics of Uganda as a country. However, there is no documentation on the impact of ragga music in Kyadondo County on its politics hence deciding to carry out that

research to bridge the knowledge gap and create awareness among the people, especially the youth. The absence of empirical knowledge about the impact of ragga music on Kyadondo County politics has hindered understanding of music's potential for political change.

1.4 Objectives.

1.4.1 Main objective.

- i) To investigate the impact of ragga music on the politics of Kyadondo County.

1.4.2 Specific objectives.

- ii) To investigate the problems faced by ragga musicians engaging in politics of Kyadondo County.
- iii) To examine the achievements of ragga musicians in politics of Kyadondo County
- iv) To explore the relationship between ragga music and political identity formation in Kyadondo County

1.5 Research question.

- i) What is the impact of ragga music on the politics of Kyadondo County?
- ii) What are the problems faced by ragga musicians engaging in politics of Kyadondo County?
- iii) What are the achievements of ragga musicians in the politics of Kyadondo County?
- iii) What is the relationship between ragga music and political identity formation in Kyadondo County?

1.6 Scope of study.

1.6.1 Content scope

The study will focus on 5 ragga Ugandan musicians and producers of ragga music in Uganda that I have chosen on my own, having ragga songs that are political, and their songs will be used for a case study in shaping politics in Kyadondo County.

1.6.2 Geographical scope.

The study will be conducted in Kyadondo County, Uganda. It will be conducted in that Geographical area because I, and most ragga musicians reside Kyadondo County, therefore information being easily accessible and less transport costs.

1.6.3 Time frame

The study is focused from 1990 when ragga music was introduced in Uganda, to the 2025 elections before finalizing the degree. It is focused on such a time frame because of the need to document the influence of ragga music on the politics of Kyadondo County.

1.7 Literature review.

According to cultural historian Louis Chude-Sokei, ragga originated in Jamaica's urban ghettos and in the 1980s political climate under leaders like Edward Seaga, alongside influences from the cocaine trade and multinational capitalism. He views it as a departure from 1970s roots reggae's Rastafarian focus on mythic African origins and exile, instead embracing a "raw, materialistic presence" with digital sounds that highlight local realities like gun violence and ghetto specifics.

Chude-Sokei (1994) traces its roots back to the 1960s rude-boy culture, where unemployed youth drew from American films and ska/reggae to assert outlaw identities, and he contrasts ragga's "aesthetics of presence" with roots reggae's nostalgia for elsewhere.

Anthropologist Norman C. Stolzoff (2000), in his book *Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica* (2000), situates ragga within the broader evolution of Jamaican dancehall culture, emphasizing its emergence as a youth-driven response to economic hardship and urbanization in the post-independence era.

Linguist and cultural studies scholar Stascha Bader explores ragga in her 1986 dissertation *Worte wie Feuer: Dancehall Reggae and Raggamuffin*, framing it as an extension of dancehall reggae with fiery, expressive lyrics that reflect the aggressive, street-level concerns of Jamaica's younger generation in the 1980s.

Carolyn Cooper (1995) analyses of gender and representation, such as in scholarly work on ragga's cultural impact, it is seen as originating in the mid-1980s with a shift toward inclusivity, incorporating dancehall elements and patois to celebrate Black women's sexuality and agency while commodifying it in a socio-economic context of material success. This perspective highlights ragga's ambivalent portrayal of women's empowerment through visibility and subversion of norms, but often disrespectful in male-dominated narratives and notes the rise of female artists like Lady Saw by the 1990s.

Ethnomusicologists like Lisa Gilman and John Fenn discuss ragga's global adaptations, but in its Jamaican roots, they align it with the influx of electronic music styles in the 1980s that appealed to youth through competitions and male symbols, though it quickly spread and fused with local traditions elsewhere.

A pivotal moment commonly cited across these views is the 1985 release of Wayne Smith's "Under Mi Sleng Teng," produced by King Jammy using a Casio synthesizer, which popularized the digital "Sleng Teng" riddim and marked ragga's break from analogue reggae sounds. The term "raggamuffin" itself reclaims a colonial-era pejorative for ragged street youth, transforming it into a badge of ghetto pride. Overall, while consensus points to 1980s Jamaica as the birthplace amid technological and social changes, scholars differ in focus-some on political/economic drivers, others on gender dynamics or linguistic identity.

Bennetta Jules (1987:93) suggests that popular artists often produce for diverse genres. They draw upon commercial genres originally targeted towards outsiders in order to enrich local, popular art forms. By the same token, they borrow syncretically from both conventional and new communal art forms to diversify their artworks. Popular artists may aspire toward and enter the gallery trade or elite publishing networks while simultaneously producing "for the people". The product diversification is carefully, even artfully calculated.

Richard Ssewakilyanga says that artists like Shanks Vivi Dee, who was originally a back-up singer for Big 5 Band in Kyadondo County, released some Luganda ragga songs, and his first song was Bundu. This was the first rap song to be produced by Kasiwukiri Studio based on traditional folklore, and it was produced by Steve Jean. Another artist, Ragga Dee (Dan Kazibwe Kyeyune) has been a household name throughout the 1990s through and has been associated with Ange Noir discotheque. Ragga Dee influenced the music of the 1990s with his very groovy ragga style that he sings in Luganda. Ragga Dee's style has not only mixed Luganda with Jamaican ragga lyrics, but it has also consistently kept everyone busy on the dance floor. Ragga Dee is one of the artistes who have been very consistent in the kind of music they play.

