

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT ON GENDER STEREOTYPES  
AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM MEDIA AND  
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COMMUNICATION OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

**February, 2026**



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
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**DECLARATION**

I, Kalikulali Gift Nangonde, declare that this is my original work to the best of my knowledge, this work has not been submitted or published for any other certificate, diploma, or degree at any other institution or university, nor has it been used for any other purpose before.


Sign.....Date.....

GIFT KALIKULALI NANGONDE

## APPROVAL

The student, Gift Kalikulali Nangonde's dissertation report is original, not published or presented to any other institution for any award.

I hereby give my approval that this dissertation to be submitted to the school of Journalism, Media and Communication, Uganda Christian University (UCU)

Sign.....  ..... Date 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2026

SUPERVISOR.

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## **DEDICATION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

First and foremost, I give all glory and thanks to God Almighty for His endless love, guidance, and strength throughout this journey. Without His grace, this dissertation would not have been possible.

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving family: my father, Mr. Kalikulali Christopher, my mother, Mrs. Kalikulali Agnes, my brother, Kalikulali Grovas, my cousin, Kalikulali Elizabeth, and my sister, Kalikulali Gladys. I also dedicate it to Reverend Rodgers Kityo, who helped me in completing my report, and to my friends Felista Nshakimana and Nambatya Maria. I further dedicate it to everyone who has believed in me and supported me throughout my academic journey.

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored the influence of social media content on gender stereotypes among university students, focusing on first-year students in the School of Journalism, Media and Communication at Uganda Christian University (UCU). The research aimed to examine how social media shapes students' perceptions of gender roles, identify challenges that hinder the reduction of gender stereotypes, and propose recommendations for using social media to promote gender equality. The study employed a qualitative research approach, using structured and unstructured questionnaires and interviews. From a class of 27 students, a purposive sample of six participants was selected to provide in-depth insights relevant to the study objectives.

Findings revealed that social media has a notable impact on students' understanding of gender roles. While certain content reinforces traditional stereotypes, other content challenges these norms and promotes equality. Students also expressed that different forms of social media content influence individuals in varied ways depending on personal exposure and interpretation. Challenges identified included persistent gender stereotypes in online spaces, cultural expectations, and the lack of diverse representation.

The study concludes that although social media possesses strong potential to support positive change, its full influence in challenging gender stereotypes requires deliberate effort. It recommends the creation and promotion of content that highlights diverse gender roles, strengthens awareness, and encourages balanced narratives to support an inclusive and stereotype-free media environment for students.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the study, the problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions, scope of the study, and the significance of the study.

In the contemporary digital age, social media has become a dominant platform for communication, information sharing, and social interaction, particularly among university students. While it offers unprecedented opportunities for learning, networking, and advocacy, social media also plays a critical role in shaping perceptions of gender and influencing societal attitudes towards men and women. Across various platforms, content often reflects and perpetuates gender stereotypes, portraying men and women in traditional or biased roles that reinforce existing societal norms. Such portrayals can significantly influence the beliefs and behaviors of young audiences, particularly university students who are at a formative stage of personal and professional development.

The growing prevalence of social media has prompted concerns about its potential to entrench gender inequality by normalizing biased representations or unrealistic expectations. University students, as active users of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, are particularly vulnerable to internalizing these stereotypes, which may affect their perceptions of self, their interactions with peers, and their understanding of gender roles in broader society.

This study seeks to critically examine the influence of social media content on gender stereotypes among university students, with a focus on first-year Journalism students at Uganda Christian University. It aims to understand how repeated exposure to specific social media messages and imagery may shape students' views of gender, and to identify strategies for promoting digital literacy and critical engagement with online content to challenge stereotypical portrayals. By exploring the interplay between social media and gender perceptions, this study contributes to the broader discourse on media influence, gender equality, and youth empowerment in Uganda.

## **1.1 Background**

In the contemporary digital era, social media has become one of the most pervasive and influential forms of communication, shaping the thoughts, behaviors, and perceptions of millions of users worldwide. Unlike traditional media, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok allow for instantaneous sharing of content, including images, videos, posts, and discussions that can influence public opinion and social norms. Among university students, who are highly active social media users, these platforms serve as primary sources of information, entertainment, and social interaction, making them particularly vulnerable to the influence of online content.

One critical area of concern is the portrayal of gender roles and the perpetuation of stereotypes on social media. Research shows that repeated exposure to content reinforcing traditional gender norms such as men depicted as leaders and decision-makers and women portrayed as caregivers or objects of beauty can significantly shape users' perceptions and attitudes toward gender (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015). These portrayals not only influence personal beliefs but also impact students' academic choices, career aspirations, and social relationships.

While social media has the potential to challenge traditional stereotypes and promote gender equality through awareness campaigns, educational content, and advocacy, biased and stereotypical content remains widespread. Limited digital literacy among students exacerbates the problem, reducing their capacity to critically analyze or question the messages they consume online. Furthermore, the sheer volume and virality of social media content make it difficult for positive or corrective narratives to have a significant impact.

