

**EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF RADIO SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE
CAMPAIGNS ON YOUTH ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR AT UGANDA
CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY, MUKONO**

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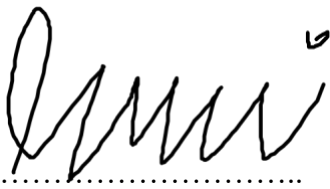
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DECLARATION

I, **NAHABWE EMILLY BAGYERUKA**, declare that this audio research project is my own original work and it has not been submitted to any institution of learning or website for publication and award for any degree or qualifications.

Signature



.....

Date

24th April, 2026.

APPROVAL

This audio research project is submitted to the School of Journalism, Media and Communication with my approval as the supervisor.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Ssenoga', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

.....

Date

24th April, 2026.

Mr. Ssenoga Geoffrey Abraham Bakiraasa

Supervisor.

DEDICATION

For my late grandfather Lay Canon Erisa Ndyabagyeruka for whom even my best effort “could have been better”.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Mr. Geoffrey Ssenoga for the guidance, patience, and academic support provided throughout this research process. He's insights and feedback were invaluable in shaping both the study and the final output.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of radio-based Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) messages on university students, with a focus on Uganda Christian University (UCU). Although radio continues to be widely used for behaviour change campaigns in Uganda, changing media consumption patterns among young people raise questions about its relevance and effectiveness for university students.

The study adopted a qualitative research approach, using interviews with undergraduate students and communication practitioners involved in radio and SBCC-related work. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and supported by an audio production that documented participant perspectives. Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns emerging from the data.

The findings revealed that while some students are exposed to radio-based SBCC messages, most do not consider them highly influential in shaping their behaviour. Credibility emerged as a critical factor in determining whether students considered a message believable or worth engaging with. Participants indicated that the source of the message, clarity, and relevance to their lived experiences played a major role in message acceptance. Communication practitioners similarly emphasised credibility as central to effective SBCC.

The study concludes that radio-based SBCC messages targeting university students must prioritise credibility, relevance, and audience-centred approaches to remain effective. The findings contribute to discussions on youth communication, media credibility, and the future of radio-based behaviour change campaigns within higher education contexts.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Radio remains one of the most influential communication platforms in Uganda and across Africa. Its accessibility, affordability, and use of local languages make it a powerful tool for information dissemination and behaviour change. Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) refers to the strategic use of communication to influence positive attitudes, knowledge, and practices within communities. It combines elements of mass media, advocacy, social marketing, and interpersonal communication to promote healthy and socially responsible behaviours.

This study examines how radio SBCC campaigns influence youth attitudes and behaviour at Uganda Christian University (UCU). While most young people are now turning to digital media, radio remains widely consumed across Uganda. The project seeks to understand whether, and how, radio campaigns still influence the perceptions and choices of students within a university environment that is shaped by faith, education, and digital exposure.

1.1 Background to the Study

In Uganda, SBCC campaigns have historically used radio to communicate messages about public health, education, and community development. Notable examples include the *Straight Talk* campaign (UNESCO, 2020) and the *Communication for Healthy Communities* project (USAID, 2020), both of which demonstrated that well-designed radio programs can influence behaviour, especially among adolescents.

However, most of these studies have focused on school-going youth and rural communities, not on university students who represent a more autonomous and media-diverse population. At UCU, students engage with a range of media from radio and television to TikTok and Instagram and are often influenced by peers and online trends. It remains unclear how much radio still shapes their awareness, attitudes, and behaviour in relation to social issues such as health, morality, and personal wellbeing.

1.2 Problem Statement

Radio has historically been a key platform for Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) in Uganda, particularly in areas such as public health, social responsibility, and youth development. National and donor-funded campaigns continue to rely on radio to disseminate behaviour change messages due to its perceived reach, affordability, and credibility.