Dhikusooka Peter (2021), in his dissertation, the interplay between music and politics in Uganda, talks about music and politics, particularly focusing on by-elections in three places that is; Bugiri, Jinja East, and Kyadondo East. His study sought to establish the different types of popular music that have been used in by-elections, determine how popular music and politics influence each other and identify challenges facing the interplay of popular music and politics in Uganda.

Therefore, his research focused on other areas in Uganda; hence a need to research on ragga influence on Kyadondo County politics.

Nanziri Ruccia, in her dissertation, *A Dialectical Performance of Uganda's political Landscape*, talks about the songs of different musicians towards shaping politics in Ugandan like songs of Bobi Wine, Hassan Nduga and Phina Masanyalaze. These songs have influenced many people especially the youth towards demanding change. Therefore, there is a need to talk about the influence of ragga music on the politics of Kyadondo County particularly hence fill the knowledge gap left by her.

1.8 Research design.

Qualitative research methods will be used to gather data and information in the field. Methods include in-depth interviews, audio and video recording, literature reviews, library research, and focused group discussions to delve into the experiences and perspectives of ragga musicians, producers, and politicians in Kyadondo County.

1.8.1 Sampling.

In sampling, the participants will be selected from Kyadondo County using a purposive technique.

The sample will include 10 -15 ragga musicians, politicians, ragga producers who are involved, composed, performed and produced political ragga songs at least 2 years of experience.

1.8.2 Data collection

Audio and video recording methods will be employed to collect data and information from the Field. In-depth interviews will be used with selected ragga musicians, politicians, and producers from Kyadondo County. Focused group discussions arranging from 5-7 people will also be used to explore the experience of selected participants in the study. Literature review method will also be employed to fill the ideas of other scholars on what they wrote about politics in Uganda and Kyadondo County in particular.

1.8.3 Data analysis.

Qualitative research methods listed in the data collection will be subjected to thematic analysis and content analysis to identify themes, compositions and lyrics of ragga music in Kyadondo County.

Comparative analysis will also be employed to compare the impact of ragga music across different social and political groups.

1.9 Significance of the study.

The study will contribute to our understanding of the impact of ragga music on politics in Kyadondo County.

It will benefit many people, like politicians, youth activists, political leaders, and producers of music, artists and all Ugandans at large. They will be able to acquire Knowledge about the relationship of ragga music and politics in Kyadondo county, Uganda and how it has shaped politics for political changes. The study will also benefit future scholars and researchers who will be interested in carrying out research on music and politics in Kyadondo County and Uganda generally. This will enable them to bridge the knowledge gap that I will leave because my study will be used for literature reviews.

1.10. Ethical considerations.

During the study and process of carrying out research, I will make sure that I maintain the principle of informed consent from the participants in case of audio or video recording, to consent her or his participation in the study. The participants' identities will also be kept confidential in case they are not included in the report, and I will make sure that my study causes no harm to the participants.

1.11. Limitations of the study.

Financial constraints can exist during the period of study due to different issues like persistent inflation. This can affect my study in a way that the money I would use could be more than the planned budget though this can be solved by seeking more funds from different people and organizations.

Data collection challenges can also affect the study. This can be as a result of missing data, inaccurate information, absence of key information, among others though it can be managed by getting a research assistant to help in data collection, such as audio and video recording, writing notes for the research, among others.

Differences in political context can also affect the study. This is because different people support different political parties, where participants can withdraw from the research after conversing on other political groups that they are not supporting yet this can be overcome by informing and explaining the role of this study in research and development of Uganda to the participants before participating in the study.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.0 Introduction.

This chapter presents the geographical and political landscape and background of Kyadondo County. It further explains the origin of ragga music, more specifically in the Ugandan context. Therefore, this provides a foundation for the findings about the impact of ragga music on the politics of Kyadondo County.

2.1 Background of the study.

Kyadondo County is a locality in Wakiso District, central Uganda, with an elevation of 1,170 meters and covers a size of 102.0 km². It is approximately 15km north of Kampala. According to the population census of 2024, Kyadondo has a population of 277,685 people, with 146,683 males and 131,002 females, respectively and also has 2,772 population density. It consists of several administrative parishes within its sub-divisions and municipalities, including Kira, Nansana, Kasangati and parishes include Kimwanyi, Kira, Kyaliwajala, Kireka, Bweyogerere and Kirinnya. Other areas considered parishes or wards within this jurisdiction are Nangabo, Nabweru, Gombe and Kakiri. Additional areas associated with Kyadondo include Gayaza, Masulita, Wampeewo and Matugga.

Traditionally, Kyadondo is one of the three states that originally made up the Buganda kingdom besides Busiro and Mawokota, located in Wakiso district. But through conquest and assimilation, Buganda expanded to 20 states /counties as recorded in the March 10, 1900, Buganda agreement. The name Kyadondo is derived from the Luganda word “*Okudonda*” meaning to hunt. This area

was a hunting ground for the king of Buganda, “*Kabaka*”. Kyadondo is also home to the “*Endiga*” clan and hosts several cultural events throughout the year.