Despite these challenges, social media offers opportunities for empowerment and inclusion. Platforms can provide spaces for dialogue, advocacy, and exposure to diverse perspectives that challenge entrenched norms and encourage critical thinking. Some initiatives, including gender-sensitive campaigns and educational programs, have been implemented to raise awareness and promote equality. However, these efforts are often small-scale and limited in reach compared to the vast amount of mainstream content consumed daily by university students.

Given the growing reliance on social media as a primary source of information and interaction, it is imperative to understand its influence on gender stereotypes among university students. This study, therefore, seeks to explore how social media content shapes students' perceptions of gender roles, the challenges posed by biased online portrayals, and the role of digital literacy in fostering critical engagement and promoting gender equality. By examining these dynamics, the study contributes to the broader discourse on media influence, gender representation, and youth empowerment in Uganda, offering insights that could inform policy, education, and advocacy strategies in the digital age.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

In Uganda, social media has become one of the most widely used platforms for communication, information sharing, and social interaction, especially among university students. According to the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC, 2020), over 70% of university students actively engage with social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. While these platforms offer opportunities for learning, networking, and advocacy, they have also become spaces where gender stereotypes are reinforced, shaping young people's perceptions of men and women.

Research shows that stereotypical portrayals of gender online such as men depicted as leaders and women as caregivers or objects of beauty can influence attitudes, behaviors, and career choices among youth (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015). Despite Uganda's commitment to gender equality under the 1995 Constitution, which promotes equal opportunities for men and women, biased representations continue to persist in digital spaces. First-year university students, including those at Uganda Christian University (UCU) in 2023–2024, are particularly exposed to content that normalizes inequality, restricts the understanding of gender roles, and perpetuates harmful stereotypes.

Although some initiatives, such as gender-focused social media campaigns and educational programs, have sought to promote equality, their impact remains limited due to the volume of stereotypical content and low levels of media literacy among students. This situation raises concerns about the long-term effects of social media on students' perceptions of gender and their capacity to engage critically with digital content.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the influence of social media content on gender stereotypes among university students at UCU, examining how online content shapes gender perceptions, the challenges students face in navigating biased material, and strategies to promote critical engagement and digital literacy. The findings aim to provide insights that can guide education, advocacy, and policy interventions to reduce gender bias and foster inclusive online environments in Uganda.

### **1.3 General purpose of the study**

The main purpose of this study is to examine the influence of social media content on gender stereotypes among university students, with specific focus on Uganda Christian University. In recent years, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and YouTube have become major sources of information and entertainment for young people, significantly shaping their perceptions, attitudes, and social interactions.

This study seeks to understand how the content shared and consumed on these platforms contributes to the formation or reinforcement of gender stereotypes among students. It further aims to explore whether social media acts as a tool for promoting gender equality or as a space that perpetuates biased and stereotypical representations of men and women.

By analyzing the experiences and perceptions of first-year Journalism students at Uganda Christian University in 2025, the study intends to provide insights into the extent to which social media influences their understanding of gender roles. Ultimately, the research seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions about digital media literacy, gender sensitivity, and the creation of more inclusive online spaces within higher learning institutions in Uganda.

### **1.4 Research Objectives of the study**

1. To examine the influence of social media content on gender stereotypes among university students at Uganda Christian University.
2. To identify the challenges that contributes to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes on social media among university students.

3. To provide recommendations for reducing gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality through responsible social media use among university students.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. How does social media content influence gender stereotypes among university students?
2. What types of social media content contribute to the formation of gender stereotypes among university students?
3. What strategies can be recommended to reduce the negative influence of social media content on gender stereotypes among university students?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study is intended to find out how social media content influences gender stereotypes among university students. It will help to identify the challenges that arise from the use of social media and how these challenges contribute to the formation of gender stereotypes.

The study will also provide useful information on how social media platforms can be used positively to promote gender equality and reduce stereotypes. In addition, the findings will help communication students, media practitioners, and policymakers to develop strategies that encourage responsible use of social media among young people.

### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

#### **1.7.1 Geographical Scope**

This study was conducted among university students in Kampala District. The area was chosen because it has many universities with students who actively use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X (Twitter). These platforms were selected because they are widely used by students and often contain content that can influence their views on gender roles and stereotypes.

### **1.7.2 Content Scope**

The study focuses on the influence of social media content on gender stereotypes among university students. It examines how the messages, images, and videos shared online shape students' attitudes toward men and women. The study also explores how social media can be used positively to promote gender equality and challenge harmful stereotypes.

### **1.7.3 Time Scope**

The research covers the period between 2020 and 2025, when the use of social media among university students has rapidly increased, making it an important area for study.

### **1.8 Justification of the Research**

This research is important because it addresses the gap between the challenges and possible solutions related to how social media content influences gender stereotypes among university students. It seeks to understand the effects of the messages shared on social media and how they shape students' attitudes toward gender roles.

