

**EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF NEW MEDIA ON COMMUNICATION AT
UNEB ADDRESSING MISINFORMATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE
DIGITAL ERA IN UGANDA**

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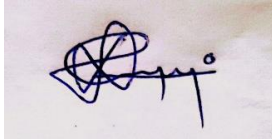


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DECLARATION

I, HANDEHE SHEENA NADINE declare that the work presented in this dissertation is entirely my own and has been carried out under the supervision of Dr. Annette Deborah Kezaabu. I confirm that this work has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any other university or institution for any academic qualification.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Handehe Sheena Nadine', is written on a light-colored background.

HANDEHE SHEENA NADINE

J22B04/049

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this report has been submitted after being reviewed and endorsed by my university supervisor.

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Date 15/10/2024

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Table of Contents	
DECLARATION	i
APPROVAL.....	ii
ABSTRACT	vi
CHAPTER ONE:	1
Introduction	1
Background of the study	1
Problem Statement.....	3
Purpose of the study	5
Research Objectives	5
Research Questions.....	5
The scope of the study	6
Geographical Scope	6
Contextual Scope.....	6
Time Scope	6
Justification of the study.	6
Significance of the study.	7
CHAPTER TWO:	9
Literature Review	9
Introduction.....	9
1.New media and its influence on communication.....	9
2. Misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era.	10
3. Influence of new media on communication at UNEB.	11
4. Theoretical frameworks and concepts.....	12
5.Gaps, challenges and opportunities.....	16
CHAPTER THREE:	18
Methodology.....	18
Introduction.....	18
Research Design	18
Research Approach.	18

Participants.....	18
Sample Size.....	19
Data Collection Methods.....	19
Data Analysis.....	19
Ethical Considerations.....	20
CHAPTER FOUR:	21
Presentation and Analysis of data.	21
Introduction.....	21
Response rate.....	21
Responses	21
The adoption of new media platforms (social media and online portals) and how these have changed communication practices within UNEB.....	21
The key benefits and challenges faced by UNEB in utilizing new media for internal and external communication.....	23
Ways in which new media has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of information dissemination at UNEB.....	25
Types of misinformation related to UNEB’s activities that are commonly spread through new media.....	27
Roles played by UNEB's official social media channels in correcting false information.....	28
How aware are UNEB staff of the measures taken to maintain confidentiality in the digital era?.....	29
Analysis	31
1. Changes in communication practices.....	31
2. Benefits and challenges.....	32
3. How efficient and effective has the information dissemination been?.....	33
4. Common misinformation.....	34
5. Social Media Role in the Correction of Misinformation	35
6. Staff awareness on confidentiality	35
CHAPTER FIVE:	37
Discussion of results.	37
Introduction.....	37
Objective 1:.....	37
Improvement in communication and operations.....	37

Broader Reach and Interactivity.	38
Cost and Time Efficiency.	38
Objective 2:.....	38
Confidentiality measures and training.	38
Challenges with new media.	39
Dealing with misinformation.	39
Objective 3:.....	40
Internal and External Communications Advantages.....	40
Efficient and effective information dissemination.	40
Problems and solutions.	41
CHAPTER SIX:.....	42
Conclusions and recommendations.....	42
Introduction.....	42
Key Findings.	42
Change in Communication Practices.	42
Challenges of Misinformation.	42
Confidentiality Dilemmas.	43
Gatekeeping in the Digital Era.	43
Implications for UNEB.	43
Policy and Strategy Advancement.	43
Capacity Building and Training.	44
Technological Investments.	44
Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms.	44
Contribution to Literature.	45
Recommendations for Future Research.....	45
Comparative Studies.	45
Longitudinal Studies.	45
Quantitative Approaches.	46
REFERENCES.....	47
APPENDICES.....	49

ABSTRACT

The coming of new media has changed communication dynamics in organizations around the world, not excluding educational institutions. The present dissertation focuses on finding out how new media is affecting communication at the Uganda National Examinations Board, with a focus on the challenges and opportunities presented by misinformation and the requirement for confidentiality in the digital age in Uganda. The study takes a qualitative approach using interviews in particular to elaborate on how digital platforms such as social media and portals have revolutionized both internal and external communication processes at UNEB. This will point out changes in information accuracy, confidentiality and operational efficiency and effectiveness. The findings are intended to offer practical insights to UNEB and institutions of similar standing in Uganda to fashion out a watertight approach for tapping benefits from the new media while warding off its pitfalls, so that the integrity and reliability of information provision in the digital age may be ensured.

CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction

This chapter presents the underlying sections of the study: the background of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research objectives, research questions justification and scope of the study.

Background of the study

In recent years, the advent of new media technologies has revolutionized the landscape of communication globally. From social networking sites to instant messaging platforms, these digital tools have facilitated unprecedented connectivity and information dissemination. However, along with their numerous benefits, new media platforms have also introduced numerous challenges, particularly in regions like Uganda, where the digital divide intersects with issues of misinformation and confidentiality. Looking into the interplay between digital media, misinformation and confidentiality this aims to provide insights into effective strategies for managing these issues.

The Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEb) serves as a vital institution in the country's educational landscape, responsible for the administration, regulation and assessment of national examinations. Effective communication at UNEb is paramount for ensuring the smooth conduct of examinations, disseminating important information to stakeholders and upholding the integrity of the examination process.

However, with the proliferation of new media, the dynamics of communication within UNEB have undergone significant transformation, presenting both opportunities and challenges.

This research aims to delve into the intricate relationship between new media and communication within UNEB, with a specific focus on addressing two critical issues that is to say; misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era in Uganda.

Misinformation, fueled by the rapid spread of unverified or false information through digital channels, poses a substantial threat to the credibility of UNEB and the educational system of Uganda as a whole. Concurrently, ensuring confidentiality in digital communication is vital to safeguarding sensitive information, such as examination papers, assessment criteria, and personal data of students and staff.

Against this backdrop, this research seeks to explore the multifaceted influence of new media on communication at UNEB, unraveling its implications for misinformation management and confidentiality protocols. By employing the qualitative methods approach, encompassing qualitative interviews and content analysis of digital communication channels utilized by UNEB.

