

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROMOTING SOCIAL CHANGE IN RURAL AREAS IN UGANDA: A CASE STUDY OF KINONI SUB-COUNTY

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DECLARATION

I declare that I, Ampumuza Alice, am the author of this dissertation entitled "The Role of Social Media in Promoting Social Change in Rural Areas of Uganda: A Case Study of Kinoni Sub-county." I also declare that no part of this dissertation has been presented for any academic award in any recognized institution of learning. I acknowledge the contributions of other authors wherever applicable.

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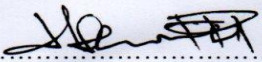
APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University Supervisor.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family, friends, and all such people who have helped and encouraged me in my academic endeavors. Your love, support, and faith in me have made it possible for me to complete this work.

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I am also committed to conveying my sincere gratitude and appreciation to Uganda Christian University, the School of Journalism, Media and Communication, and especially to my supervisor, Dr. Sam Kazibwe, throughout the entire period.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the role of social media in catalyzing social change in rural communities, with particular emphasis on Kinoni Sub-county, Kiruhura District, Uganda. Social media have evolved as a crucial instrument for communication, information sharing, and civic engagement in modern times; however, its potential impact in rural areas remains unexplored. The goal of this research study was to determine the level of engagement with social media, its contribution to changing lives in health, education, and community development, challenges affecting rural users, and ways through which its effectiveness could be boosted.

A descriptive case study design was adopted, involving 80 respondents comprised of ordinary residents, local leaders, social media activists, teachers, and health workers. Data collection was done through questionnaires, interviews with key informants, and nonparticipant observation. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while thematic analysis was used on qualitative data.

WhatsApp and Facebook were the most used platforms, with 81% and 60%, respectively, especially among the youth and educated residents. Social media have enacted social change by promoting health awareness, increasing access to educational materials, or improving community development issues, such as mobilization at the community level, sharing agricultural information, and community governance.

Some of the key challenges that affected the trends in social media usage were internet and smartphone costs, connectivity, lack of digital literacy, misinformation, and unawareness of the potential of social media.

The study found that social media is an effective means for advancing social change in rural areas, although its maximum potential is quenched by infrastructural, economic, and knowledge factors. The recommendations included enhancing digital infrastructure, reducing data charges, and raising digital literacies alongside positive social media practice and production by young people in the community.

These findings are useful and provide valuable insights for policymakers, development partners, and the education community, and also emphasize

the need to capitalize on the "social media" tool for the improvement of awareness, participation, and rural development

Keywords: Social media, Social change, Rural development, Digital literacy, Kinoni Sub-county, Uganda.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Social media has transformed the way people communicate, share information, learn, and mobilize around a cause everywhere in the world. Platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, TikTok, and X have reshaped how societies connect and participate in development efforts.

Kaplan and Haenlein 2010 have defined social media sites as online applications that allow users to generate and distribute information, which facilitates quick social interaction and participation in public issues.

Social media has, in many places around the world, become a driver for social change by giving voice to the underrepresented or misunderstood. It is through these networks that communities can marshal available resources, promote social justice, disseminate health and educational information, and connect with and shape governance. The shift technology has even reached rural areas that previously had limited access to other channels.

In Uganda, increased mobile phone and Internet utilization has enhanced social media penetration into more rural areas. Networks are utilized for health communication, education support, agricultural marketing, and community mobilizing, among others, and dissemination of government programs.

Reported growth in mobile Internet access also continues in Uganda, although rural areas have always been disproportionately affected.

The phenomenon has thus been well manifested in the Kinoni Sub-county of Kiruhura District. Much like many rural settings within Uganda, Kinoni is one of the areas experiencing increasing usage of social platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. The local authorities, health workers, teachers, and community organizations use these tools to pass information on public health, schooling activities, community meetings, farming techniques, and government initiatives.

Despite these advances, very limited work has been done on how social media shapes social change in rural settings. This study aims to establish how social media facilitates social change in Kinoni Sub-county.

1.2 Problem Statement

Though social media utilization continues to grow in Uganda, rural areas have a lot to contend with that taints the usefulness of social media as a tool for development. The issue comes with a lot of misinformation, a lack of knowledge regarding the effective use of social media, the unaffordability of data, a lack of access to smartphones, and a poor network. This is an unexplored utility, the true capability of social media in bringing a positive social change in rural areas.

Despite the growing use of social media for information sharing and movement mobilization in Kinoni Sub-county, a big gap still exists in research on the amount of contribution that social media has on the development of knowledge and education in health development in society. How much does social media impact development in society? Are these media merely a new means of communication with little contribution to development in society? This question poses a gap in knowledge that this research aims to explore.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The aim of this particular study is to explore the role that social media can play in the promotion of social change within the Ugandan rural community, specifically within the Kinoni Sub-county, including assessing the impacts of the same on health awareness, education, and development.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives

General objectives

This study examines the influence of social networks in the process of social transformation in rural Uganda.