The study is also significant because it aims to generate practical solutions that can help reduce negative gender stereotypes and promote equality among young people. The findings will be useful to educators, media practitioners, and policymakers in designing strategies that encourage responsible and positive use of social media.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Social media has become a major source of information, communication, and entertainment for university students. It shapes the way students think, interact, and understand social issues, including gender roles. While social media can reinforce traditional stereotypes by showing women and men in certain roles, it can also challenge these norms by presenting diverse and empowering stories.

This chapter examines how social media content, particularly documentaries and short films, influences gender stereotypes among university students. It explores the ways students perceive gender roles, the impact of traditional cultural beliefs, and how exposure to modern media can promote critical thinking and gender equality.

#### **2.2 Impact of Social Media Content on Gender Stereotypes among University Students**

Social media has a strong influence on how university students perceive gender roles. The content they see posts, videos, memes, and advertisements can either reinforce traditional gender stereotypes or challenge them. For example, repeated exposure to images showing women only in domestic roles or men only in leadership positions may strengthen these stereotypes.

On the other hand, social media can also empower students by promoting messages of equality, diversity, and inclusion. Content highlighting women in leadership, men in caregiving roles, or breaking traditional norms can help students question and rethink stereotypes.

University students are particularly sensitive to social media because they spend a lot of time online and often look to it for social cues. Therefore, the type of content they engage with significantly affects their attitudes and beliefs about gender roles, shaping how they behave in their personal and social lives.

### **2.3 The Impact of Social Media Documentaries on Gender Stereotypes among University Students**

The evolution of documentary filmmaking from traditional television formats to digital platforms has significantly influenced how gender stereotypes are portrayed and challenged. While early documentaries like *Miss Representation* (2011) and *The Mask You Live In* (2015) highlighted the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of women and men in media, respectively, the advent of social media has democratized this storytelling. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok now host a plethora of user-generated documentaries that directly engage university students. These digital documentaries often present real-life stories and discussions that resonate with younger audiences, making complex issues more accessible and relatable. Research indicates that exposure to such content can influence students' perceptions of gender roles, potentially challenging traditional stereotypes and promoting a more inclusive understanding of gender identity and expression.

### **2.4 The Nature of Broadcast Media on Gender Stereotypes among University Students**

Broadcast media, including television, radio, and social media platforms, plays a major role in shaping how university students perceive gender roles. It not only delivers information but also influences attitudes through content such as news, documentaries, talk shows, and short videos. Social media, as a form of modern broadcast media, allows students to access diverse perspectives, interact with content, and share opinions. By highlighting stories that challenge traditional gender roles such as women in leadership or men in caregiving broadcast media can help reduce stereotypes and promote gender equality among students.

The interactive and wide-reaching nature of broadcast media makes it a powerful tool for influencing beliefs, encouraging critical thinking, and shaping positive attitudes toward gender roles in academic and social settings.

### **2.5 Effects of Primitive Culture on Gender Stereotypes among University Students**

Primitive or traditional cultural beliefs often shape how gender roles are viewed, influencing students' perceptions of men and women. Practices that favor men in leadership or restrict women to domestic roles can reinforce stereotypes and limit women's participation in public and academic life.

University students, even while exposed to modern ideas through social media, may still be influenced by these cultural norms, which affect their attitudes and behavior toward gender equality. Social media content that challenges these traditional beliefs by showing women in leadership, men in caregiving roles, or other non-traditional examples can help students question stereotypes and promote a more inclusive understanding of gender roles.

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

This study is guided by the Uses and Gratifications Theory. The theory suggests that individuals actively use media to satisfy specific needs and motivations, such as information, entertainment, social interaction, and personal identity. It explains that media consumers are not passive but make conscious choices based on what they want to gain from the content they consume.

In relation to this study, the theory helps to explain how university students use social media platforms to fulfill their personal and social needs. It also shows how the type of content they choose to engage with can influence their perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes. The Uses and Gratifications Theory therefore provides a framework for understanding the relationship between social media consumption and the development or reinforcement of gender stereotypes among university students.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Social media documentaries and content have a significant impact on university students' perceptions of gender roles. While traditional cultural beliefs and stereotypes continue to influence attitudes, exposure to social media content that challenges these norms encourages critical thinking and promotes gender equality. By highlighting diverse experiences and non-traditional roles, social media serves as a powerful tool for reshaping students' understanding of gender and empowering both women and men to participate more equally in academic and social life.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodology used in the study on the impact of social media content on gender stereotypes among university students. It describes the research design, study area, population and sample, data collection methods and instruments, data analysis and processing techniques, as well as the limitations of the study. The methodology ensures that the study is conducted systematically and that the findings are reliable and valid.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a descriptive survey design, using both descriptive comparative and descriptive correlational strategies. Descriptive studies are non-experimental research approaches that examine and describe the characteristics, behaviors, or opinions of a specific group in this case, university students.

The descriptive comparative strategy allowed the study to compare perceptions of gender stereotypes among students based on factors such as age, gender, and academic level. The descriptive correlational strategy enabled the researcher to explore relationships between social media exposure and students' perceptions of gender roles. By asking multiple questions on the topic, the study provided flexibility in analysis and ensured that patterns, trends, and associations could be identified, making the results meaningful and statistically significant.