Through this research, I will endeavor to contribute empirical insights that not only enrich the scholarly discourse on new media and communication but also provide actionable recommendations to UNEB and similar institutions grappling with the complexities of digital communication in Uganda. Ultimately, by fostering a deeper understanding of these issues and devising effective strategies to address them, this research aspires to promote transparency, integrity, effectiveness and efficiency in

the communication practices of UNEB, thereby fortifying the foundation of Uganda's educational system in the digital age.

In the rapidly evolving digital landscape, new media has transformed the way organizations communicate. This is particularly evident in institutions like the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) the national education examining and assessment body of Uganda. While new media offers numerous benefits, it also presents significant challenges which include the spread of misinformation and threats to confidentiality. The proliferation of digital media platforms has transformed how individuals access, share and consume information. In Uganda, where traditional media coexists with new media, understanding the implications of this shift is crucial. UNEB, as a critical educational institution faces unique challenges in navigating the digital landscape. This concept note outlines a proposed study to explore the influence of new media on communication at UNEB, focusing on addressing misinformation and maintaining confidentiality in the digital era in Uganda.

Problem Statement

In the contemporary digital era, the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities in communication, particularly concerning the influence of new media. The rapid proliferation of digital platforms has revolutionized how information is disseminated, accessed and shared, presenting both advantages and risks for UNEB and its stakeholders. Within this context, the prevalence of misinformation and concerns regarding confidentiality pose significant challenges to UNEB's communication practices and the integrity of its examination processes.

Misinformation, fueled by the rapid dissemination of unverified or false information through digital channels, has the potential to undermine the credibility of UNEB, erode public trust and compromise the fairness and validity of examination outcomes. The pervasive nature of misinformation on social media platforms and online forums exacerbates these risks, making it imperative for UNEB to address this challenge effectively to maintain the integrity of its operations.

Furthermore, ensuring confidentiality in the digital era presents complex challenges related to the protection of sensitive information such as examination papers, assessment criteria, uniqueness of UNEB academic documents so as to prevent forgery and student records. The increasing digitization of UNEB's communication processes coupled with cybersecurity threats and privacy concerns, underscores the importance of robust confidentiality protocols to safeguard the privacy and security of stakeholders' data.

Despite the growing recognition of these challenges, there remains a gap in understanding the nuanced dynamics of new media's influence on communication at UNEB, specifically concerning misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era in Uganda. A comprehensive exploration of this topic is essential to inform and offer evidence-based strategies and interventions aimed at mitigating the risks of misinformation and enhancing confidentiality protocols within UNEB's communication practices.

Purpose of the study

To explore the influence of new media on communication at UNEB as well as address misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era in Uganda.

Research Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives;

1. To examine the role of new media in shaping communication practices at UNEB.
2. To explore confidentiality concerns arising from digital communication channels especially misinformation.
3. To assess the extent and nature of new media utilization for communication within the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB).

Research Questions

1. What are the key benefits and challenges faced by UNEB in utilizing new media for internal and external communication?
2. In what ways has new media improved the efficiency and effectiveness of information dissemination at UNEB?
3. How aware are UNEB staff of the measures taken to maintain confidentiality in the digital era?

The scope of the study

The study comprises of geographical scope, content scope and time scope as shown below;

Geographical Scope

The study involves staff members at UNEB especially those whose work is in line with administration, communications and cyber security. UNEB is a government institution, the examining body of Uganda whose main offices are located in Ntinda 35 martyr's way and in Kyambogo. An act of Parliament, (the UNEB act of 1983) was enacted in 1983 and it established and legalized UNEB and its operations hence officially making UNEB Uganda's first national education examining and assessment body. As time has gone by, so have the communication practices at UNEB evolved with time to today when UNEB utilizes new media for information dissemination.

Contextual Scope

This study focuses on exploring the influence of new media on communication at UNEB and addressing misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era in Uganda.

Time Scope

The research is going to be carried out in the period of June and July 2024.

Justification of the study.

The transition in dynamics where the use of new media platforms has revolutionized communication at UNEB thus the need to understand them holistically.

The ubiquity of false information. Unchecked dissemination of falsehoods via new media can seriously undermine and compromise UNEB's credibility and operations.

Stake holders like; students, parents and teachers need accurate information in order to make informed decisions about their lives. It is therefore essential to examine how misinformation propagates and come up with ways of counteracting it.

The need to maintain privacy and data protection. UNEB handles a lot of delicate details which include examination processes, outcomes as well as student files. Confidentiality is everything in this cyber era.

Embracing the understanding of specific challenges and opportunities presented by new media in the Ugandan context ensures that solutions tailored for the same are in effect especially for critical organizations like UNEB.

The research can contribute to increasing the academic discourse on the effect of new media in educational administration, especially in developing countries and fill the existing knowledge gaps.

Significance of the study.

Knowing how new media influences the communication aspects within UNEB may lead to the betterment of educational practice. This can be utilized in refining information dissemination, efficient communication and improvement of operations within this educational institution.

Misinformation travels quickly in the digital era and it is important to know how to manage it better. This research may further elaborate on how UNEB will counter misinformation and ensure that proper information reaches its students, teachers and all the stakeholders at large.

Digital communication inherently brings about concerns regarding confidentiality and security of data. Such exploration may trigger the development of policies and practices that ensure the safety of information in UNEB and similar organizations.

The study increases the extant body of literature through an empirical addition of data on the interaction between new media, communication practices and educational institutions in Uganda, hence contributing to the understanding of digital communication dynamics in developing countries.

The study may come out with practical recommendations on how best UNEB and institutions of this nature can harness new media for effective communication while mitigating risks of misinformation and confidentiality breaches. The findings of this study can also be used in the formulation of policies and guidelines governing digital communication practices within UNEB. This may include protocols on information sharing, use of social media and reacting to misinformation incidents.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, the research reviews related Literatures on the study topic, “Exploring the influence of new media on communication at UNEB, addressing misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era in Uganda”. In this case, for a concise and structured literature review, this chapter will be divided into five sections;

1. New media and its influence on communication.
2. Misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era.
3. Influence of new media on communication at UNEB.
4. Theoretical frameworks and theories.
5. Gaps, challenges and opportunities.