However, the great Kyadondo would presently include Kampala, Entebbe, Mpigi, Luweero and Wakiso among other neighboring districts. Until 1961, Kyadondo was still administratively one county, but under Mengo district. After the March 1961 general election, several constituencies were carved out of the greater Kyadondo. They include Kyadondo North, Mengo

South, Mengo North, Kampala East, Kampala West, Mengo Central and Kibuga (Kampala Central).

Again, before the 1980 elections, there was gerrymandering for fear of the Democratic Party influence emanating from DP stalwarts in Kampala district. The 1961 constituencies were abolished and new ones created. In Kyadondo, constituencies created include Mpigi Central, Mpigi South East, Mpigi West, Mpigi East and Mpigi North East. In other words, the whole of Kyadondo was put under Mpigi district.

The 3rd parliament lasted from December 1980 to July 1987 when the UPC government was once again overthrown. During the expanded National Resistance Council, Kyadondo was recreated as a single constituency in Mpigi district. It was represented by Steven Kavuma. Before the 1996 general election, Mpigi district was divided into 13 constituencies, including a slot for a district woman representative.

They were Busiro East, Busiro North, Busiro South, Butambala, Entebbe Municipality, Gomba County, Kyadondo East, Kyadondo North, Kyadondo South, Mawogola County, Mawogola North and Mawogola South.

Sam Njuba was the first Member of Parliament for Kyadondo East. He was in office from 1996 to 2001. In the 7th parliament, Kyadondo East was represented by William Sitenda Sabalu, who was defeated by journalist Ibrahim Semujju Nganda in 2011. In 2016, Kira Municipality was created out of Kyadondo East, and Semujju took the Member of Parliament position of Kira Municipality

Historically, Kyadondo is one of the turning points of the national resistance movement (NRM) government. It was in Kyadondo that the rebels from the bush and their external members often met to strategize for a war due to its proximity to Kampala. During the 1981-1986 bush war, Kyadondo was the frontier of the Luweero triangle. Areas of Matugga, Gayaza and Namugongo in Kyadondo had an escape route to or from Luweero.

In spite of the several military roadblocks in the area, NRM often found their way around, except for a few unlucky ones who were caught by the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) government soldiers. Now, an opposition is how such a Kyadondo stronghold was important to the Luweero bush war struggle.

NRM historians such as Cat Gertrude Njuba and retired Maj. Gen Matayo Kyaligonza, who recruited fighters, fought and won battles in Kyadondo, are puzzled by how the NRM government can fail to win such a constituency.

2.2 Ragga music and its origins

Ragga, also known as ragamuffin music, is a subgenre of dancehall and reggae that emerged in Jamaica during the 1980s. It is characterized by its heavy use of electronic instrumentals, digital production, sampling, and fast-paced, rhythmic vocal styles often delivered in Jamaican Patois. Unlike earlier roots reggae, which emphasized acoustic sounds, spiritual themes, and PanAfrican

unity, ragga tends to focus on urban life, materialism, social issues, and energetic dance elements. It is a sub-genre of dance hall and reggae music, which themselves grew out of Ska and rock steady. It differs marginally from its dance hall predecessor, other than a slightly more aggressive attitude and an alignment with the kind of concerns of its youthful audience. Ragga spread to Europe, North America and Africa, eventually spreading to Japan, India and the rest of the world.

Their births coincide with the introduction of drum machines and synthesizers, which revolutionized music production by placing live bands with electronic rhythms known as riddims. Ragga music distinguished itself from traditional reggae by its faster tempo, heavier bass lines and reliance on digital sound. The genre quickly became associated with dance hall culture, where DJs and MCs performed over these riddims, often improvising lyrics in a style called toasting.

Pioneering Jamaican artists such as Shabba Ranks, Beenie Man, Buju Banton and Cutty Ranks popularized ragga internationally, making it a dominant force in Caribbean music and influencing global genres like hip hop and afrobeats.

The evolution of ragga was marked by its adaptability and global spread. From Jamaica, ragga travelled across continents, finding vibrant homes in Europe, Africa and North America. Its digital foundation made it easy to reproduce and remix, allowing local music to adapt it to their cultural contexts.

According to cultural historian Louis Chude-Sokei, ragga originated in Jamaica's urban ghettos amid the 1980s political climate under leaders like Edward Seaga, alongside influences from the

cocaine trade and multinational capitalism. He views it as a departure from 1970s roots reggae's Rastafarian focus on mythic African origins and exile, instead embracing a "raw, materialistic presence" with digital sounds that highlight local realities like gun violence and ghetto specifics. Chude-Sokei traces its roots back to the 1960s rude-boy culture, where unemployed youth drew from American films and ska/reggae to assert outlaw identities, and he contrasts ragga's "aesthetics of presence" with roots reggae's nostalgia for elsewhere (1994).

Anthropologist Norman C. Stolzoff, in his book *Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica* (2000) situates ragga within the broader evolution of Jamaican dancehall culture, emphasizing its emergence as a youth-driven response to economic hardship and urbanization in the post-independence era (2000).

Linguist and cultural studies scholar Stascha Bader explores ragga in her 1986 dissertation *Worte wie Feuer: Dancehall Reggae and Raggamuffin*, framing it as an extension of dancehall reggae with fiery, expressive lyrics that reflect the aggressive, street-level concerns of Jamaica's younger generation in the 1980s (1986).