#### **3.2 Area of Study**

The study was conducted among university students in the central region of Uganda, particularly in Kampala, due to the high use of social media among this population. This area was suitable for the study because it provides access to students from different universities who actively engage with social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.

The study focused on students' exposure to social media content, particularly documentary-style videos and posts, to understand how such content influences perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes. In addition, data was also collected from online platforms and social media groups frequented by students to obtain sufficient and diverse information relevant to the research topic.

### **3.3 Area and Population of Study**

The study population comprised university students in the central region of Uganda, particularly those in Kampala, who actively use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. These students were selected because they are frequent consumers of social media content, including documentary-style posts that can influence perceptions of gender roles.

In addition to students, the study also considered social media content creators such as influencers, vloggers, and page administrators whose content shapes online discussions about gender. Existing records, posts, and online discussions were also analyzed to provide references and context for the research. The findings from this population were generalized to understand the broader impact of social media on gender stereotypes among university students.

### **3.4 Sampling Techniques and Population**

The study population consisted of university students who actively use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. A total of 6 participants were purposively selected for the study, as they are frequent consumers of social media content and are likely to provide relevant insights on gender stereotypes.

The random sampling technique was employed to allow participants to freely express their opinions and experiences regarding social media content and its influence on perceptions of gender roles. This approach ensured that each selected student had an equal chance of participating, providing diverse perspectives relevant to the research study.

### **3.5 Sample Procedure**

Stratified random sampling was employed to select respondents from different universities and social media user groups. The population was divided into categories based on factors such as gender, academic level, and frequency of social media use. This ensured that participants from different backgrounds and experiences were represented in the study.

Before data collection, the sampling procedure and instruments were pre-tested to ensure their effectiveness in gathering relevant information. The selected participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their consent was obtained before they were fully involved in providing data. This process helped ensure ethical standards were maintained while collecting accurate and reliable information about the impact of social media content on gender stereotypes among university students.

### **3.6 Variables Definitions and Measurements**

In this study, the dependent variable is gender stereotypes among university students, which reflects the students' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about gender roles as influenced by social media content. This variable was measured by examining students' responses to questions about their views on traditional and non-traditional gender roles.

The independent variable is social media content, specifically documentary-style posts, videos, and short films shared on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. This variable was measured by analyzing the type, frequency, and nature of content the students were exposed to and how it influenced their understanding of gender roles.

By linking the independent and dependent variables, the study aimed to determine how exposure to social media content affects university students' perceptions of gender stereotypes.

### **3.7 Methods of Data Collection**

The following data collection methods were used in this study.

#### **3.7.1 Questionnaires**

Structured questionnaires were administered to university students to gather information about their exposure to social media content and its influence on their perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes.

#### **3.7.2 Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students and social media content creators to obtain in-depth insights into how specific documentary-style content challenges or reinforces gender stereotypes.

### **3.7.3 Document Analysis**

Social media posts, videos, and short films relevant to gender representation were analyzed to complement primary data and provide context for the study.

### **3.7.4. Observation**

Researchers observed discussions and interactions in online social media groups and forums to understand how students engage with content that addresses gender roles.

## **3.8 Data Collection Instruments**

This study primarily relied on qualitative data collection methods to capture in-depth insights into the influence of social media content on gender perceptions among students. The main instruments included questionnaires, interviews, key informants, and observation checklists, all designed to collect rich, descriptive information.

Questionnaires were used with mostly open-ended questions, allowing respondents to express their views freely. This approach enabled the researcher to gather detailed opinions and perceptions in line with the research objectives.

Interviews were conducted to complement the questionnaires, using in-depth and partial formats. An interview guide ensured consistency while allowing respondents to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives, providing valuable qualitative insights.

Key informants, including reporters, program coordinators, and viewers, were also consulted. Their knowledge and experiences provided a broader understanding of the issues under study, contributing to the depth of the qualitative analysis.

Finally, observation checklists were used to systematically record behaviors and interactions related to social media engagement. Structured and unstructured observations helped to capture real-life contexts and examples that aligned with the research objectives.

Together, these instruments ensured the collection of comprehensive, descriptive data, which forms the basis for the qualitative analysis and interpretation in this study.

### **3.9 Quality/Error Control**

In this case I made sure that I have a continuous review of the methods and formats that I was using in my research in order to attain reasonable and justifiable views from my respondents during the period of my research study.

### **3.10 Data Processing and Analysis**

The processing of data was done to verify and ensure that the information collected from respondents was complete, clear, and consistent. This was achieved through editing, sorting, and cross-checking responses from questionnaires and interview guides to remove any errors or irrelevant information. This process helped to ensure that all questions were properly answered and that the data accurately represented the views of the respondents.

Data analysis was carried out according to the research objectives and questions. The collected information was categorized based on key themes such as gender representation, social media influence, and students' attitudes toward gender roles. Qualitative data obtained from interviews and open-ended questions were analyzed through content analysis, where common ideas and patterns were identified and interpreted. Quantitative data from structured questionnaires were summarized using simple statistical methods such as percentages and frequency tables.