Specific aims and objectives

1. Identify which social platforms are most commonly used in Kinoni Sub-county.
2. Examine how social media can bring positive changes in health, education, and community development.
3. Identify the challenges in adopting social media in rural areas.
4. Propose ways that social media can be used for social change in Kinoni Sub-county.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the most popular social media platforms in Kinoni Sub-county?

2. In what manner does social media facilitate social transformation in rural areas.
3. What challenges are there to use of social media in rural areas ?
4. How might social media usage for social change be made more effective?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study's findings for different stakeholders cannot be overstated. Government agencies, for instance, may use the findings to inform them as they make different policies that seek to advance digital inclusion and rural development. Non-governmental, as well as development agencies, will appreciate insights that seek to inform them about different strategies for utilizing social media to advance different causes, including health, education, and community development initiatives. Educators and health workers will understand how social media can be utilized to advance different causes, including information dissemination and community engagement. The community at large will understand how they can utilize social media for constructive social change.

1.7 Scope of the Study

Geographic scope

The research was undertaken in Kinoni Sub-county, Kiruhura District, Uganda. Content Scope The focus is on the use of social media and the part it plays within social change, particularly in the health, education, and developmental fields. Timeframe The study looks at the usage of social media within the last five years, as well as the corresponding societal transformations.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will delve further into the existing literature about how social media may bring about change in society, particularly in a rural setting. It begins a conceptual framework for the study by bringing up a discussion about what exactly social media is in a setting of change. It also includes a discussion of how social media intersects health, education, and community.

In the chapter, not only are the positive implications of social media outlined, but the challenges facing its use in the rural areas are also addressed. Each of the concepts is linked to the research questions of the study.

2.1 Theoretical Frame works

The essential theoretical frameworks that have been used in this particular analysis revolve around the works penned by Manuel Castells, as presented in his book **Theory of the Network Society** in 1996, along with reiterations in 2012, and Everett Rogers, as presented in **Diffusion of Innovations** in 2003. These theories have been chosen based on the availability of effective explanatory mechanisms.

2.1.1 Network Society

Castells introduced the concept of the Network Society in 1996 and revised it again in 2012. With this concept, Castells hypothesized that societies are organized around information and communication technologies. He also stated that this is the new way of organizing society.

Social media is located at the heart of the network society. Social media promotes global connectivity, information sharing, and collective action. According to Castells, the potential of networked communication to

empower marginalized social groups arises from giving these groups access to information that they normally lacked.

Social media might play a major role in the formation and development of social relations in rural regions where mass media, such as newspapers and television, are not accessible. Rural regions can still utilize social media despite poor infrastructure. Moreover, in Kinoni Sub-county, social platforms such as WhatsApp groups have turned out to be essential platforms for disseminating health campaigns, social information, and program updates among the people and stakeholders in the region. The relevance of the Network Society Theory is evident, particularly in analyzing the social interactions that may be catalyzed to bring social change among the people.

2.1.2 Diffusion of Innovation theory.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory: The theory was proposed by Rogers (2003). It is defined as “the process by which, over time, an innovation—the new idea or practice—becomes accepted and utilized within a social system.” This theory consists of five phases of diffusion of innovation, which are Knowledge, Persuasion, Decision, Implementation, and Confirmation. In addition, this theory categorizes the adopters of the innovation differently, which includes Innovators, Early Adopters, Early Majority, Late Majority, and Laggards.

Cases:

Social media can be regarded as an innovation in the context of rural environments. The process of social media adoption seems to depend on some factors, such as its perceived utility, accommodation, affordability, simplicity, and observability. According to Rogers (2003), any innovation that meets the needs of people and is compatible with their social values can easily be adapted to its application.

In the rural area of Uganda, the use of social media is influenced by the number of smartphones used, the level of digital literacy, the cost of the internet, and the coverage of the internet. According to the Uganda

Communications Commission (2022), there is an increasing trend in the rate of mobile internet penetration in rural areas, though the rate is not even. This theory explains why, in Kinoni Sub-county, some people use social media for development, while the rest are very slow or reluctant in adopting the technology.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory thus finds application in highlighting the prospects as well as limitations of the use of social media as a technique for enhancing societal transformations in rural Uganda.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.1 Social Media Concept

Social media can be defined as the online applications that enable users to create and share user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The applications enable interactive communication and participation. Unlike the conventional forms of media, the use of social media entails two-way communication.

Some of the common social media platforms include Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and X, earlier known as Twitter. The uses of these platforms vary in communication, entertainment, education, advocacy, and marketing reasons. WhatsApp is the most used social platform in Uganda, particularly in the countryside, because of its low data intensity, ease of use, and group communication functions. Facebook is widely used for information sharing and discussion, though TikTok has recently gained popularity among the youth for its use in entertainment and health campaigns. Social media has increasingly become an essential developmental communication platform in Uganda.