In analyses of gender and representation, such as in scholarly work on ragga's cultural impact, it is seen as originating in the mid-1980s with a shift toward inclusivity, incorporating dancehall elements and patois to celebrate Black women's sexuality and agency while commodifying it in a socio-economic context of material success. This perspective highlights ragga's ambivalent portrayal of women empowerment through visibility and subversion of norms but often disrespectful in male-dominated narratives and notes the rise of female artists like Lady Saw by the 1990s (Carolyn Cooper, 1995).

Ethnomusicologists like Lisa Gilman and John Fenn discuss ragga's global adaptations, but in its Jamaican roots, they align it with the influx of electronic music styles in the 1980s that appealed to youth through competitions and male symbols, though it quickly spread and fused with local traditions elsewhere.

A pivotal moment commonly cited across these views is the 1985 release of Wayne Smith's "Under Mi Sleng Teng," produced by King Jammy using a Casio synthesizer, which popularized the digital "Sleng Teng" riddim and marked ragga's break from analog reggae sounds. The term "raggamuffin" itself reclaims a colonial-era pejorative for ragged street youth, transforming it into a badge of ghetto pride. Overall, while consensus points to 1980s Jamaica as the birthplace amid technological and social changes, scholars differ in focus-some on political/economic drivers, others on gender dynamics or linguistic identity (Norman C. Stolzoff, 2000).

2.3 RAGGA MUSIC IN UGANDA

In Uganda, ragga music emerged during the mid-1990s when the Ugandan pop industry was just beginning to be formed. This was the first international music to make an impression on Ugandan artists at that time. Artists like Shabba Ranks and Buju Banton became the inspiration for Ugandan artists like Shank Vivi D, Ragga Dee, Menton Krone and Rasta Rob. The predominant beat that was used by the artists was the Dem bow beat, which was created by Shabba Ranks.

It quickly became one of the most influential urban genres. Kampala, the capital city, served as the hub of Ugandan ragga, the adaptation of raggamuffin. Local artists embraced the genre and blended it with indigenous languages and rhythms. It was the period marked by rapid

globalization and liberalization of Uganda's media landscape. Jamaican records and radio broadcasts introduced the Ugandan audience to ragga.

At first, ragga was performed by Ugandan artists imitating Jamaican style; however, the genre quickly underwent a process of localization that gave it a distinct identity. Unlike Jamaican ragga, which is rooted in Caribbean culture, Ugandan ragga reflected realities of urban African life. Musicians sang in Luganda, Swahili and English, ensuring that their music resonates with diverse audiences. They infused ragga with traditional rhythms and instruments, creating a hybrid sound that was uniquely Ugandan. The songs and themes of Ugandan ragga songs often addressed youth struggles, love, nightlife and political tensions, making the genre a mirror of society. Ragga quickly became the sound track of Kampala's youth, shaping fashion, dance and social identity.

In the late 1990s, new artists like Mega Dee and Emperor Orlando joined the fray. Also, other artists like Chameleon, Bebe Cool, and Bobi Wine joined the scene and consolidated it.

Tjeyn played different roles in popularizing ragga in Uganda. Ragga Dee is widely regarded as one of the pioneers, introducing the genre to mainstream audiences with hits. His work laid a foundation for ragga popularity in the country; for example, Didida, Oyagala Cash, Parliament, among others. Bebe Cool blended ragga with reggae and Afrobeats, creating a style that appealed to both local and regional audiences, for example, songs like Kasepiki, Akamwako, among others. Joe Chameleone fused ragga with Afro pop, expanding its reach across East Africa and making Ugandan ragga a regional phenomenon. For example, songs like Fitina yako, Mango Bado, Jamira, among others. Bobi Wine, initially a ragga artist, used the genre as a platform for

political activism. His songs like Kiwani and Situka critiqued corruption and inequality, cementing ragga's role as a voice of resistance and youth mobilization.

Ragga music in Uganda, often synonymous with or fused into the local genre with different names such as kidandali /afro ragga or Ugandan dancehall, represents a vibrant adaptation of Jamaican influences blended with indigenous sounds. It emerged as a dominant force in the country's popular music scene, reflecting urban youth culture, globalization, and socio-economic shifts. Below is a breakdown of its origins, evolution, key figures, and factors contributing to its rise and any perceived collapse;

Bennetta Jules (1987:93) suggests that popular artists often produce for diverse genres. They draw upon commercial genres originally targeted towards outsiders in order to enrich local, popular art forms. By the same token, they borrow syncretic ally from both conventional and new communal art forms to diversify their art works. Popular artist may aspire toward and enter the gallery trade or elite publishing networks while simultaneously producing “for the people”.

The product diversification is carefully and artfully calculated.

Richard Ssewakilyanga says that artists like Shanks Vivi Dee, who was originally a back-up singer for Big 5 Band in Kampala, released some Luganda ragga songs, and his first song was Bundu. This was the first rap song to be produced by Kasiwukiri Studio based on traditional folklore, and it was produced by Steve Jean. Another artist, Ragga Dee (Dan Kazibwe Kyeyune) has been a household name throughout the 1990s through and has been associated with Ange Noir discotheque. Ragga Dee influenced the music of the 1990s with his very groovy ragga style that he sings in Luganda. Ragga Dee's style has not only mixed Luganda with Jamaican ragga

lyrics, but it has also consistently kept everyone busy on the dance floor. Ragga Dee is one of the artistes that have been very consistent in the kind of music they play.