The analyzed data were then presented in a descriptive form using tables, charts, and narrative summaries to clearly show how social media documentaries influence gender stereotypes among university students.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

All respondents were fully informed about the purpose of the study, which focused on examining the impact of social media documentaries on gender stereotypes among university students. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were given the freedom to agree or decline to take part.

Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were strictly maintained. No personal names or identifying information were disclosed in the final report. The principle of harm avoidance was also observed, ensuring that no emotional, psychological, or social harm came to any respondent during the data collection process.

The research was conducted with a high level of integrity, honesty, and respect for all participants. Data collected were used strictly for academic purposes and handled responsibly throughout the study process.

### **3.12 Methodological Constraints**

Since one of the methods used in this study was conducting interviews, it was challenging to reach some of the respondents on time. This was mainly because many university students had tight class schedules and personal commitments, which made it difficult to meet them physically. As a result, some of the interviews were conducted online through social media platforms and virtual meetings to allow flexibility and ensure wider participation.

Additionally, some respondents were hesitant to freely express their opinions on issues related to gender stereotypes, fearing judgment or misunderstanding. However, the researcher assured them of confidentiality, which helped to improve the quality and honesty of their responses.

#### **Advantages of Interviews**

The use of interviews in this study allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the context behind the participants' responses. Through the interview guide and supporting questionnaires, respondents were able to provide detailed information related to how social media documentaries shape their perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes.

In addition, conducting some interviews online made participants feel more comfortable and free to express their opinions without fear of judgment. This created an open and engaging environment, enabling the researcher to collect rich, honest, and relevant data that strengthened the overall findings of the study.

#### **Disadvantages of Interviews**

Some participants did not pay close attention to the kind of responses they provided, which affected the accuracy and depth of the information collected. Because many interviews were conducted online, it was difficult for the researcher to observe the physical gestures or emotions of the respondents, which are often useful in interpreting attitudes and reactions.

The absence of nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language made it challenging to fully understand the participants' true feelings about how social media documentaries influence gender stereotypes. Additionally, the researcher had limited control over the participants' environment, which sometimes led to distractions and interruptions that affected data quality.

Finally, online interviews offered limited room for deeper discussions compared to face-to-face interviews, making it harder to explore some issues in detail.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents and interprets the findings of the study. Data were collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods and subsequently analyzed to generate meaningful insights. The presentation of findings aligns with the research objectives, which guided this study, namely:

1. To examine the influence of social media content on gender stereotypes among university students.
2. To identify challenges that hinder the reduction of gender stereotypes through social media among students.
3. To propose recommendations for enhancing the positive impact of social media content in addressing gender stereotypes.

**The results are presented according to the following order:**

1. Response rate
2. Respondents' gender distribution
3. Respondents' age distribution
4. Social media usage patterns
5. Influence of social media content on gender stereotypes
6. Changes in students' perceptions about gender roles due to social media
7. Respondents' suggestions on how social media can better address gender stereotypes
8. Perceptions regarding the meaningfulness of gender pay gap research.

#### **4.1 RESPONSE RATE**

Out of a total of 27 first-year journalism students, a sample of six students was selected for this study. All selected participants completed the questionnaires, resulting in a 100% response rate. This high response rate indicates the reliability of the collected data.

#### 4.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

**Table 4.1: Gender of Respondents**

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	4	66.7
Female	2	33.3
Total	6	100

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The findings in Table 4.1 show that the majority of the respondents were male (66.7%), while females constituted 33.3% of the sample. This gender distribution indicates that male voices were more represented in the study. However, the inclusion of both genders ensures that the study captures a range of experiences and viewpoints regarding how social media influences perceptions of gender stereotypes. The presence of both male and female respondents helps to balance perspectives and reduces the risk of bias in interpreting the results.

**Table 4.2: Age of Respondents**

Age (years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-20	3	50
21-23	2	33.3
Above 23	1	16.7
Tota	6	100

Source: Primary Data, 2025

According to Table 4.2, half of the respondents (50%) were between 18 and 20 years old, making this the largest age group in the sample. Another 33.3% fell within the age range of 21 to 23 years,

while 16.7% were above 23 years. This distribution reflects the typical age range of first-year university students, who are generally young adults. Because younger individuals are often highly active on social media, their responses provide meaningful insight into how digital content shapes modern attitudes and perceptions about gender roles.

**Table 4.3: Social Media Usage per Day**

Hours	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-2 hours	1	16.7
3-4 hours	3	50
5+ hours	2	33.3
Total	6	100

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The results in Table 4.3 indicate that most respondents spend a significant amount of time on social media each day. Half of the participants (50%) reported using social media for 3 to 4 hours daily, while 33.3% spent 5 or more hours online. Only 16.7% used social media for 1 to 2 hours per day. This high level of daily engagement suggests that students are frequently exposed to social media content, meaning that what they see online has substantial potential to influence their views, beliefs, and attitudes including those related to gender stereotypes.