2.2.2 Concept of Social Change

Social Change

Social changes can be defined as the major and permanent changes, which take place in the structures, values, norms, behaviors, and

relationships of a given society. In addition, social changes also encompass positive changes in the standards of living, service, decision-making, and societal well-being.

In the rural environment, the social change process might be observable through the promotion of healthy lifestyle habits, better educational levels, improved agricultural productivity, enhanced social organizations, or improved citizens' involvement. There might be various aspects that bring about the social change process; they might be in the form of technology, education, communications, or government involvement.

The role of social media as a contributor to societal change is based on the aspect where social media has been effective in delivering increased information accessibility, dialogue, participation, and actions. This allowed societies to communicate through sharing experiences and engaging with the authorities, making it a key factor in changing rural societies

2.3 Use of Social Media in Rural Societies

At the moment, some of the challenges facing the globe include the digital divide between rural and urban cities. However, studies have shown that there has been an improvement in rural community penetration in developing nations relating to digital technology use. Specifically, mobile phones have dramatically increased to empower people in rural areas to use internet-connected apps.

In Africa, social media has developed and become a crucial tool not only for communication but also for development, but this has been affected by factors like infrastructure, affordability, and human resource capacity. In Uganda, mobile internet penetration is increasing steadily, as noted in the report done by the Uganda Communications Commission (2022). However, the rural regions are still lagging in terms of digital literacy, cost, and accessibility of the network.

Nonetheless, the population living in the rural regions also utilizes social media as a channel to facilitate their communications and gain access to

information. Social media has also become an alternative source of information outside the traditional media, especially for the youths and the active population in society.

2.3.1 Commonly Used Social Media Platforms in Rural Uganda

The most popular social media used extensively among rural people in Uganda is What app.

What app is used extensively among various social groups, churches, savings groups (SACCOs), schools, as well as health organizations.

The use of What app among social groups to communicate helps in mobilizing meetings as well as coordinating activities among other members of the community.

Facebook is also used by people, particularly the youth and the leaders of social groups, for sharing news, announcements, and views. TikTok has been on an uptake for sharing entertainment and awareness among the youth. YouTube is used for purposes of access and consumption of education and training, including agriculture, health, and vocation-related content.

2.4 Role of social media in promoting social change

2.4.1 Social media and health Awareness

Social media platforms remain an important tool in educating rural communities on matters of public health. Social platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook are utilized by health personnel, NGOs, as well as the government, in posting information on health, immunization programs, prevention, as well as emergency messages.

Mwesige (2020) explains that “WhatsApp groups are employed by health professionals in rural Uganda to share information with the community members.” Research in Uganda and Kenya suggests that social media

platforms are instrumental in health communication related to malaria prevention, HIV testing, and mothers' health, as well as COVID-19 awareness (Tufte, 2017).

The use of social media to access appropriate and up-to-date health information may affect positive behavioral change and health-seeking behavior. The use of social media in health communication is, however, dependent on digital literacy and trust in the sources of the health information.

2.4.2 Social Media and Education

Social media has advanced educational accessibility, especially in rural areas where such facilities may be lacking. Social media platforms, like WhatsApp and Facebook, enable educational information to be conveyed from tutors to learners.

Social media has played an impressive role during the COVID-19 period concerning continuity of learning. According to Nakato (2021), school children in rural Uganda used WhatsApp and Facebook immensely for learning content viewing during the learning institution closure. Social media has an added advantage to be used as a collaborative learning tool.

Nevertheless, the unavailability of smartphones, high data charges, and the lack of digital literacy remain limitations to the efficiency of the adoption and application of social media platforms as an instrument of education.

2.4.3 Social Media and Community Development

Social media platforms facilitate the development of communities through mobilization, participation, and sharing of information. As noted by Castells (2012), online communities shape offline behavior through the enhancement of community participation and group decision-making. In Uganda, the most prominent use of WhatsApp application is the mobilization of the public towards community celebrations such as

bulungi bwansi. Social media platforms are also the cornerstone of the growth of the agricultural sector.

2.5 Challenges Affecting Use of Social Media in Rural Areas

Nevertheless, there are a number of factors that are affecting the use of social media for social change despite the increasing number of users among the rural population. The factors are mainly linked to the use of social media and accessing the required information. The factors are affecting the social media development potential in the rural setup of Kinoni Sub-county.

2.5.1 Digital

Lack of skills in digital literacy has continued to be one of the major challenges hindering the use of social media. Digital literacy, therefore, refers to the skills that an individual must have in order to enable him/her to access, understand, and use information and communication technology appropriately. Therefore, lack of skills, such as knowledge of how to use smartphones and social media, among others, is most common in rural areas.