As ragga fame was being popularized another space was emerging where new forms of popular music were being nurtured. These include Sabrina's Bar and Restaurant among others. This space started karaoke nights every Saturday thus offering an opportunity to emerging and would-be young stars to try out their newly found skills. This inspired many artists in Uganda, thus populating the style of music in the country.

Some of the factors for the development of the ragga music style in Uganda include the following;

Different DJs in Uganda contributed to making ragga and vernacular rap popular in Kampala; these include Dj Charlie, Dj Elves, among others. Dj Charlie insisted on playing some of the best dancehall ragga music, mostly from the Jamaican Buju Banton's raspy-voiced tradition, thus popularising the style of music in Uganda. Furthermore, over the years Charlie improved the

Ange Noir discotheque to such an extent that it now looks like any first-class discotheque in Europe or America whilst also catering for various tastes of the Ugandan audience, where he also hired some of the best names in the Kampala DJ world including people like Robert 'Rasta Rob' Ogwal who popularized the mixing of ragga music with local rhythms.

It should be remembered that DJ RS Elvis also found a career slot in radio, which had a more mass-oriented audience than the six hundred to eight hundred capacities of Ange Noire. Elvis took ragga records from Ange Noire which he played on his Friday nights mid 1990s Radio Sanyu Hot Mix programs, many of which were recorded and learnt by heart by aspiring

musicians including the artists of the new millennium, Jose Chameleon, among others. (Richard Ssewakilyanga)

This liberalization of the radio economy led to 'aesthetic liberalization' of popular music and art in Kampala on 23rd December 1993, which will always be remembered in Uganda as a great day in the history of the liberalization of radio waves. This was the day when Sanyu FM, the first FM station in Uganda, was opened. The station started by playing the latest global hits, which for a long time were only accessible through audiocassettes, sold on Kampala's streets. In the era of audiocassettes, therefore, good music was expensive music. Now an FM station was pouring out these expensive musical vibes onto the airwaves free of charge (Ssewakiryanga Richard: 1999)

Another major turning point in the evolution of Ragga music in Uganda was the proliferation of young people's neighborhood singing groups. These were young people in urban high schools and universities who used to stage music shows for their colleagues during school holidays, and many of them went around miming the latest R&B hits. These included groups like the Muyenga Youths, Sharing Youth, Bugolobi Youths, Bukoto Youth and Hot Soul Crew, which staged small concerts for their friends of which most of their performances were based on the music videos of MTV and some of the music that was coming out on the MNET pay TV channel that had just opened its doors in Kampala.

The contribution of these artists extended beyond entertainment. Ragga became a tool for political expression, particularly in Kyadondo County where Bobi Wine's rise from ragga musician to Member of Parliament highlighted the intersection of music and politics. Ragga concerts and lyrics became platforms for civic engagement, mobilizing youth and challenging political authority

In conclusion, these first two stations were modelled on the Western FM stations and so, initially targeted the urban educated elite, where the proprietors were unwilling to experiment, especially because they did not know how the audience would receive these FM stations. They hired presenters who could speak very good English with a good radio personality. Good music was free, and the entertainment industry was growing. To date, over 40 new stations have been opened up in all parts of the country, targeting different audiences in both rural and urban Uganda. Most of these FM stations are now modelled around the diverse ethnic groups in Uganda as well as the different social classes. These factors all impacted the evolution of the Ugandan music industry, thus popularizing Ragga music in Ugan

CHAPTER THREE

RAGGA MUSIC ON THE POLITICS OF KYADONDO COUNTY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study on the impact of ragga music on the politics of Kyadondo County. The study investigates how ragga has influenced the political landscape of Kyadondo County. Furthermore, the findings are categorized into positive and negative impacts to have a strong analysis.

3.2 Positive impacts

3.2.1 Political mobilization of people.

Music has been a powerful tool in mobilizing people into activism. The use of music for rallies and campaigns has inspired people to take part in political activities, take action for the cause, fight for their rights, protest and see themselves as agents for social, political and economic changes. According to Bulaba Aggreg in his article *“The power of music in Africa /Uganda ‘s political landscape since colonial times”*, he explained that music has always been a driving force for social change, particularly in Africa, where it has played an instrumental role in fighting for independence across the continent during the colonial regime. In countries like South Africa, musicians wielded their art as a weapon against apartheid, and songs like “Soweto” by Mariam Makeba immortalized the Soweto uprising. Hugh Masekela's song, “Bring Him Back Home”, became an anthem calling for Nelson Mandela's release. Through their music, they captured the anger and hope of people, uniting communities, mobilizing, and inspiring generations to continue fighting.

Similarly, Edrine Benesa, in his article *“The role and power of music in political mobilization in Uganda”* also notes that the genre called popular music has played an important role in political mobilization. The struggles for national liberation helped create strong emotional bonds and a sense of common purpose. The South African *“Toyi Toyi”* dance and *“Chimurenga”* songs in Zimbabwe were central in fusing collective will against established authority. Also, the place of music in mobilizing South African blacks is well documented in films such as *“Rhythm of Resistance”* in 1990 and *“Amandla”* in 2002.