## 4.2 INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT ON GENDER STEREOTYPES

**Table 4.4 Social Media Reinforces Gender Stereotypes**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	2	33.3
Agree	3	50
Disagree	1	16.7
Total	6	100

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 4.4 reveals that the majority of respondents believe social media reinforces traditional gender stereotypes. A combined 83.3% (Strongly Agree and Agree) stated that social media often promotes stereotypical portrayals of men and women, while only one respondent (16.7%) disagreed. This suggests that many students observe content that limits people to traditional roles, such as portraying men as dominant or strong and women as emotional or focused on beauty. This perception aligns with concerns that repeated exposure to such content can normalize and strengthen gender stereotypes among young audiences.

**Table 4.5 Social Media Promotes Awareness about Gender Equality**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	1	16.7
Agree	2	33.3
Disagree	2	33.3
Strongly Disagree	1	16.7
Total	6	100

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The responses in Table 4.5 show a fairly even split in how students view social media’s role in promoting gender equality. While some respondents (50%) agreed or strongly agreed that social media raises awareness on gender equality issues, an equal portion (50%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that while some students recognize the presence of educational campaigns, advocacy content, and gender equality discussions online, others feel that negative or stereotypical content overshadows these positive messages. Therefore, the impact of social media on promoting equality depends heavily on the type of content individuals consume.

**Table 4.6: Students’ Change in Perceptions About Gender Roles Due to Social Media**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	2	33.3
Agree	1	16.7
Disagree	2	33.3
Strongly Disagree	1	16.7
Total	6	100

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 4.6 indicates mixed views regarding whether social media has changed students’ perceptions of gender roles. Half of the respondents (50%) agreed or strongly agreed that their views have changed due to social media exposure, while the other half disagreed or strongly disagreed. This imbalance suggests that social media does not influence everyone in the same way. Some students may follow content that challenges traditional roles and promotes equal opportunities, while others may be exposed to material that reinforces long-held gender expectations. This shows that the impact of social media on personal beliefs is not uniform.

### **4.3 RESPONDENTS' SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT**

Respondents proposed several strategies that they believe would make social media more effective in reducing gender stereotypes among students. Many students emphasized the need for content that challenges traditional gender roles. They explained that social media often shows men and women in fixed roles such as men being strong or authoritative and women being emotional or domestic and this limits how people view what each gender can or cannot do. According to them, social media should begin showcasing a wider range of activities and achievements from both genders. For example, seeing women in leadership, men in nurturing roles, or students excelling in careers not typically associated with their gender would help break long-held stereotypes.

Another major suggestion was the need for inclusive storytelling. Respondents expressed that social media narratives should include both male and female perspectives so that no group feels ignored or misrepresented. They pointed out that when one gender dominates the conversation, the other may feel left out, which makes it harder to reduce stereotypes.

Students also suggested the promotion of positive role models who break gender norms. They believe that when young people see someone their age succeeding in a field that society does not usually expect them to be in, it encourages others to believe they can also do the same. These role models, according to respondents, can influence attitudes more positively than traditional media messages.

Lastly, respondents highlighted the importance of educational content. They recommended that social media should mix entertainment with learning. This means providing content that raises awareness about gender equality in simple, engaging, and relatable ways. They explained that when educational messages are delivered in a fun or creative manner, students are more likely to pay attention and reflect on their own beliefs.

#### **4.4 PERCEPTIONS ON THE MEANINGFULNESS OF GENDER PAY GAP RESEARCH**

Respondents were also asked to share their views on whether gender pay gap research is meaningful, and their answers revealed mixed but insightful opinions. A majority of the respondents, representing 71%, stated that gender pay gap research is meaningful. These students believe that such research plays a crucial role in uncovering unfair differences in how men and women are paid, even when they have similar qualifications or perform similar work. They added that research helps expose hidden inequalities in workplaces and gives people evidence to demand fairness and accountability.

On the other hand, 19% of the respondents felt that research on the gender pay gap is not meaningful. This group explained that differences in pay may not always be caused by discrimination. Some students suggested that the pay gap might result from personal choices such as choosing different career paths, job positions, or work hours and therefore believe that research may sometimes give a misleading impression.

Meanwhile, 10% of respondents were unsure about the significance of gender pay gap research. These students said they lacked enough information about the topic or had never thought deeply about workplace inequalities. Their uncertainty shows that more sensitization and awareness are needed to help students understand how the pay gap affects society.

Overall, the findings indicate that while most students recognize the importance of researching the gender pay gap, a notable number either question its relevance or do not fully understand the issue. This demonstrates that the topic is still complex, and discussions around workplace gender fairness need more emphasis in both academic and social spaces.

#### **4.5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The key findings from the analysis are as follows:

1. Social media significantly influences students' perceptions of gender roles.
2. The majority of respondents believe that social media reinforces traditional gender stereotypes.
3. Some students recognize social media's potential to promote awareness of gender equality.