As per Mwesige (2020), the poor digital literacy level limits the possibilities and potential of rural communities to create beneficial information via the help of various social media tools. Instead, individuals become passive recipients of information without any attempt to critically assess the nature of the information. This situation is more worrying in the case of the older

The high prices of internet data and smartphones are other significant hindrances to the efficient use of social media platforms. Despite the rise in the adoption of smartphones, the ones with capabilities to enable social media usage cannot be afforded by the inhabitants of the rural areas. The prices of internet data are also high going by the income levels of the inhabitants.

According to the World Bank (2021), high data charges also negatively impact people from low-income backgrounds, preventing them from accessing online services on a regular basis. It is because of this that social media is often employed either partially by people in rural areas or through shared devices, which affects consistency. This impacts the use of social media as a vehicle for creating positive change in rural societies.

2.5.2 Cost of Internet and Smartphones

The high prices of internet data and smartphones are other significant hindrances to the efficient use of social media platforms. Despite the rise in the adoption of smartphones, the ones with capabilities to enable social media usage cannot be afforded by the inhabitants of the rural areas. The prices of internet data are also high going by the income levels of the inhabitants.

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2.5.3 Poor Network

In most rural settings in Uganda, there is a general lack of good and stable internet connectivity.

In some of the districts, like Rwampara and Kiruhura in Uganda, the connections are either poor or unreliable. Such circumstances limit the use of social media platforms in the rural setting. Lack of connectivity inhibits social participation in online conversations, slowing the process of exchanged critical information and inhibiting continuous usage of social media platforms.

According to the Uganda Communications Commission in 2022, the most significant barrier to digital inclusiveness, which is still low in rural areas,

is yet to be supplemented with sufficient telecommunication infrastructure. An absence of connectivity respectably nullifies the effectiveness of social media in advancing social change.

2.5.4 Informational Deficiencies in Terms of Social media sites also tend to expose users to enormous amounts of information that has not been authenticated, which leads to a predisposition toward disinformation.

The rural areas are highly susceptible because they have low media literacy and weak mechanisms of regulation. False information on health, political, and money-related aspects can, therefore, be uploaded on these sites. Mwesige (2020) stresses that misinformation on social media could undermine public health campaigns and public trust.

2.6 Empirical Various empirical studies reported the positive contribution of social media in promoting social change as well as the challenges associated with the use of social media.

Research conducted in Uganda, Kenya, and Nigeria indicated that social media was effective in acquiring more information, participation, and access in rural areas. Research conducted in Uganda showed that Nakato (2021) concluded that ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA, as seen on WhatsApp and Facebook, was important in enhancing EDUCATION ACCESS during the pandemic. Kakuba (2021) concluded that the use of ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA was effective in maintaining LOCAL GOVERNING BODY participation through effective communication.

Nevertheless, this paper informs and warns of limitations which include the absence of accessibility and ILLEGIBILITY. While there seems to be an increase in literature regarding the matter, there appears to be a scarcity of literature specifically related to Kinoni Sub-county. This emphasizes the need to carry out localized research, especially to ascertain the utilization of social media platforms.

2.7 Research Gaps

Even though the literature points out the importance of social media in creating change within society, there are gaps that are yet to be filled:

1 Geographical gap:

Studies are normally concentrated in either urban or national settings without any specific focus on rural areas such as the Kinoni Sub-county in Kiruhura District.

2. Contextual gap:

Most research on the use of social media neglects the influence of the social, economic, and infrastructural contexts of rural areas on the use of the technology.

3. Sectoral gap:

There is a gap in research regarding the joint use of social media for the health, education, and development of communities within the same rural area. All the aforementioned challenges can be addressed by this study by concentrating on the case of Kinoni Sub-county, focusing on the role played by social media.

2.8 Summary of Literature Review

The chapter covered an examination of literature regarding the role of social media in facilitating social change. The study used theoretical approaches to learn more about the concepts involved in social media and the effects of using social media in rural communities. The social media study revealed the capability to improve health education and development in rural communities. However, some factors such as lack of

skills in using social media, costs associated with online connectivity, lack of strong network connectivity, and lack of information limit the full potential of using social media. The chapter is based on network society theory and diffusion of innovations theory to investigate how social media is involved in facilitating social change in Kinoni Sub-county.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The chapter is also intended to illustrate the research design and methodology employed in the conduct of the research on the role of social media in facilitating social change within Kinoni Sub-county in Kiruhura District. The chapter also reveals the research approach followed in conceiving the research questions in order to answer the research questions effectively. The research approach is actually composed of various parts such as the research design, the research population, and the research sample size/techniques applied in the conduct of the research process. The research approach applied in the conduct of the research was aimed at enhancing the validity/reliability of the research results.

3.1 Research Design

This study was conducted using a descriptive study research design. As Creswell (2014) defines it, a descriptive study may be used whenever an investigation of characteristics, behavior, and phenomena as they relate to one another in a natural state is desired. This enables the researcher to get an opportunity to carry out a case study on the influence of social media on social change as it relates to the rural area of Kinoni Sub-county.