1. New media and its influence on communication.

- Existing literature on new media highlights its transformative impact on communication processes. Scholars such as Jenkins (2006) and Castells (2009) discuss how new media platforms, characterized by user-generated content, interactivity, and connectivity, have revolutionized the way individuals and organizations interact and exchange information.
- Studies by Boyd and Ellison (2007) and Rheingold (2014) emphasize the role of social media in shaping interpersonal communication, fostering online communities and facilitating participatory culture. These platforms enable

individuals to share opinions, experiences, and content in real-time, transcending geographical and temporal barriers.

- Additionally, research by Pew Research Center (2020) and Global Digital Overview (2020) provides insights into the global adoption and usage patterns of various new media platforms, highlighting their prevalence and significance in contemporary communication practices.

2. Misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era.

- Scholars such as Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) and Tandoc et al. (2018) have extensively studied the phenomenon of misinformation in the digital era. They discuss how factors such as algorithmic biases, echo chambers and the virility of content contribute to the spread of false or misleading information online. Additionally, studies by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) and Vosoughi et al. (2018) have examined the prevalence and impact of misinformation on social media platforms, particularly during sensitive events such as elections or health crises.
- Concerning confidentiality, research by Solove (2008) and Warren and Brandeis (1890) delves into the legal and ethical dimensions of privacy in the digital age. They discuss challenges related to data protection, surveillance, and the erosion of privacy rights in the context of digital communication technologies. Studies by Acquisti and Gross (2006) and Cavoukian and Jonas (2012) examine the implications of data breaches, identity theft, and surveillance for individuals' privacy and confidentiality in online environments.

3. Influence of new media on communication at UNEB.

New media has made communication at UNEB much easier and faster for both UNEB and its stakeholders. Initially, UNEB used to give out circulars to schools containing the academic calendar and in case of any changes or new developments, other circulars would be sent to schools or head teachers would be informed to come and get them from the UNEB headquarters. However, UNEB now communicated directly with schools through the online portals and for the other stake holders, information is put on the official social media platforms of UNEB.

When it comes to release of examination results for candidates, the new media has made the entire process convenient, cheaper, faster and easier for both the institution, UNEB and its stake holders. Initially, stake holders would only know of the day that examinations have been released from newspapers, the radio or television news only and then they would proceed to go to their respective schools however far just to know the results they have got. As for the head teachers, they were to travel to UNEB offices to pick up the results of their respective schools. However, by the help of new media, announcement of examination release dates is communicated earlier on the UNEB social media platforms which allows mental preparation and order. Students can use their phones to access their results in the comfort of their homes and only go to the schools to pick hard copies of their results. The head teachers can access

results of students from the UNEB portal and only come to UNEB to pick hard copies of results.

4.Theoretical frameworks and concepts.

Gatekeeping theory as regards new (digital) media is about the process of choosing, filtering, and presenting news as well as information. This is important in realizing the control or spread of wrong information through digital ways peculiar to the Uganda digital era which is due to the fact that only the new creators or legitimate sources can guarantee security in these periods of information overload.

The idea of gatekeeping in media was created from communication studies in the mid-1900s. It is the method of the media professionals who have to go through the process where media information is filtered and controlled before it is released to the public. The theory suggests that journalists, editors and media organizations act as gatekeepers who decide which information is important enough to be published or broadcasted and in what manner. The concept of 'gatekeeping' was first known when a social psychologist Kurt Lewin first instituted the gate keeping theory in 1943. According to Kurt Lewin, gate keeping occurs at all levels of the media structure from a reporter deciding which sources are presented in a headline story to editors choosing which stories are printed or covered. Hence, the theory has not only gotten broader but can now be applied to various communication forms.

Television and print were the most noticeable impacts in the 20th century, while platforms like digital and social media have gained ground in the 21st century with

the proliferation of individual users, but also with the use of algorithms, moderators through which users are able to interact, create and communicate content. The gatekeeping theory, therefore, remains true to the issue of how information flows through all kinds of media platforms and its consequences on society.

Gatekeeping theory in media is based upon certain fundamental assumptions which give the explanation of the information how the information is filtered and disseminated through media channels:

Originally gatekeepers direct the flow of information, the theory implies that media organizations' individuals or groups being the ones that have the control as well as the ability to decide what is disseminated. They serve as gatekeepers who filter out which news stories to cover, how much to emphasize them, and which details to give or leave out.

News filtering that is done by gatekeepers is based on news values, the theory assumes that gatekeepers are the ones who make decisions that are based on news values that have been determined such as timeliness, proximity, prominence, human interest, and conflict. Gatekeepers will look at a list of chosen stories that they believe are of high relevance and might appeal to the audience thereby their news values.

Theory of the impact on public opinion, in such a case, the theory hopes that gatekeepers' decisions are the key causes of the public's reaction and perception of how things really are. Gatekeepers methodically set the agenda by urging for positive or negative policies and by changing the ways information gets delivered to their target groups.

As the online information is everywhere nowadays and people get it mainly through the digital media and social platforms the theory has grown to encompass a larger set of gatekeepers, which include algorithms, social media influencers, and individual users who curate content. These digital gatekeepers regulate the content which is given priority, which is promoted, and which one is being suppressed in the online platforms.

Gatekeeping theory is one of the areas that considers the possibility of bias and influence, meanwhile it implies that bias in the information media comes out of the non-evidence-based judgments by the decision-making personnel. This bias is made up of personal likes and dislikes, departmental structures, political pressures, economic profits and cultural behavior and norms.

Certainly, those starting assumptions, of the gatekeeping theory, offer a garniture for the understanding of the nature Nexus of this phenomenon, the adaptation of the media channels, the filtration of the information, and the project of these processes for the public discussion, and opinion making.

Gatekeeping theory is also a part of exploration of the impact of disseminating false information in Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEBC) through technological evolution in the communication sector in the country as illuminated in this case.

The principle of media gatekeeping, however, claims that the staff, among them UNEBC in administration and in communication, are the main actors in misinforming the public. The truth is that, in the digital age, people are able to communicate pieces of information through social media and the internet, thus the

gatekeepers have to be vigilant on the issue of misinformation.