4. Exposure to social media affects students' perceptions differently, with some adopting more progressive views while others maintain traditional beliefs.
5. Respondents emphasized the need for content that challenges stereotypes, showcases diverse roles, and promotes positive role models.
6. Most students consider gender pay gap research meaningful, acknowledging systemic workplace disparities.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in relation to existing literature, theories, and the assumptions guiding this research. The focus is on first-year students at Uganda Christian University in 2025 and how social media content influences their perceptions of gender stereotypes. While global studies on social media and gender stereotypes exist, there is limited research specific to Ugandan university students. By linking the findings from Chapter 4 with theoretical frameworks such as Social Learning Theory and Gender Schema Theory, this chapter analyzes the influence of social media, the changes in students' perceptions, the challenges in addressing stereotypes, and the recommendations suggested by respondents to promote gender equality online.

#### 5.1 Influence of Social Media on Gender Stereotypes

The findings reveal that social media significantly reinforces traditional gender stereotypes among first-year students at Uganda Christian University. A majority of respondents, 83.3%, reported that social media often portrays men and women in stereotypical ways men as dominant, authoritative, or strong, and women as emotional, nurturing, or appearance-focused. This aligns with the Gender Schema Theory, which asserts that repeated exposure to gendered content leads individuals to internalize and reproduce traditional roles. Students noted that platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook frequently feature content, including memes, videos, and posts, that exaggerates these roles. The data suggest that the first-year students' frequent social media use ranging from 3 to 5+ hours daily exposes them to both reinforcing and challenging content, but the dominance of stereotypical portrayals contributes to the persistence of traditional gender norms.

#### 5.2 Changes in Students' Perceptions

The study also found mixed effects of social media on students' perceptions of gender roles. Half of the respondents agreed that their views had been positively influenced by exposure to content that challenges traditional stereotypes, including posts promoting equality or showcasing men and

women in non-traditional roles. The other half reported no change, suggesting that the type of content consumed heavily determines the impact on beliefs. This finding mirrors global literature, which highlights that social media can either reinforce stereotypes or encourage more progressive attitudes depending on content selection. For example, students who follow pages promoting gender equality reported an increased awareness of traditional biases and more willingness to question them.

### **5.3 Students' Suggestions for Reducing Gender Stereotypes**

Respondents provided several recommendations to reduce gender stereotypes on social media. They emphasized the importance of promoting content that challenges conventional gender roles, such as women in leadership positions and men in caregiving roles. Inclusive storytelling, where both male and female perspectives are equally represented, was also highlighted as crucial. Additionally, students suggested showcasing positive role models who break gender norms, believing that peer examples can have a strong influence on attitudes. Educational content combined with entertainment was recommended as an effective approach to engage students and raise awareness in a relatable and memorable way. These suggestions indicate that students are both aware of the problem and capable of proposing actionable solutions for promoting gender equality online.

### **5.4 Challenges in Addressing Gender Stereotypes**

The study identified several challenges students face in addressing gender stereotypes. First, entertainment-focused content that exaggerates traditional roles is prevalent and difficult to avoid. Second, peer influence can reinforce stereotypes, especially when students share or mimic content without critically analyzing it. Third, subtle forms of gender stereotyping often go unrecognized, indicating a need for media literacy and awareness campaigns. Finally, the lack of university-led initiatives on gender equality in social media contexts limits students' exposure to content that challenges traditional norms. These challenges reflect both the pervasiveness of online stereotypes and the structural gaps within the university environment.

### **5.5 Perceptions on the Importance of Gender Pay Gap Research**

Students were asked about the meaningfulness of research on gender pay disparities. A majority, 71%, considered such research important, as it provides evidence of inequalities in opportunities and remuneration, even within Ugandan workplaces. Some respondents (19%) questioned its relevance, suggesting that pay differences may stem from personal career choices rather than systemic discrimination. A small portion (10%) were unsure, highlighting the need for increased awareness and education on gender inequality issues. These perceptions demonstrate that first-year students are beginning to critically engage with gender equity issues, though further sensitization is required.

### **5.6 Summary of Discussion**

The discussion highlights that social media plays a dual role in shaping perceptions of gender among first-year students at Uganda Christian University in 2025. While it reinforces traditional stereotypes, it also has the potential to promote awareness and progressive attitudes. Students' recommendations emphasize diverse role representation, inclusive storytelling, positive role models, and educational content as key strategies. Challenges include entertainment-driven content, peer influence, and lack of university-led awareness initiatives. Overall, the study underscores the significant influence of social media on young adults' perceptions of gender and highlights opportunities for promoting equality within the university context.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Conclusion

The findings of this study have revealed important insights regarding the influence of social media content on gender stereotypes among first-year students at Uganda Christian University. The study shows that social media plays a significant role in shaping students' perceptions of gender roles, with a majority of respondents noting that social media reinforces traditional gender stereotypes. These stereotypes often portray men as dominant, assertive, and strong, while women are frequently depicted as emotional, appearance-focused, or limited to domestic roles.

At the same time, the study revealed that social media has the potential to promote awareness of gender equality. Some students reported encountering content that challenges stereotypes and encourages equitable representation of both genders. However, the influence of social media varies among students; while some adopt more progressive views regarding gender roles, others continue to hold traditional beliefs, suggesting that exposure to positive content is inconsistent and often overshadowed by stereotypical portrayals.