For the context of Uganda, songs were created during the Milton Obote and Idi Amin Dada regimes, for example, like *“Baalaba taliwo”* by Dan Mugula during Milton Obote's regime over the mistreatment of Kabaka Muteesa II, though it was released during Idi Amin's regime due to fear of being killed. In the same way, Oweyegha Afunaduula 2025, in his article *“The political music in new liberation of Uganda”*, explained that in Uganda's bush war in the Luweero triangle (1981-1986), songs mobilised the largely Baganda rank and file through the rebellion's ambitions extending influences in Rwanda and Eastern Congo. For example, *“Omwoto Nawaka”*. The songs and music for liberation were used purposely to mobilize people to take action against the ruling governments.

Nevertheless, the emergence of ragga music as a genre of music on the Uganda music industry scene in the late 1990's has greatly impacted the political landscape of Uganda and Kyadondo in particular. The rise of a talented ragga musician and politician, Robert Kyagukanyi Sentamu, popularly known as Bobi Wine, on the music scene in 2001 with his first release *“Akagoma”* never left the Ugandan music industry the same. Although this song doesn't convey political lyrics, his unique voice and style captured many people's minds, especially the youth. His continuous release of songs against the ruling government of Yoweri Kaguta Museveni paved the

way for his journey in the politics of Uganda by 2017. Since he grew up in the ghettos of Kamukya, his ghetto inspired music became a platform for mobilizing thousands of people into political participation and activism.

In an interview with Monnedde Herbert, a resident and voter from Kyadondo county, stated that “ragga music has been largely used to motivate, inspire and engage people of Kyadondo county and Uganda at large. This is because people know that ragga music is for the low people staying in slums and ghettos, and most of them are youth. That’s why every message conveyed in the song, people feel like they are represented, and it acts as a voice for the voiceless. The coming of Bobi Wine with his political songs against the ruling government of Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, for example, Obululu, Situka tutambule, Time bomb, Ogenda, Kasukali, and Akatego aroused people’s grievances highly because the messages in the songs are for the poor and oppressed people. The message in the music motivates and mobilizes people to take action and also participate in politics for political, social and economic change”. (Interview 15th November 2025).

In the same way, Bazaale Morris, a lawyer and politician, argued that “ragga music in Uganda went beyond entertainment for commercialization as it was in the late 1990s, but now it is one of the most popular styles of music used in a political context. Many ragga musicians, producers, song writers have invested in creating such songs to speak to people to their voters and supporters. This has been more prevalent during rallies and campaigns in Kyadondo East. For example, songs like Obululu Tebutwawula, Situuka, and Freedom. These songs speak to people directly, mobilizing them to love their country, uniting communities and engaging in politics.” (Interview 18th November 2025).

Similarly, Lucy Llado affirmed this in her article “*Music, Power, and the Politics of Belonging*” 2025 that during Bobi’s campaigns and rallies, people on a dusty field could rise chants before he even steps forward. Young people could press closest to the front, while children, middleaged workers and older supporters gather behind them, drawn together across generations. Bobi Wine’s “*Uganda Zukuka*” (Uganda, wake up) and “*Ebibuuzo*” captured people’s minds not because the songs were playing, but because the crowd itself embodies its message, with young and old standing together. The energy carries the cadence of performance, yet the gathering is unmistakably political, occupying a space where music, memory and political expectation overlap. It demonstrated how cultural expression has become a primary language of political belonging in a society, especially among the youth.

Additionally, in an interview, Mushini Muhammad, a ragga artist, noted that ‘using music as a tool for political mobilization, especially for ragga, has been seen during the year 2015 when Bobi Wine released a song of obululu. This song motivates and encourages voters to go and vote, but without causing divisions. It also inspired the electoral commission and used it in the 2017 elections to encourage citizens to take part in elections.’ (Interview 27th November 2025)

3.2.2 Socio-political awareness

Apart from mobilization, ragga music has also played a crucial role in making the citizens of Kyadondo aware of the social, economic and political affairs of the country (Uganda). Messages and lyrics of the songs reflect the day-to-day struggles of people. They address corruption, police brutality, unemployment, a poor education system, inequality, dictatorship, and nepotism.

In an interview with Okanya Summy, a political analyst stressed that “music and politics are intertwined because we have seen many politicians and musicians release songs talking about political affairs for the issues that oppress people, as well as address problems. For example, in Kyadondo County, a good example is Robert Kyagulanyi Sentamu releasing songs like Freedom, Tugambire ku Jenifer, Tuliymbala Engule, symbolising hope for people of Uganda. These songs communicate directly to people, educating them and also spreading political message and awareness”. (Interview 20th November 2025)

It is also affirmed by Lucy Llado (2025) when he explained that Bobi wine’s early music engaged directly with everyday realities, often reflecting concerns circulating in public conversation but rarely addressed with seriousness by political leaders. In the song of Ebibuuzo released in the mid-2000s, he raised questions about corruption, unsolved violence, rising living costs and political tragedies that had become routine. Later songs like Tugambire ku Jenifer responded to the treatment of street vendors and unemployed youth in Kampala, criticism of the heavy-handed city enforcement and social exclusion. As his audience expanded, his work evolved songs like Freedom and Ogenda reflected a growing civic awareness.

In the same way, Damson Kahyana 2020 noted that Bobi Wine, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, is a popular Ugandan musician turned politician who has used music to rally his political supporters in Uganda. His music often addresses social and political issues affecting ordinary Ugandans, such as poverty, corruption, and human rights abuses. His songs are often critical of the Ugandan government and have made him a popular figure among young people in the country.