The choice of case study research design was relevant in this study as it allowed for in-depth information regarding usage trends, levels of perceived effects, as well as various levels of challenges posed by social media to be collected. Moreover, it is important to note that this study used descriptive research design to collect data through quantitative methods as well as qualitative approaches.

3.2 Study Area

The research was conducted in Kinoni Sub-county located in Kiruhura District. This district can be found in the Western Region of Uganda. Kinoni Sub-county is mainly a rural area; agriculture is their way of earning a living. The area has experienced an increased number of mobile phones and internet use over the years; indeed, this area has provided an opportunity to explore and investigate the effects of social media use on rural transformation. This Sub-county has different parishes and villages; its residents consist of different social classes of people, such as youths, farmers, traders, leaders, teachers, and health workers, and they take an active role in community issues.

3.3 Study Population

The population of the study included those people living in and working in Kinoni Sub-county, who are either directly or indirectly involved in using social media and other developments in the community. The population that was targeted included:

- Normal people from Kinoni Sub-county
- Local council leaders and community development officers
- Social media activists or influencers within the community
- Healthcare providers and educators as part of outreach programs

The figure of the estimated accessible population stood at 3,500 people. This included residents, leaders, and people who actively used social platforms. This was seen as sufficient for the collection of views on the issue of the use of social media in bringing about social change.

3.4 Sample Size

The total number of participants chosen for conducting this study was 80. The reason why this particular number was chosen was that it enabled the collection of sufficient data to represent the opinions of various types of participants, yet it was still manageable with the constraints of time and resources.

The next topic to discuss is the data collection methods that were employed to conduct this research.

The topic to be covered next is the data analysis technique that was used to carry out this research.

Table 3.5: Summary of Study Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Techniques

Respondent Category	Population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique Used
Ordinary residents	4000	50	Simple random sampling
Local leaders	50	10	Purposive sampling
Social media activists	30	5	Purposive sampling
Health workers/Teachers	150	10	Purposive sampling
Youth/Students	500	5	Simple random sampling
Other community stakeholders	200	-	Not sampled / Observational notes
Total	4930	80	Combination of purposive & simple random sampling

Interpretation

The above table shows a comprehensive view of the target population of the study and the corresponding sample selected for the purpose of the research. It indicates that the study focused on the population involved directly in the engagement of social media usage. It covers different sectors of the population from the community. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling have been combined to represent the study. This is to ensure the key informants' knowledge.

3.5 Sampling Techniques

Probability and nonprobability methods of collecting samples were both used to carry out the study among the participants.

3.5.1 Simple Random Sampling

The common sampling technique used in selecting the ordinary residents of Kinoni Sub-county was the simple random sampling method. The sampling method was very appropriate in that everyone was given an equal chance, hence reducing bias. The sampling method was very appropriate in selecting the ordinary residents because, as a matter of fact, they were a big mass, and their contribution was very important.

The method used in sampling the local leaders, social media activists, teachers, health workers, and community development officers from where the data was collected is known as purposive sampling.

The sampling method is applicable to the research study because the selected sample population needed in-depth knowledge or information through the sampling method adopted to fulfill the requirements of the research study. They were experts in social media, governance, and community development activities.

3.6 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Research involves Both the study's data collection methods were employed through this study, which helped ensure a degree of triangulation as far as the study's validity was concerned. Various means were employed to ensure that data is accurate and comprehensive.

3.6.1 Questionnaires.

The type of questionnaires used were structured, and they were both open and closed-ended. The questions generated quantitative results on the different platforms used, the frequency of use, and the benefits garnered from their use. They also gave the respondents an opportunity to give their own opinion on the challenges experienced and the improvements needed on the same issues. The use of questionnaires ensured that the data for many people was collected in a short period of time.

3.6.2 Key Informant Interviews

In order to achieve the research objective, semi-structured interviews were used with key informants like leaders in the community, community development workers, social media activists, teachers, and health practitioners. This interview technique helped the researcher use the semi-structured interview method to extract qualitative data relating to the use of social media platforms in aiding mobilization, the delivery of services, health communication, and civic engagement. This type of interview allows the researcher to probe deeper into the discussion topic.

This technique was used to supplement data that was obtained through questionnaires and interviews. The researcher made use of observation techniques to collect data about community meetings and events, with the aim of understanding the role of social media within community.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedures employed a methodical approach in that:

1. The researcher got the introductory letter from the Uganda Christian University.
2. Permission was obtained from the local authorities, Kinoni Sub-county.
3. Participants had been informed about the intentions of the research as well as guaranteed confidentiality.
4. Questionnaires were self-administered to literate participants, and the interviews were conducted face-to-face with key informants
5. Data collection was done for a period of two weeks.

3.8 Content Validity and Reliability

Content validity was ensured by sending the research instruments to the supervisor as well as the experts in the field of the research in the School of Journalism, Media, and Communication. The response has been helpful in refining some of the questions to a degree where they are clear.