However, recent studies on youth media consumption in Uganda indicate a significant shift toward digital and online platforms. Research among Ugandan university students shows that a majority spend several hours daily on mobile phones and social media, while radio consumption is often secondary or intermittent (Straight Talk Campaign Evaluation; UNESCO, 2019; AKU Thesis Repository). This shift raises concern about the continued relevance and effectiveness of radio-based SBCC campaigns among university students, particularly those in urban, media-saturated environments such as Uganda Christian University (UCU).

Despite the continued investment in radio SBCC campaigns, there is limited empirical evidence examining how university students interpret these messages, whether they perceive them as credible, and whether such messages influence their attitudes or behaviour. This gap is especially pronounced for students aged 18 years and above, who differ significantly from younger adolescents in autonomy, media literacy, and decision-making capacity.

At UCU, institutional values rooted in faith, ethics, and moral conduct further shape how messages are received and evaluated. It remains unclear how these cultural and moral frameworks interact with radio SBCC messages addressing themes such as health, responsible behaviour, and social wellbeing.

If radio SBCC campaigns are no longer relevant or credible to university students, public communication efforts risk misallocating resources and failing to influence a critical segment of the youth population. Without understanding how students engage with, interpret, or disregard radio-based behaviour change messages, campaign designers and communicators may continue to rely on strategies that are ineffective in contemporary university contexts.

This study therefore seeks to examine how UCU students perceive radio-based SBCC messages, the factors that influence their credibility and relevance, and the extent to which such messages

affect student attitudes and behaviour in a digitally dominant media environment. 1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3 General Objective

To examine the influence of radio-based Social and Behaviour Change Communication campaigns on youth attitudes and behaviour at Uganda Christian University.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess the extent of exposure of UCU students to radio SBCC campaigns.
2. To examine how these campaigns influence students' awareness, attitudes, and behaviour.
3. To explore how institutional culture and peer influence shape the reception of SBCC messages among students.
4. To identify the communication strategies that make SBCC campaigns more effective for university audiences.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How often are UCU students exposed to radio SBCC campaigns?
2. What attitudes do students hold toward the messages broadcast through these campaigns?
3. How do radio SBCC campaigns influence students' perceptions and behaviour?
4. What factors such as peer influence, institutional culture, or digital exposure affect the impact of these campaigns?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study will be conducted at Uganda Christian University (UCU), Mukono, focusing on undergraduate students aged 18 to 25 years across different faculties. It will also include a small number of experts in communication and SBCC campaign design to provide professional perspectives.

The research will limit its scope to radio-based SBCC campaigns those that use radio talk shows, adverts, or jingles to promote positive social or health behaviour. Other SBCC channels, such as television or social media, will only be considered when they interact with radio content.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways. First, it contributes to academic knowledge by exploring how radio-based SBCC campaigns influence behaviour and perception among university students, a group often overlooked in previous Ugandan communication research.

Second, the findings will provide practical insights for communication practitioners, media houses, and SBCC campaign designers on how to make radio messages more relevant and engaging to youth audiences in higher education.

Third, as UCU students increasingly consume both radio and digital media, this study will help identify strategies for integrating traditional and digital platforms in youth communication campaigns.

Finally, the project supports journalism and communication training by demonstrating how research and media production can be merged to create impactful, fact-based storytelling that informs and educates.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature related to Social and Behaviour Change Communication, radio as a platform for behaviour change, and youth media consumption. The review highlights existing knowledge and identifies gaps that justify the current study.

2.1 Defining Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC)

SBCC is defined as a systematic, research-based process that uses communication to promote and sustain positive behaviour (UNESCO, 2020). It builds on theories from psychology and mass communication, including the *Social Cognitive Theory* (Bandura, 2001) and the *Diffusion of Innovations Theory* (Rogers, 2003). These theories explain how individuals learn behaviours from models, and how new practices spread through social systems.

In the Ugandan context, SBCC campaigns have largely used radio because of its reach and trust. Studies show that radio messages can significantly increase awareness and promote public health practices, though their impact depends on message clarity, cultural relevance, and repetition (Akankunda et al., 2022).