As for the managing of information flow, UNEB's gatekeepers, including the communication officers, are the ones responsible for making the information public according to the examination results, policies, and other significant updates. They choose what is to be published, how it should be articulated, and by which way it is transmitted. This administration is beneficial for the protection of sensitive data and preventing it from being leaked unlawfully.

Gatekeeping can be defined as a tool that impacts the public's view of an issue through what is important, that is, setting an agenda and the perception of meaning, that are framing. At UNEB, the communication drives can lead to how society sees the institution as genuinely and openly provides the organization examination which are the main criteria for determining its credibility, transparency, and reliability. When implemented rightly, the gatekeeping strategy that is effective should not only minimize the damage caused by the misinformation thrown to the public that it would ruin the reputation of UNEB.

In the wake of exposure to worldwide news, where social media and online news sites are now the new media platforms in Uganda, gatekeepers of UNEB will need to adjust their stratagems by using these platforms more efficiently while curbing wrong information. The establishment of new media and its general use for gatekeeping is now a notable part of the communication tactic that the agency needs to do. To do so, the employees of UNEB shall have to be wished to operate in the sphere that is digitized by dealing with situations like algorithms, user-generated content, and that

information is just necessarily fast.

The theory of gatekeeping brings out the role that ethical communication responsibilities of the employees at UNEB in the information age. They need to wear many hats at the same time the first being that they have to be the ones who are supposed to be the ones that are open with all information safe and secure as well as be the public's advocates for honest and timely information.

To sum up, the utilization of gatekeeping theory in the research of media's impact on communication at UNEB in Uganda can be presented and understood by learning about the way information is controlled, distributed, and filtered to deal with the problems like misinformation and confidentiality in the era of digitization in Uganda. It provides a model for studying the roles and duties of gatekeepers in ensuring that communication works and is efficient even where the media environment keeps evolving.

5.Gaps, challenges and opportunities.

Despite the extensive research on new media and misinformation in broader contexts, there is a notable gap in the literature concerning specific implications for UNEB on misinformation and confidentiality in Uganda. Further investigation is needed to understand how new media platforms are utilized for communication within UNEB, the prevalence and impact of misinformation on examination processes and the effectiveness and efficiency of existing strategies for addressing misinformation and maintaining confidentiality.

Despite the utilization of new media having come along with very many advantages, it has also dragged along many various pitfalls. UNEB is highly exposed to the dangers and consequences of the spread of misinformation and battling them while still trying to maintain confidentiality which is the most important core value of UNEB in this digital era in Uganda.

Additionally, while theoretical frameworks provide valuable insights into the dynamics of new media communication, their application to the specific context of UNEB requires further exploration. Integrating theoretical perspectives with empirical research can enhance our understanding of the complex interplay between new media, communication practices and institutional governance within UNEB.

CHAPTER THREE:

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter shows the research method that is going to be used to collect the answers for the research problem and also gathering answers to the research questions. It includes the research design, methods, sampling, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the influence of new media on communication at UNEB, focusing on addressing misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era in Uganda. Qualitative methods are chosen because they allow for an in-depth understanding of the perceptions, experiences and behaviors of individuals within their social contexts (Creswell, 2013).

Research Approach.

The study adopts a phenomenological approach to investigate how individuals experience and make sense of communication practices influenced by new media technologies at UNEB. Phenomenology is appropriate as it seeks to uncover the essence of lived experiences and understandings (Creswell, 2013).

Participants

The sampling strategy is used where participants will be purposively sampled to ensure relevance and diversity of perspectives. Key stakeholders such as

administrative staff of UNEB, public relations (communications) department at UNEB and ICT and reprographics staff members at UNEB.

Sample Size.

Approximately 5-8 participants will be recruited initially, with the possibility of additional participants if data saturation is not achieved (Guest et al., 2006).

Data Collection Methods.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to gather rich, detailed accounts of participants' experiences and perspectives regarding the influence of new media on communication practices at UNEB. This method allows flexibility to explore emergent themes while maintaining a focus on predefined research questions (Kvale, 2007).

Data Analysis.

Data collected from interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis. This method involves identifying patterns and themes within the data, coding transcripts and interpreting the underlying meanings to address the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To ensure the thoroughness and trustworthiness of findings, measures such as member checking, peer debriefing and maintaining an audit trail of analytical decisions will be implemented (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Considerations.

Prior to data collection, participants will receive detailed information about the study objectives, procedures, potential risks and benefits. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, emphasizing voluntary participation and confidentiality.

Participants' confidentiality and anonymity will be strictly maintained throughout the study. All data will be securely stored and identifiable information will be removed during analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Presentation and Analysis of data.

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study.

Response rate.

The target response rate was 5-8 respondents. Out of the 8 only 5 were able to respond which is 62.5% and was deemed appropriate enough for the research to continue.

Responses

The adoption of new media platforms (social media and online portals) and how these have changed communication practices within UNEB.

Online portals allow schools to register candidates and submit assessment results directly, streamlining processes and reducing administrative delays as one administrator noted:

“It has eased communication and operations. Registration of candidates, and feeding in of continuous assessment results is done locally by the school on the online portals and the information reaches UNEB. There is no longer need to travel long distances to be served by UNEB as most of the services can be done online. Answers to the frequently asked questions (FAQs) are put on the website to ease access to the general public”. **Respondent one (administrator)**

Mass information dissemination has been enabled expressed respondent two:

“The adoption of new media platforms has ensured efficiency and effectiveness in information dissemination. Information can be disseminated to a larger audience quickly, extending UNEB’s reach beyond its immediate geographic boundaries. Social media and online portals facilitate instant communication between UNEB and its stakeholders reducing the time lag associated with traditional methods.”

Respondent two (administrator)

Respondent three (Public Relation Department staff) said that,

“The adoption of new media platforms has significantly diversified communication channels at UNEB, enabling quicker dissemination of information to a broader audience. Instead of inviting people to the office who end up crowding making it difficult and time consuming to assist them, they now get information from the portal which is much easier.”