This study employed a descriptive research design and a survey research design, as these research designs suited the population and the purpose of this study well. The survey research design and the descriptive research design complement each other in that, as a research

To ensure reliability, a pilot study was conducted with only 10 participants from a neighboring sub-county. The consistency of the research questions had the potential to be analyzed through Cronbach Alpha. Adjustments to the questions were made to ensure reliability prior to the next process.

3.9 Data Analysis

3.9.1 Quantitative

The quantitative data was coded and analyzed through the application of descriptive statistics, which include frequency, percentage, tables, and graphs. The quantitative data helped to summarize the trends concerning the use of social media, challenges, and demographic data.

3.9.2 Analysis of the themes generated from qualitative in-depth interviews and observations were developed in accordance with thematic.

From the qualitative interviews and field observations, the identified themes were developed through the process of thematic analysis. These developed themes resulted from research questions, which were interpreted and validated through quantitative findings, as advocated by Creswell (2014).

3.10 Ethical guidelines

The research was conducted in accordance with the following ethical principles:

Informed consent: The subjects were involved voluntarily after the purpose of the research was made known to them.

Confidentiality: The personal details were handled with confidentiality, only used academically.

AUTONOMY: Respondents were able to withdraw from the research project at any time of their choice.

Non-maleficence: This action did not cause or lead to any form of physical, psychological, or social harm.

3.11 Limitations of the Study

There were some limitations that the study encountered. These are: Additionally, a number of the participants were not digitally literate, which impeded their ability to explain social media use.

Limited internet connectivity hindered the observation of internet behavior. There were delayed interviews due to unavailability of key informants. The constraints were addressed through flexible scheduling and simpler questionnaires as forms of communication.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

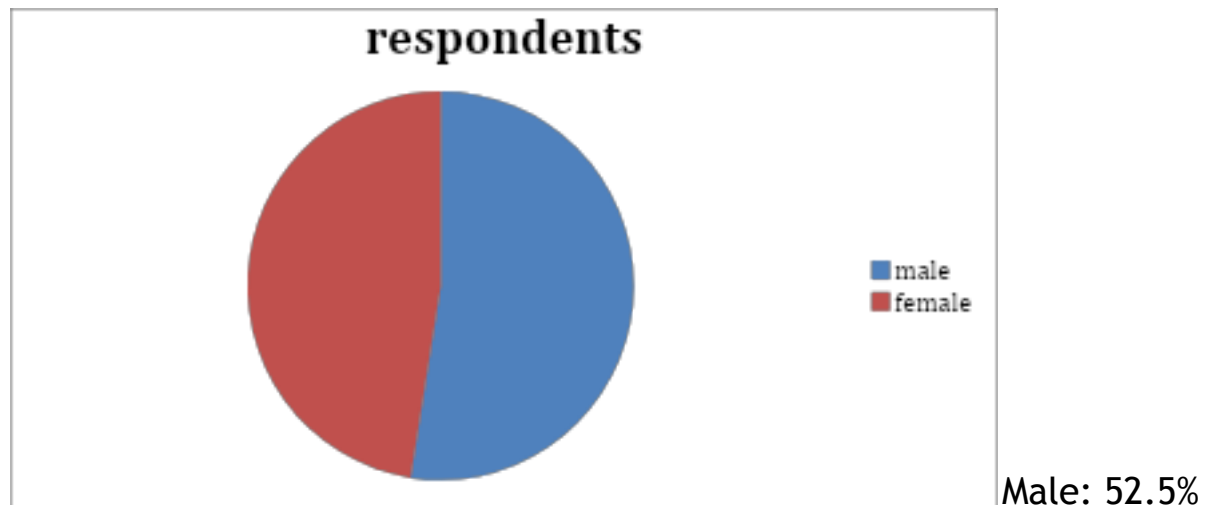
This chapter presents and analyzes the interpreted data from respondents in Kinoni Sub-county, Kiruhura District. The analysis will be done in line with the objectives of the study, which include the assessment of social media usage, its role in promoting social change, challenges faced by its users, and strategies that can promote the use of social media in rural development. Data are presented using tables, pie charts, and thematic discussion to enhance clarity and coherence.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

4.1.1 Distribution by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	42	52.5%
Female	38	47.5%
Total	80	100%

Pie Chart Suggestion:



- Female: 47.5%

Interpretation:

The respondents had a near equal gender distribution, slightly dominated by males. This can ensure that the findings reflect both genders in regard to the use of social media in Kinoni Sub-county.

4.1.2 Age Distribution

Age Group (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	30	37.5%
26-35	28	35%
36-45	12	15%
46-55	10	12.5%
Total	80	100%

Interpretation:

Most respondents (72.5%) were aged between 18 and 35 years, indicating

that youth dominate social media engagement in rural communities. This is consistent with global and national trends in digital participation.

4.1.3 Education Level

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	20	25%
Secondary	35	43.8%
Tertiary/University	25	31.2%
Total	80	100%

Interpretation:

A significant proportion of respondents had secondary or higher education, implying that most participants possess the digital literacy required to utilize social media effectively.