In an interview with Ankunda Harriet, a politician noted that ‘ragga music, especially the songs of Bobi Wine, has reflected and exposed the atrocities of the ruling government. This has created awareness of such oppressive activities among the people, even in the deep villages. Music is one of the tools that reach a bigger number of people more easily than any other way. The music seems to be for low-income earners or people from the ghetto who face many problems in such places. Therefore, people feel they are represented in the music for the government to work on their problems’ (interview 16th November 2025)

In addition, according to Mugonero Ivan Mutebui 2023 in his article “Political Communication through popular music in Uganda”, he explained that music has increasingly played a role in communicating socio-political issues. Particular attention is placed on Bobi Wine in using music as a tool for communicating political messages, not just for fans, but for raising political consciousness to the wider population. This can be seen in his songs like “Dembe” on violent free elections, “Ebibuuzo” on why fires were ravaging schools and markets, “Obululu tebutwawula” calling for Ugandans to stay united even when they support different candidates. His later liberation songs, “Akatengo” and “Tuliyambala Engule”, were an antecedent of a strong political storm whose ingredients were the political messages they communicated.

Nantale Rucia also affirmed this in her dissertation, *Dialectical Performances of Uganda’s political landscape* (2021), when he explained that musicians are significantly impacted in the politics of the societies because songs can elicit strong emotional and visceral responses, which allow musicians to motivate and inspire a large population. Musicians have in recent years increasingly used their music to relay messages and encourage social, political and economic change. Robert Kyagulanyi Sentamu, in his song “*Naye Mukama*”, asserted the people’s suffering and crying in their country, the high costs of living. In his songs like “Time Bomb”, “he

raised corruption, nepotism, poor roads, shoddy public buildings, insufficient drugs in the hospitals, and a consistent lack of jobs.

3.2.3 Leadership transformation and inspiration.

In an interview, Kaaya Herny TV presenter and news reporter, said that ‘Music in Uganda has not only mobilized and educated people, it has also reshaped the ideas of leadership.

Traditionally, Ugandan political leadership was dominated by politicians from wealthy families, military backgrounds, and long-standing party structures. It also emphasized hierarchy, age and tradition. However, music changed the way people think about who can be a leader in Uganda.

Music introduced charisma, reliability, and cultural authenticity as leaders' assets. (Interview 20th November 2025)

Nsabya Hannington, Prime Minister Makerere and voter in Kyadondo, also noted that ‘Music provided a platform for counter leadership that even ordinary artists could raise and lead. For example, Bobi Wine began as a ragga artist, producing songs like situuka, freedom that spoke directly to the ordinary Ugandans, corruption, unemployment, and lack of freedom. These sounds built him a reputation as a voice of the people. Citizens of Kyadondo began to see him not just as an entertainer but as a leader of hope and courage. (Interview 18th November 2025)

Similarly, Amina Nakizito, a voter of Kyadondo in Kasangati, stressed that ‘When Bobi Wine contested the 2017 elections for Kyadondo East, people trusted him and took the seat for Member of Parliament Kyadondo East. Therefore, ordinary citizens saw him as an artist from the Ghetto rise and challenged the entrenched elites. People began to value leaders who could sing their struggles, speak their languages and embody their daily realities. Music gave him the power to move from the stage to the government. This marked a turning point, and leadership is no

longer restricted to career, political parties, and wealthy elites but could emerge in artistic spaces. This also inspired other musicians from other genres of music to contest, for example, Geoffrey Lutaaya, Rachel Magoola, Nina Rose, Nubian Lee, Jose Chameleon, Hilder man and most of them succeeded. ” (interview 18th November 2025)

Additionally, Nancy J. Adler and Linda M in their article ‘Musical Leadership and Societal Transformation: Inspiration and Courage in Action explained that ‘Music is a form of leadership. Music-based interventions in organizations and society are being used throughout the world, including in situations of extreme conflict and consequence. Artists are going beyond the dehydrated language of economics, politics, and war to achieve goals that have eluded those using more traditional approaches.

3.3 Negative effects

3.3.1 Censorship, arrest and intimidation of people.

In Uganda, several musicians of ragga music have been censored, arrested and intimidated, especially when it criticizes government. Therefore, the government set strict laws against the resale of such music. Lucky Llodra 2025 explains that reports of violence against opposition supporters, including incidents involving a ragga artist and politician Bobi Wine and his campaign team, have raised concerns among legal bodies and international observers. Bobi was blocked from campaign routes, dispersed with tear gas and repeatedly confronted by security forces during public appearances.

In the interview with Nsobya, Hannington said that “the government pushed to regulate the entertainment industry in 2019. Critics called it an attempt to gag artists who are critical of the

government. Rules would force artists to submit lyrics for vetting, get performances, permits and register with the authority.” (Interview 18th november2025)

Also, Nakizito Amina stressed that “the Uganda communication commission banned political songs, for example, Bobi Wine's song Tuliambala Engule on the media. Concerts got blocked by the police on public order grounds, for example, Bobi Wine's concerts between 2017 and 2021 were cancelled”(interview 18th november2025)

Additionally, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) report on Uganda ahead of the 2026 elections states that arbitrary arrests, house arrests, and intimidation of opposition supporters, including musicians, have been systematically carried out. Concerts were banned, and venues were threatened with hosting politically outspoken artists, effectively censoring their ability to perform. The report highlights that the ragga artist and politician Bobi Wine and his collaborators, such as Nubian Li, were repeatedly detained or confined to their homes, preventing them from mobilizing through music. Security forces violently dispersed rallies where musicians performed, using tear gas, pepper spray, dogs, and live ammunition, leading

In the same Ankunda, Harriet noted that ‘the government has also arrested people, for example, Bobi Wine, the 2018 Arua arrest during the by-elections reshaped him from an artist testing political space to a direct challenger to state power. Also, artists, producers and venue owners got threatened not to release or perform such music that is against the government” (interview 16th November 2025).