2.2 The Role of Radio in Behaviour Change

Radio's accessibility makes it ideal for reaching diverse audiences. The *Straight Talk* campaign (UNESCO, 2020) and similar projects demonstrated how storytelling and discussion programs can promote open communication about sensitive topics like sexual health. However, more recent studies, such as the USAID (2020) report on youth engagement, reveal that traditional radio alone may not be sufficient to influence young audiences who are more active on digital platforms.

2.3 Gaps in Existing Research

While previous studies confirm the potential of radio to influence knowledge and attitudes, they focus mainly on adolescents and rural listeners. Few studies explore university students, who are older, more autonomous, and digitally engaged. Research from UCUDIR (2023) and *The Standard* (2016) highlights that while UCU students still access radio, it is often through mobile

phones or online streaming. This shift demands an updated evaluation of how radio campaigns integrate with digital platforms to sustain relevance.

The current study addresses this gap by focusing on the attitudes and behaviours of UCU students in response to radio SBCC campaigns, and by examining how factors such as peer influence and institutional norms shape message reception.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by two key theories: Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI). These frameworks explain how communication influences awareness, attitudes, and behaviour particularly among youth audiences.

a) Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001)

SCT posits that people learn and adopt new behaviours by observing others and believing they can achieve similar outcomes. In radio SBCC campaigns, characters or speakers act as *models* whose stories demonstrate the benefits of positive behaviour such as healthy living, responsibility, or community engagement. When students find these messages relatable and attainable, their self-efficacy (belief in their ability to act) and outcome expectations (belief that action leads to benefits) increase. This helps explain how UCU students might be influenced by persuasive, story-driven radio content.

b) Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003)

DOI explains how new ideas and practices spread within a social group. It emphasizes the role of communication channels, time, and peer networks in shaping adoption. For university students, peer discussions and campus culture play a major role in validating what they hear on radio. If a radio message is endorsed by influential peers or aligns with shared values, it becomes more likely to influence behaviour across the student body.

c) Theoretical Link to the Study

Together, these theories suggest that behaviour change among UCU students occurs when radio campaigns provide relatable models (SCT) and when those messages are reinforced through peer interaction and social validation (DOI). This integrated framework helps explain how radio can still influence youth attitudes and behaviour even in a digital age.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Justification of the Study

This research is justified by the need to evaluate the continuing role of radio in influencing behaviour among a digitally savvy youth population. Understanding how UCU students respond to radio campaigns will help communicators design more effective, hybrid SBCC strategies that combine traditional media and digital interaction.

The audio documentary format will enhance this research by capturing authentic voices, reflections, and attitudes of students and professionals, making the findings accessible to both academic and public audiences.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Methodology

The study will be qualitative in nature, using interviews and focus group discussions to gather insights. The findings will be presented through both a written report and a 10-minute audio documentary that captures authentic student and expert voices.

Population: UCU students and SBCC or journalism professionals.

- **Sample:** 20 students and 1 expert (selected through purposive sampling).
- **Data Collection:** Semi-structured interviews and 2 focus group discussions.
- **Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis will be used to identify recurring patterns, attitudes, and perceptions.
- **Output:** A 13:51 minute audio documentary that creatively presents findings, supported by an academic report.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Ethical Considerations

- Participation will be voluntary, and informed consent will be obtained before interviews.
- Participants' names will not be disclosed; pseudonyms may be used in the documentary.
- Respondents will be informed that the study is purely academic.
- Participants may withdraw at any point without consequence.
- The research will adhere to Uganda Christian University's ethics guidelines and the principles of responsible journalism.

5.1 Appendix A: Student Questionnaire

1. How often do you listen to the radio?
2. Which radio stations or programs do you listen to most?
3. Are you aware of any radio programs or campaigns that promote behaviour change (e.g., health, relationships, environment)?
4. What kind of radio messages attract your attention the most?
5. Have you ever changed a habit or belief because of something you heard on radio?
6. Do you discuss radio messages with friends or classmates afterward?
7. Do you find radio messages more trustworthy than social media messages? Why or why not?
8. What factors make a radio campaign engaging or relevant to you as a student?
9. Do you believe radio is still effective in influencing young people today?
10. How could radio campaigns be improved to better reach students at UCU?