“The adoption of new media platforms has revolutionized communication practices at UNEB, allowing for faster dissemination of information to stakeholders. Social media platforms have enabled more interactive and engaging communication, allowing for two-way communication between UNEB and its stakeholders,” Justified

Respondent four (public relations department staff in charge of social media)

“New media has significantly enhanced UNEB’s external communication strategies, fostering greater transparency and engagement with stakeholders and the public at large. Online portals provide a centralized location for important information,

making it easier for users to access updates, announcements and resources,”
remarked **Respondent five (ICT and reprographics department staff)**

The key benefits and challenges faced by UNEB in utilizing new media for internal and external communication.

At UNEB, digital communication reduces the need for physical travel to UNEB offices, saving time and transportation costs for schools and stakeholders. Moreover, information such as FAQs and important announcements can be easily accessed by the public on UNEB’s website, enhancing transparency and public engagement. The highlight of the digital experienced is real-time communication where the new media enables immediate communication between UNEB and educational institutions, ensuring timely dissemination of important information.

“Work is faster easier and smarter. There are less accuracy risks. There are less people doing so much work faster. It has increased public confidence in UNEB by eliminating room for bias and human error. It in favor of the cost benefit analysis, in a way that despite the fact that it is expensive to set up but cheaper in the long term”. **Respondent one (administrator)**

“While new media has eased internal communication, some information meant for a particular level of staff in UNEB ends up being known to many of the staff members which has necessitated discussing and keeping very confidential information in meetings, in person or sending sealed typed letters. Externally, it has eased UNEB public communications and engagement with the public. The challenges include

balancing openness with the need to protect sensitive information and combatting misinformation that can tarnish the institution's reputation,” Respondent two, another administrator said.

Respondent three (public relations department staff) retorted saying,
“Communication is so much efficient than it used to be, of which it was very tiring, time consuming and costly for both UNEB and stakeholders. The issue is now that new media has also increased the complexity of managing communication due to the speed and volume of interactions, information is spread faster and with ease but the fake news also spreads just as fast.”

Respondent four (public relations department staff in charge of social media) shared their thoughts saying, *“The key benefits include enhanced reach and engagement with stakeholders, improved transparency in information sharing and facilitated feedback mechanisms. However, it has also necessitated stricter monitoring to manage misinformation and uphold confidentiality standards. The challenges include managing misinformation, ensuring data privacy and maintaining consistent messaging across various platforms. There is also a digital divide where not all stakeholders have equal access to digital platforms therefore this makes them receive information later than others since they have to wait to access the information through traditional media.”*

Respondent five (ICT and reprographics department staff) explained that, *“New media platforms have improved the timeliness of receiving important announcements such as exam schedules and results. However, there are expressed concerns about*

misinformation spreading quickly, which can lead to confusion and anxiety among stakeholders especially the candidates expecting results to be released. Protecting sensitive information in a digital environment is also a challenge which requires constant monitoring, learning and advancement of software so as to better maintain the sensitive and private running of UNEB.”

Ways in which new media has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of information dissemination at UNEB.

In addition to improved efficiency, time and cost saving, digital platforms provide a more reliable and organized method for storing and retrieving data, reducing the risk of loss or damage associated with physical records. With information readily available online, new media promote greater transparency in UNEB’s operations, helping to build trust with the public, as this UNEB worker confirmed:

“It has reduced travel costs for stakeholders whose location is far from UNEB offices. It is much easier for UNEB to know in case any misinformation is being spread about UNEB in turn increasing spread of correct information. All information needed by stakeholders is put in the public by UNEB with ease if someone needs confirmation of registration of a candidate all they need to do is interact with the sitting center portal.” Respondent one (administrator)

Respondent two (administrator) vouched for the fact that, “New media has improved efficiency by enabling real-time updates on exam schedules, results and

administrative announcements. Effectiveness is enhanced through interactive communication that fosters engagement and responsiveness among stakeholders.”

“The aspect of timeliness is key which communication using the new media observes well. Information is shared promptly, ensuring stakeholders are kept up to date with minimal delay. Information is accessible to a wide audience, including those in remote areas, via the internet of which one no longer has to come to UNEB physically to get information because it is always there on the website, portal or on the UNEB social media platforms and updated as soon as anything changes,” authenticated

Respondent three (public relations department staff).

Respondent four (public relations department staff in charge of social media) **verified that,** *“If someone wants to know if UNEB has any new announcements or to confirm the authenticity of any information concerning UNEB that they have interacted with, all they have to do is check out the UNEB website.”*

Respondent five (ICT and reprographics department staff) attested that, *“New media has improved efficiency by allowing for instant updates and notifications, reducing the time lag in information dissemination. Platforms like online portals streamline the distribution of official documents and results, while social media enables UNEB to address queries and concerns promptly. Effectiveness has been enhanced through interactive features that engage users and provide immediate feedback, ensuring that information reaches and resonates with the intended audience.”*

Types of misinformation related to UNEB’s activities that are commonly spread through new media.

There are several types of misinformation related to UNEB’s activities are commonly spread through new media. misinformation and disinformation manifest in form of false examination dates, fake exam papers, wrong results, misleading announcements, fraudulent registration information rumors of system failures, fabricated statements from UNEB officials and many other forms and Respondent one confirmed:

“Leaked examinations. Assumptions on schools with cancelled results. Registration fees which are usually exaggerated by schools and days for results release.” Respondent one (administrator)

“False exam leakage rumors and inaccurate grading criteria, Misleading information about administrative decisions. Misrepresented statements attributed to UNEB officials. Misleading information about the cost of exams or payment processes,”
acknowledged **Respondent two (administrator)**.

Respondent three a public relations department staff reacted saying, “Fake leaked examination papers. Wrong information about the examinations time table spreading. Misinformation regarding UNEB policies, procedures or changes to the education system. Fraudulent individuals offering guaranteed passes or insider information.”

“Misinformation commonly spread through new media includes rumors about exam leaks, misleading information about grading system and fake announcements of examination results release. Misinformation surrounding withheld results of candidates/ schools by UNEB,” Aforementioned **Respondent four (public relations department staff in charge of social media)**

“Fraudulent messages or websites pretending to be affiliated with UNEB to extract money from unsuspecting individuals. Incorrect information about the release or contents of exam results. Circulation of fake examination papers claiming to be official but leaked by an insider,” Outlined **Respondent five (ICT and reprographics department staff)**

Roles played by UNEB's official social media channels in correcting false information.