The article “Uganda’s Opposition Musicians under Siege Ahead of 2026 Elections (2025). also affirmed it by describing how opposition musicians in Uganda were systematically silenced

ahead of the 2026 elections. Bobi Wine's concerts were banned across the country, while Nubian Li was arrested alongside other performers. Police raided studios producing political songs, and venues were intimidated into cancelling shows. Broadcast stations were warned not to air protest music, with the government framing politically charged songs as threats to national stability. It also notes that artists were denied freedom to perform and that censorship was deliberately used as an election strategy. Arrests were arbitrary and politically motivated, with musicians detained without trial and subjected to house arrests that prevented them from campaigning. The intimidation extended to family members of musicians, spreading fear throughout artistic communities.

Amnesty International's report on Uganda, *Uganda: Authorities Subjecting Opposition Supporters to Brutal Campaign of Repression* (2026) describes that brutal campaign of repression against opposition supporters, including musicians. Ragga artists and politicians like Bobi Wine faced repeated detentions, while Nubian Li was imprisoned with other opposition figures. Concerts were violently dispersed by police, with tear gas and live ammunition used against crowds. Amnesty documents torture of detained artists and widespread intimidation of opposition musicians.

CHAPTER FOUR

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations generated from the study.

4.2 Summary and conclusions

In this study, the impact of f ragga music on the politics of Kyadondo County has been examined through its historical development, social, and political engagement. The findings reveal that ragga music is beyond mere entertainment but it has become a powerful tool for political communication. Artists have used the genre to address social concerns, critique governance, and mobilize communities, particularly the youth. The genre's popularity among young people, who form a significant portion of Uganda's population, has displayed its political impact, making ragga music a political force.

At the same time, the state's responses ranging from collaboration with musicians during campaigns to censorship and restrictions highlight the contested space in which ragga music operates. Overall, the study demonstrates that ragga music is deeply intertwined with Uganda's political processes, shaping public political opinions and influencing participation.

From these findings, several conclusions have been noted down. First, ragga music has emerged as an instrument of political expression, providing a voice for groups and fostering civic awareness. It illustrates the relationship between popular music and politics, showing how music can reflect social change.

Secondly, the genre has strengthened democratic participation by encouraging dialogue and mobilization, yet it has also exposed tensions between freedom of expression and state control. This has been evidenced during campaigns of Robert Kyagulanyi Sentamu, being arrested, beaten and his supporters get exposure to tear gas and some were killed and kidnapped and taken to the base mates.

Thirdly, the impact of ragga music underscores the importance of identity in political activism, as artists draw upon local traditions and narratives to connect with audiences. Therefore, the study confirms that the political significance of ragga music lies not only in its lyrical content but also in its ability to unify communities and inspire collective action.

4.3 Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, several recommendations are proposed. Firstly policy makers should recognize ragga music as a vital form of political expression and safeguard the rights of artists to freely communicate their ideas. This is because some of ragga music songs have been used in campaign for example obululu tebutwawula used by the electoral commission during 2010 national elections, creating civic awareness and encouraging people to participate in election activities.

Musicians, on their part, should continue to use ragga responsibly, ensuring that their message promote awareness and unity rather than division or incitement. With such people will be able to stay in peace rather than being censored, kidnapped and killed.

Civil society organizations are encouraged to collaborate with ragga artists in promoting civic education, voter awareness, and peaceful participation in political processes for example electoral commission should work together with artists to pass their messages and information to the

people through music because it resonates deeply in to People's hearts than spoken words and also reaches a wider audience.

Researchers should undertake further studies to explore the long-term effects of ragga music on Uganda's political landscape, particularly its role in elections and policy debates. This will help to bridge the knowledge gap left. It also helps people to understand the context of ragga Music and politics of Kyadondo County and Uganda at large hence contributing to the development and growth of research field.

Finally, educators should integrate discussions of music and politics into academic curricula, enabling students to appreciate the dimensions of democracy and the role of art in shaping political consciousness. This should be through introducing new course units related to politics enabling them to understand how politics and music shape each other.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW

1. How can you describe Ragga music in brief?
2. What could be the impact of Ragga music on politics?
3. What is the relationship between Ragga music and politics?
4. What role do Ragga artists play in influencing public opinion on governance and politics in Kyadondo?
5. How do politicians in Kyadondo engage with Ragga music and artists to mobilize support or convey their message?
6. What are the challenges Ragga musicians face engaging in politics?
7. How have they managed the challenges encountered in politics?
8. What impact has Ragga music had on promoting political participation among Kyadondo residents?
9. How do politicians respond to Ragga music that critiques their political policies?
10. What advice would you give to Ragga musicians willing to join politics?