4.1.4 Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Farmers	25	31.2%
Traders/Entrepreneurs	15	18.8%
Teachers/Health Workers	10	12.5%
Youth/Students	30	37.5%
Total	80	100%

- Youth/Students: 37.5%

Interpretation:

Respondents represent a diverse occupational mix, reflecting perspectives from both traditional rural livelihoods and professional sectors. This diversity provides a broader understanding of social media use in community engagement.

4.2 Social Media Platforms Used in Kinoni Sub-county

Platform	Frequency	Percentage
WhatsApp	65	81%
Facebook	48	60%
TikTok	22	28%
X (Twitter)	10	12%

Interpretation

WhatsApp and Facebook are the most utilized means because they are cost-effective, easy to use, and facilitate group communication. On the other hand, TikTok and X are largely used by the youth for entertainment and civic engagement purposes.

4.3 How Social Media Promotes Social Change

4.3.1 Health Sector

Key contributions include:

Sharing of Health Alerts and Vaccination Schedules

Mobilizing Mothers for Antenatal Care

Educating Communities to Combat HIV/AIDS and Malaria

Disease Outbreak Reporting

Interpretation

The role of social media comes in the form of an accessible channel for carrying out health communication, aside from conventional means such as the radio and health workers. It can be useful in awareness campaigns and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle among people in rural areas (Mwesige, 2020).

4.3.2 Education Sector

Key contributions include:

Sharing of learning resources via WhatsApp & Facebook groups

Announcing School Activities and Events

Organizing Online Tutors and Study Groups

Interpretation

Social media promotes educational inclusivity, especially during educational disruptions such as school closures. Social media offers enhanced peer-to-peer learning and effective information dissemination (Nakato, 2021).

4.4 Challenges Limiting Social Media Use

Some of the key challenges that affected the trends in social media usage were internet and smartphone costs, connectivity, lack of digital literacy, misinformation, and unawareness of the potential of social media.

The study found that social media is an effective means for advancing social change in rural areas, although its maximum potential is quenched by infrastructural, economic, and knowledge factors. The recommendations included enhancing digital infrastructure, reducing data charges, and raising digital literacies alongside positive social media practice and production by young people in the community.

These findings are useful and provide valuable insights for policymakers, development partners, and the education community, and also emphasize the need to capitalize on the "social media" tool for the improvement of awareness, participation, and rural development.

Keywords: Social media, Social change, Rural development, Digital literacy, Kinoni Sub-county, Uganda

Interpretation:

The major barriers to social media use include affordability, network instability, and low digital literacy. These challenges limit its effectiveness in promoting social change in rural communities.

4.5 Ways to Improve Social Media for Social Change

Respondents proposed the following strategies:

Upgrade internet infrastructure and network connectivity in rural areas

Reducing mobile data charges to improve accessibility

Provide Digital Literacy Training for Community Members

Sensitize the population on responsible social media use

Support online civic education programs through governments and NGOs

Encourage youth to produce local content that meets the needs

Interpretation

The implementation of these strategies will undoubtedly empower rural communities to tap into the opportunities that social media has to offer towards the promotion of awareness, mobilization, and transformation

4.6 Summary

The findings, therefore, reveal that WhatsApp and Facebook are the most popular social media platforms used to disseminate messages for health, education, and development in Kinoni Sub-county. However, the challenges affecting the potential of social media, for instance, lack of connectivity, cost, and literate citizens, can be addressed through infrastructural development and capacity building, which can greatly shape social change in rural areas.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed synopsis of the research, and the conclusions of the research based on the results, in addition to the recommendations on the improvement of the usage of social media in bringing social change in the rural areas. This study aims to address the research questions, which were evaluating the usage levels of social media, the impact of social media on health, education, and community development, the constraints of using social media in rural areas, and the strategies for improving the efficiency of social media in the Kinoni Sub-county, Kiruhura District.

5.1 Summary of the Study

Summary

The major objective of the study was to examine the role of social media platforms in effecting social change in rural areas, with specific reference to Kinoni Sub-county. The study aimed to:

1. Estimate the extent of social media use in the sub-county.
2. Investigate the role of social media in facilitating changes in the health, educational, and community development sectors.
3. Identify the factors that could influence the impact of social media.
4. Suggest ways of improving its usage in rural development.

A descriptive case study was conducted because the study sought to explore in-depth the usage of social media. A total of 80 participants, consisting of ordinary citizens, leaders of the local councils, social media activists, teachers, and health staff, were taken into consideration.

A variety of methods were used to collect data from the study. These methods include questionnaires, key informant interviews (KIIs), as well as non-participant observations. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. The other type of data was analyzed thematically.

Key Findings

1. Social Media Usage:

WhatsApp was used most frequently on the platform (81%), followed by Facebook (60%), TikTok (28%), and X (12%).