“Utilizing the channels to answer FAQs to give correct information and tackle misinformation. New FAQs are updated onto the website regularly. Press releases are posted to tackle any serious damaging information that may have emerged. Press conferences are held to address misinformation.” **Respondent one (administrator)**

Respondent two an administrator expressed that, *“UNEB's official social media channels serve as crucial platforms for debunking misinformation by promptly sharing accurate information, issuing clarifications and directing stakeholders to reliable sources such as the official website, social media platforms or directly contacting UNEB.”*

Respondent three (public relations department staff) stated that, “Social media channels enable monitoring and reporting any suspicious activity being leaked to UNEB. Actively monitoring social media for misinformation ensures that the necessary steps are taken in time to debunk the misinformation and have the false content removed. They also enable sharing updates and corrections through verified channels to counteract misinformation.”

“Social media platforms ensure issuing official statements and updates to preempt misinformation in time while also responding to queries and addressing concerns directly. Therefore, in cases of misinformation UNEB comes out and addresses it online its social media platforms and in the traditional media.” said **Respondent four (public relations department staff in charge of social media)**

Respondent five (ICT and reprographics department staff) confirmed that “Social media channels make keeping track of misinformation and responding proactively to prevent its spread much easier. They also provide an official base for the UNEB stakeholders to fact check and get clarity on any information that they may have interacted with concerning UNEB activities. UNEB also gets to quickly address and correct false information by providing accurate details.”

How aware are UNEB staff of the measures taken to maintain confidentiality in the digital era?

“Yes, they are made aware. Through the orientation and trainings, code of conduct, company policies and the oath of secrecy that is signed by staff and has serious legal implications, staff know to maintain confidentiality when it

comes to handling UNEB information. Constant seminars are held on upholding confidentiality.” Respondent one (administrator)

Respondent two an administrator stated that, *“While UNEB staff generally recognize the importance of confidentiality measures, awareness varies among different departments and personnel levels. Training programs and internal communications initiatives are done to ensure effectiveness in enhancing awareness and adherence to the confidentiality protocols of UNEB.”*

Respondent three, a public relations department staff said, *“Clear policies and guidelines on data protection and confidentiality are distributed to staff and anyone working with UNEB. There are regular training sessions for various departments and clear briefing on handling any sensitive and confidential information on digital security and privacy practices. Staff are informed about new threats and updated security protocols through internal communication channels.”*

Respondent four (public relations department staff in charge of social media) responded saying, *“UNEB staff are very much aware of the kind of work they do and the environment in which to discuss work matters. Confidentiality and discretion is key and very important and this is something all staff members know and understand well.”*

“Staff awareness of measures to maintain confidentiality in the digital era varies. While there are policies in place, ongoing training and awareness campaigns are

necessary to ensure compliance and mitigate risks associated with data breaches and unauthorized access,” said respondent five (ICT and reprographics department staff)

Analysis

The data collected from the various respondents within UNEB clearly indicates that new media platforms have radically changed the communication practices of UNEB while addressing misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era in Uganda. Below is an analysis of the main findings.

1. Changes in communication practices.

In terms of efficiency, new media has facilitated ways of communication by avoiding physical movements and promoting information dissemination faster and to large numbers of the target population.

In terms of accessibility, it is easier give information to all the stakeholders while reducing traveling costs and facilitates remote stakeholders to stay connected with what's happening.

Key Points.

For internal communication, efficiency and effectiveness increase with instant communication and reduced time lags. For external communication, there is better reach out with real time updates of information leading to improved stakeholder engagement.

2. Benefits and challenges.

Benefits:

There is speed and efficiency. Communication is quicker, brainier and error-free, with less human fallibility and reduced bias.

There is increased public confidence. Transparency and efficiency improved a lot of the citizens' confidence in UNEB.

In the long term, there is cost benefit. Although expensive to set up, operational costs in the long run are reduced.

Challenges:

Maintenance costs are huge. Investment in maintenance, expertise and upscaling of technology as respondent one (administrator) stated that, *“The challenges include, a lot of funding goes into maintenance, investing in expertise, improving and upgrading the technology to match the fast evolving technology.”*

There is a lot of misinformation being spread in the public every now and then, Fake news and misinterpreted information spreads so fast, which may damage the credibility of UNEB as respondent three (public relations staff) said, *“The issue is now that new media has also increased the complexity of managing communication due to the speed and volume of interactions, information is spread faster and with ease but the fake news also spreads just as fast”*

Cyber security is also an issue. There is a heightened risk of cyberattacks therefore stringent measures shall be implemented to guard against this. *“There are many cyber risks that come with utilizing the internet for communications both internally and externally.”* Informed respondent one an administrator.

There is a digital divide. Not all stakeholders are at par with digital platforms therefore information may be received later than others. *“Social media and online portals facilitate instant communication between UNEB and its stakeholders reducing the time lag associated with traditional methods.”* Respondent one (administrator) insinuating that stakeholders who rely on traditional media receive information later than those who rely on new media platforms and get it instantly.

3. How efficient and effective has the information dissemination been?

Improvements:

There are real-time updates for example information of changes in the examination schedule, results and other occurrences as soon as it happens as respondent two (administrator) said, *“New media has improved efficiency by enabling real-time updates on exam schedules, results and administrative announcements.”*

There is easier accessibility to information. Information is found on online portals and social media, hence eliminating the need for physical visits to UNEB offices. *“The adoption of new media platforms has ensured efficiency and effectiveness in information dissemination. Information can be disseminated to a larger audience*

quickly, extending UNEB's reach beyond its immediate geographic boundaries," Said respondent two (administrator)

There is more engagement. This interactive communication promotes better engagement and responsiveness among stakeholders. *"The key benefits include enhanced reach and engagement with stakeholders, improved transparency in information sharing and facilitated feedback mechanisms."* Stated respondent four (public relations staff for social media)

4. Common misinformation.

Exam Leak false rumors implying that some examination papers have leaked. *"Circulation of fake examination papers claiming to be official but leaked by an insider."* Respondent five (ICT and reprographics department staff)

Wrong information on grading scales. *"False exam leakage rumors and inaccurate grading criteria."* Respondent two (administrator)

Wrong suppositions on schools whose results have been cancelled. *"Misinformation surrounding withheld results of candidates/ schools by UNEB."* Respondent four (public relations department staff in charge of social media)

High, overblown registration fees by some schools which aren't the fees charged by UNEB. *"Registration fees which are usually exaggerated by schools..."* Stated respondent one, an administrator.