Furthermore, students emphasized that gender stereotypes on social media are perpetuated by the limited diversity of roles and perspectives showcased online. Content that fails to highlight women in leadership positions, men in caregiving roles, or students excelling in non-traditional fields contributes to the persistence of stereotypes. These findings reflect the broader societal influence of digital media and the responsibility of content creators to promote inclusivity and equality.

Overall, the study demonstrates that while social media has the power to influence gender perceptions positively, its current use among first-year students at Uganda Christian University both reinforces existing stereotypes and presents opportunities for change. The findings underscore the need for strategic interventions to ensure social media promotes gender equality rather than perpetuating traditional biases.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the positive impact of social media on gender perceptions among university students. These recommendations aim to guide content creators, educators, and students themselves in reducing gender stereotypes.

### **6.2.1 Promoting Inclusive Social Media Content**

Content creators on social media should consciously produce and share material that represents diverse roles for both genders. This includes showcasing women in leadership positions, men in nurturing roles, and highlighting achievements in careers not traditionally associated with one gender. Inclusive content encourages students to broaden their understanding of gender roles and challenges limiting stereotypes.

### **6.2.2 Encouraging Critical Media Literacy**

University programs and student organizations should organize workshops and campaigns to improve students' critical understanding of social media content. By teaching students to recognize and question gender stereotypes online, they become more capable of resisting negative influences and supporting content that promotes equality.

### **6.2.3 Empowering Students to Create Positive Content**

Students should be encouraged to actively contribute content that challenges traditional gender norms. Initiatives such as blogs, social media pages, and online campaigns managed by students can amplify positive messages about gender equality. Peer-driven content is often more relatable and impactful among first-year students.

### **6.2.4 Collaboration with Social Media Influencers and Platforms**

Social media influencers and university clubs can collaborate to create campaigns that advocate for gender equality. By leveraging popular platforms, these campaigns can reach a wider student audience, raising awareness about the effects of stereotypes and highlighting stories that inspire equitable behavior.

### **6.2.5 Institutional Support and Guidance**

Uganda Christian University should integrate gender equality awareness into student orientation and curriculum activities. This includes sensitizing students about the influence of social media on perceptions, encouraging respectful online behavior, and providing guidelines on responsible content creation. Institutional support ensures that students have both knowledge and a framework to navigate social media responsibly.

### **6.3 Concluding Observations**

In conclusion, social media is a powerful tool that can either reinforce harmful gender stereotypes or promote equality among students. The study demonstrates that while first-year students at Uganda Christian University are exposed to content that perpetuates traditional roles, they are also receptive to messages promoting gender equity. By implementing the recommendations above, students, content creators, and the university community can collectively foster a more inclusive and equitable digital environment that challenges stereotypes and empowers all genders.

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**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RESPONDENTS**

Title of the Study: **“The Influence of Social Media Content on Gender Stereotypes among University Students”**

Researcher:

Gift Kalikulali Nangonde

Bachelor of Journalism and Communication

Uganda Christian University (UCU)

**Introduction**

Dear Participant,

Greetings!

My name is Gift Kalikulali Nangonde, a Bachelor’s student of Journalism and Communication at Uganda Christian University (UCU). I am conducting a research study titled “The Influence of Social Media Content on Gender Stereotypes among University Students.”

I kindly request you to take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Your participation is voluntary, and your responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Your honest insights will help in understanding how social media content shapes perceptions of gender among university students.

**Section A: Personal Information**

Email: .....

Name: .....

Gender:

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

University/Faculty: Uganda Christian University

Year of Study: .....

**Section B: Social Media Usage**

1. Which social media platforms do you use most often? (Tick all that apply)

Facebook

Instagram

TikTok

X (formerly Twitter)

YouTube

Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

2. How often do you use social media?

Daily

Several times a week

Once a week

Less than once a week

3. What is your main purpose for using social media?

Entertainment

Information/News

Communication

Education

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### **Section C: Perceptions and Stereotypes**

4. How do you think women and men are portrayed on social media?

Equally represented and respected

Women are often stereotyped

Men are often stereotyped

Not sure

5. Have you ever seen social media content that promotes gender stereotypes?

Yes

No

Not sure

If yes, please give an example:

.....

6. Have you come across content on social media that promotes gender equality or challenges stereotypes?

Yes

No

Not sure

If yes, please describe briefly:

.....

7. Do you believe that social media influences how university students view gender roles?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

**Section D: Opinions and Recommendations**

8. How important do you think it is for social media to promote gender equality?

Very important

Important

Neutral

Not very important

Not important at all

9. In your opinion, what measures can be taken to reduce gender stereotypes on social media?

.....

10. What kind of social media content do you think helps to promote gender equality among university students?

.....

Thank you very much for your time and participation!

Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

Prepared by:

Gift Kalikulali Nangonde

Bachelor of Journalism and Communication

Uganda Christian University (UCU)