Youth, along with people possessing secondary and higher levels of education, were the most actively engaging on the social media platform, emphasizing that both digital literacy skills and younger ages play an important role in social media engagement.

2. The Role of Social Media in Social Change:

Health: The technology was utilized to create Alerts and Vaccination Schedules, and Maternal Health messages. The mobilization of mothers to attend antenatal care through the use of social media helped in the prevention of certain a Diseases like HIV and malaria

Education: Teachers, students, and parents used WhatsApp and Facebook for exchanging learning materials and creating learning groups. This shows that social media helps complement education and, in fact, becomes even more relevant in situations where access to learning materials is restricted.

Country Development: Social media greatly contributed to mobilization for various community activities such as bulungi bwansi, awareness creation about domestic violence, promotion of agricultural activities, and involvement in activities related to governance, such as the Parish Development Model.

3. Challenges to Social Media Usage:

High internet and smartphone costs (75%)

No or poor connectivity in the

Low digital literacy (56.

A limited number of smartphones available for use among

Misinformation Diffusion (31

Lack of awareness of the social media potential (25%)

These are the factors that affect the maximum potential of social media as a tool of social change.

4. Strategies for Improvement:

More internet infrastructure and networks should be established in rural areas.

Reduced costs of mobile data connectivity.

Digital literacy education.

To raise awareness about social media use.

Develop content creation among the young population.

Participate in online civic education campaigns instituted by appropriate authorities.

5.2 Conclusion

Conclusion Based on the results, the following conclusion can be made:

1. Social Media as a Tool for Social Change:

The social media like WhatsApp and Facebook are efficient in reaching the communities located in the rural areas.

2. Influence on Behavior and Awareness:

Thus, social media is a positive agent in behavioral change through the provision of health information, access to education, and tools for community development programs.

3. Obstacles to

Problems related to the absence of digital literacy skills, connectivity inability, cost ineffectiveness, as well as misinformation, have limited the possibility of social media acting as a catalyst for change.

4. Potential

Therefore, in this context, the optimal utilization of social media in resolving infrastructural challenges, digital literacy, and its positive use can be very instrumental in rural development.

5.3 Recommendations

As part of improving the efficiency of utilization of social media in executing social change in Kinoni Sub-county, the following recommendations are recommended:

1. Improving

The government and internet service providers must ensure that internet connectivity reaches the rural areas.

2. Reducing Data

Telecom companies can offer rural population-oriented data plans to encourage the usage of social media sites.

3. Digital Literacy

Training workshops to impart the required skills in the usage of social media in health, education, and development should be conducted by schools, NGOs, and the local government.

4. Awareness

There should also be sensitization campaigns in the communities regarding the responsible use of Social Media.

5. Youth and Community Engagement:

The youth may be encouraged to produce content which may address issues like agriculture, health, and governance among other things that affect their surrounding environment.

6. Policy

Furthermore, the strategy and the programs must be developed by policy-makers, targeting digital inclusion and the utilization of social media for the benefit of rural communities.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

The areas of potential future research which were determined by this study include:

1. Examine the application of social media platforms in related fields and rural areas, such as agriculture, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy.
2. Perform a comparative study on the difference and similarities in the use of social media in both rural and urban settings.
3. Participate in long-term research to assess the long-term effects of social media services on the development of rural communities.

5.5 Summary of the Chapter .

This chapter has successfully summarized the entire study while also offering conclusions and recommendations with the aim of optimizing the use of social media as a tool in effecting social change within the community. The conclusions here are that there are immense capabilities of using social media as a tool of effecting behavioral change in Kinoni Sub-county, as long as the challenges are properly addressed.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Questionnaire for Respondents

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
 2. Age: ☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56+
 3. Education Level: ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Tertiary/University
 4. Occupation: ☐ Farmer ☐ Trader/Entrepreneur ☐ Teacher/Health Worker ☐ Student/Youth ☐ Other (Specify)
-

5.

Section B: Social Media Usage

5. Which social media platforms do you use? (Tick all that apply)
- ☐ WhatsApp ☐ Facebook ☐ TikTok ☐ X (Twitter) ☐ Other (Specify)
-

6. How frequently do you use social media?
- ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Rarely

Section C: Social Media and Social Change

7. How does social media help in:
- a) Health awareness?

b) Education?

c) Community development? _____

8. What challenges do you face in using social media?

9. Suggest ways to improve social media usage for community development:

Appendix II: Interview Guide for Key Informants

1. What social media platforms are commonly used in Kinoni Sub-county?
2. How do these platforms influence health, education, and community development?
3. What challenges do residents face in using social media effectively?
4. What strategies would you recommend to improve social media use for social change?

Appendix III: Observation Checklist

- Presence of WhatsApp or Facebook groups used for community mobilization.
- Evidence of shared health or education materials online.
- Signs of youth participation in digital content creation.
- Community engagement in online discussions or campaigns.
- Challenges noted, such as poor connectivity or low smartphone use.