5. Social Media Role in the Correction of Misinformation

Through the UNEB official channels, UNEB uses its social media platforms to correct the misinformation, clarify and advise stakeholders on where correct information can be obtained. *“UNEB also gets to quickly address and correct false information by providing accurate details.”* Respondent five (ICT and reprographics department staff)

Through proactive monitoring, the scanning of social media for incorrect information and addressing it. *“...it has also necessitated stricter monitoring to manage misinformation and uphold confidentiality standards.”* Respondent four (public relations department staff in charge of social media)

Through press releases and conferences, statements and updates are released on a timely basis to pre-empt and correct misinformation. *“Press releases are posted to tackle any serious damaging information that may have emerged. Press conferences are held to address misinformation.”* Respondent one (administrator) stated.

6. Staff awareness on confidentiality

There is training and orientation. Regular training sessions, orientation and seminars on confidentiality and data protection. *“Clear policies and guidelines on data protection and confidentiality are distributed to staff and anyone working with UNEB. There are regular training sessions for various departments and clear briefing on handling any sensitive and confidential information on digital security and privacy practices. Staff are informed about new threats and updated security protocols through internal communication channels.”* Stated respondent three (public relations staff)

There are policies and guidelines. Clearly laid down policies, code of conduct and legal implications through the oath of secrecy. *“Through the orientation and trainings, code of conduct, company policies and the oath of secrecy that is signed by staff and has serious legal implications, staff know to maintain confidentiality when it comes to handling UNEB information.”* Respondent one (administrator).

There is continuous internal communication on confidentiality. Reminder campaigns to achieve awareness among staff in following confidentiality guidelines. *“Training programs and internal communications initiatives are done to ensure effectiveness in enhancing awareness and adherence to the confidentiality protocols of UNEB.”* Said respondent two (administrator).

CHAPTER FIVE:

Discussion of results.

Introduction

This chapter is going to focus on the discussion of the findings using the information from the findings according to the research objectives guiding it all back to exploring the influence of new media on communication at UNEB while addressing misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era in Uganda.

The gatekeepers at UNEB include the UNEB top administration most importantly the Executive Director, the public relations (communications) department staff and the ICT and reprographics department staff.

Objective 1: To examine the role of new media in shaping communication practices at UNEB.

Improvement in communication and operations.

The first respondent claimed that with innovations in new media, like social media and online portals, communication and operations at UNEB had been greatly facilitated. For instance, the registration of candidates and results of continuous assessment are submitted online, eliminating the need to visit the UNEB offices physically. This points to a heavy reliance on digital communication practices as a way of improving efficiency.

"The new media ensures that there is efficient and effective coverage and penetration of information. Hence it enables UNEB to reach many people quickly and eliminates

the time lag challenge that characterizes traditional method of communication, "observed respondent two.

Broader Reach and Interactivity.

"Social media has revolutionized communication at UNEB because it facilitates interactive communication that promotes engagement in ways that foster two way communications between UNEB and its stakeholders, " observed respondent four.

This fifth respondent was of the view that new media has indeed enhanced UNEB's external communication strategies in easily placing information in the public domain more transparently and interactively.

Cost and Time Efficiency.

The third respondent indicated that it is far easy, less tiring, time consuming, and costly for both UNEB and its stakeholders to communicate. This change, therefore, directly reflects the cost and time advantages brought forth by the new media platforms.

Objective 2: To explore confidentiality concerns arising from digital communication channels especially misinformation.

Confidentiality measures and training.

Respondent one revealed that UNEB staff is sensitized to confidentiality measures through induction, training, company policies, and an oath of secrecy, and further added that there are frequent seminars to uphold confidentiality.

While respondent two acknowledged that UNEB staff generally appreciate the need to handle information with confidentiality, he also recognized that in reality, awareness on the same is not uniform across board and continuous training programs aided by effective internal communications initiatives should always be implemented.

As such, respondent five commented that staff awareness of confidentiality measures varies, which definitely calls for continuous training and awareness campaigns to ensure compliance and minimize the risks associated with data breaches.

Challenges with new media.

The challenges shared by the first respondent were on the high cost of maintenance, expertise and upgrade in technology to compete with the rapidly changing digital environment. There is also a tug of mistrust and suspicion, especially from those stakeholders who want to physically verify the information. This creates unnecessary traffic to UNEB offices.

The fourth respondent shared the challenges of dealing with misinformation and ensuring data privacy is maintained through strict monitoring to observe standards of confidentiality.

Dealing with misinformation.

It is in light of this that the third respondent warned that new media easily fuels misinformation, making communication control a bit complicated. However, new media allows UNEB to track events and promptly respond in a way that assures the elimination of misinformation and the deletion of wrong information.

Field five observed that social media channels offer an easier way of tracking misinformation and responding to it proactively to avoid its viral spread. It provides an official base for stakeholders to fact-check and get clarity on the UNEB related information.

Objective 3: To assess the extent and nature of new media utilization for communication within the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB).

Internal and External Communications Advantages.

The second respondent put forward that new media has made internal communication easier while also pointing to the challenge of specific staff levels being known to many and, therefore, many issues that would be very confidential in nature having to be communicated through very secure means.

The key benefits that emanated from respondents four and five were; increased coverage and interactivity with stakeholders; transparency in information provision and feedback processes which are now relatively easy.

Efficient and effective information dissemination.

According to respondent one, new media has reduced the amount spent by stakeholders on travel and has enabled UNEB to easily identify and correct misinformation to the public, hence improving the dissemination of correct information.

According to respondent three, information shared through new media is timely, and stakeholders are updated with a little or no delays at all, and information made accessible to a wider area, even those in remote areas.

Problems and solutions.

One of the issues is balancing this openness with protecting sensitive information and combating misinformation, which can hurt UNEB's image, as pointed out by respondent two.

Therefore, there should be constant monitoring software to improve protecting sensitive information in the digital environment, as pointed out by respondent five, addressing fears on misinformation and its potential impact on stakeholders.

The adoption of new media platforms at UNEB has greatly changed the practices of communication, improving efficiency, effectiveness and engagement toward the stakeholders. Much as the shift brings challenges that relate to confidentiality and fast moving misinformation, UNEB has put in a number of measures to check the aforementioned challenges through continuous training of the staff, strict monitoring and proactive miscreation and management through the official social media platforms. Generally speaking, new media have positively influenced organizational communication at UNEB in so many aspects, for they are dynamic and responsive, trying to adapt to the continuous changes in the digital landscape.

CHAPTER SIX:

Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

The research on Exploring the Influence of New Media on Communication at UNEB, Addressing Misinformation and Confidentiality in the Digital Era in Uganda has provided a clear view of how new media has transformed organizational communication at UNEB. It is through the application of qualitative methods mainly in-depth interviews with key stakeholders and gatekeeping theory that one can fully comprehend these dynamics. This chapter of the research contains the remarks and recommendations and a conclusion for this research.

Key Findings.

Change in Communication Practices.

The acceptance of new media at UNEB has led to alteration of the way information is passed over making it cheaper, effective, efficient, easier and faster.

Challenges of Misinformation.

Misinformation expansion was found to be one of the biggest challenges. The circulation and spread of fake news through various social media platforms were highlighted by respondents. Stricter verification processes have become necessary as well as constant monitoring information flows.

Confidentiality Dilemmas.

Confidentiality of critical information especially in the digital era is still a major issue. This is because information can be shared very easily online thus presenting serious challenges and issues relating to the privacy and security of data in digital communications as noted by various respondents. The Uganda National Examination Board has had to use improved methods of encryption as well as establish strong digital security measures to protect confidential data.

Gatekeeping in the Digital Era.

The application of the gatekeeping theory highlights how the role of gatekeepers has changed with the new media. Traditional gatekeepers such editors and managers are now supplemented by algorithmic gatekeeping and user generated content curation. This transition means that how information is sieved and spread has been altered from how it originally was. When it comes to organizations, their top management and communications department usually serve as the gate keepers just like UNEB whose gatekeepers include the UNEB top administration most importantly the Executive Director, the public relations (communications) department staff and the ICT and reprographics department staff.

Implications for UNEB.

Policy and Strategy Advancement.

To do this, UNEB needs to make new media a focus through the development of comprehensive digital communication policies that are cognizant of both the

opportunities and challenges. These should include among others anti-misinformation measures, improved information verification approaches by investing in making all official media channels of UNEB verified as well as safeguarding confidentiality by constantly briefing staff in case of any currently spreading misinformation.

Capacity Building and Training.

Digital literacy training must be continuous and there is need to build capacity on cyber security for all the staff members. It would also involve tutoring stakeholders about such dangers associated with new media while arming them with tools that would aid them in navigating around it thus mitigating risks which come along with misinformation and breaches on confidentiality.

Technological Investments.

The communication infrastructure of UNEB can be beefed up if it invests in such advanced technological solutions like AI-driven detection tools to detect misinformation spreading about UNEB online partnered with a person to constantly monitor so as to tackle any misinformation as soon as it starts spreading making it easier to locate the source and even take legal action.

Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms.

Other than allowing brief stakeholder engagement through new media platforms, UNEB could pick interest in some of the information being availed to them by the people so as to easily locate the problems and rectify them so as to facilitate transparency, fairness, openness, accountability and trust. Such feedback mechanisms

allow stakeholders to report misinformation or suggest changes can make communication strategies more effective.

Contribution to Literature.

This research contributes to the broader academic discourse by providing empirical evidence from a developing country context, Uganda. It accentuates the nuanced ways in which new media influences communication within educational institutions, highlighting both the potentials and perils. Furthermore, it enriches the application of gatekeeping theory by showcasing its relevance and adaptation in the digital era.

Recommendations for Future Research.

Comparative Studies.

Future research could undertake comparative studies between different institutions or countries to explore varying impacts and strategies in managing new media communication. Studies could also be carried out on similar examining bodies in Uganda even going as far as comparing them.

Longitudinal Studies.

Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how the influence of new media evolves over time and the long term effectiveness of implemented strategies.

Quantitative Approaches.

Incorporating quantitative methods alongside qualitative interviews could offer a more holistic understanding of the impact of new media on communication, providing statistical validation to the findings.

In conclusion, the impact of new media on UNEB communication is deep and multi-faceted, ranging from opportunities for enhanced engagement to challenges linked to misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era in Uganda. Through informed policy-making, strategic investments and continuous capacity-building, UNEB will be better placed to harness the full power of new media for communication while ensuring that its integrity and confidentiality are protected effectively and efficiently.

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APPENDICES

Participant consent form samples

Research Participant Consent Form

Study Title: *Exploring the influence of new media on communication at UNEB, addressing misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era in Uganda.*

Principal Investigator: *HANDEHE SHEENA NADINE*

Contact Information: *handehesheenanadine@gmail.com*

Purpose of the Study:

To explore the influence of new media on communication at UNEB as well as address misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era in Uganda.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer a few questions on the subject. This will take approximately 10 minutes.

Confidentiality:

Your privacy is important and a priority. Your identity will be protected by not using your name. Instead, a collective category where the participant belongs will be used. All data will be stored securely and only I the researcher will have access to it and only use the information needed.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Questions:

If you have any questions about the study, feel free to contact me at *handehesheenanadine@gmail.com*.

Consent Statement:

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that my identity will be protected. I consent to participate in this study.

Participant's collective category: ADMINISTRATOR

Signature: 

Date: 20/06/24

Research Participant Consent Form

Study Title: *Exploring the influence of new media on communication at UNEB, addressing misinformation and confidentiality in the digital era in Uganda.*

Principal Investigator: *HANDEHE SHEENA NADINE*

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Voluntary Participation:

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

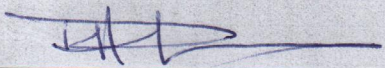
Questions:

If you have any questions about the study, feel free to contact me at *handehesheenanadine@gmail.com*.

Consent Statement:

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that my identity will be protected. I consent to participate in this study.

Participant's collective category: PUBLIC RELATIONS STAFF

Signature: 

Date: 20/06/24