5.2 Appendix B: Expert Interview Guide

1. How effective do you think radio still is as a tool for behaviour change among youth?
2. What challenges do you face when designing or implementing SBCC campaigns on radio?
3. How do you ensure messages are relatable to young, university-aged audiences?
4. What strategies have proven successful in integrating radio with digital or social media?
5. What lessons can be learned from past campaigns like *Straight Talk*?
6. What advice would you give to communicators or students interested in SBCC?

5.3 Appendix C: Ethical Statement

This study follows ethical research practices. All participants will be briefed about the purpose of the study, their right to confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation. The research does not involve any form of coercion, deception, or harm. Audio recordings will be securely stored and used only for academic purposes. Excerpts used in the final documentary will not identify participants by name.

CHAPTER SIX

6.1 Overview of Participants

The study reached out to 24 students of Uganda Christian University (UCU). Out of these, 20 students consented and participated, while 4 declined. The participants were drawn from different years of study and academic programmes. The study also included one communication practitioner, whose insights were used to complement the student perspectives.

6.2 Students' Exposure to Radio SBCC Messages

Findings from the table indicate that not all students regularly listen to radio, even though radio remains a common platform for Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) campaigns. Among the 20 participants, a noticeable number reported irregular or minimal radio listenership, while others indicated that they only listen occasionally or for specific programmes.

This finding suggests that while radio remains present in students' media environments, it is not the dominant medium for many UCU students. This aligns with broader media consumption trends among young people, where digital platforms increasingly compete with traditional media.

6.3 Perceived Effectiveness of Radio SBCC Campaigns

The findings further show that most students reported that radio SBCC messages do not strongly influence their behaviour. According to the table, more than half of the respondents indicated that they rarely change their behaviour based on radio messages alone.

Students explained that although they may hear health or social messages on radio, these messages often do not translate into personal action. This suggests a gap between message exposure and behaviour change, which is a core concern of SBCC practice.

6.4 Credibility as a Key Determinant of Message Acceptance

One of the strongest themes emerging from the data is credibility. According to the table, the majority of students identified credibility as the most important factor when deciding whether to believe or act on an SBCC message.

Several students indicated that they are more likely to trust messages delivered by:

Recognised professionals

Trusted institutions

Voices with lived experience or proven expertise

This finding was strongly reinforced by the communication practitioner, who emphasised that credibility determines whether a message is taken seriously or ignored. The practitioner noted that audiences are increasingly critical of messages and are more likely to question the source before accepting the content.

The convergence between student responses and the practitioner's views strengthens this finding and highlights credibility as a central element in effective SBCC communication.

6.5 Limited Behaviour Change Despite Message Exposure

Despite being exposed to SBCC messages, many students reported little to no direct behaviour change. The table shows that only a small number of respondents felt that radio campaigns had influenced their personal decisions or habits.

This suggests that exposure alone is insufficient. Students appear to require messages that are:

Relevant to their lived realities

Delivered by credible sources

Reinforced through multiple platforms

The findings indicate that without these elements, SBCC messages risk being perceived as background noise rather than catalysts for change.

6.6 Discussion of Key Insights

Overall, the findings reveal that while radio SBCC campaigns continue to reach students, their impact on behaviour is limited. Credibility emerged as the most influential factor in determining message believability, more than frequency of exposure or message content alone.

The study also shows a contrast between the intended goals of SBCC campaigns and the actual experiences of students, highlighting the need for more student-centred communication approaches. The practitioner's insights confirm that effective SBCC must go beyond broadcasting messages and focus on trust, relevance, and audience engagement.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that radio-based Social and Behaviour Change Communication messages do not automatically influence university students. Instead, students actively assess the credibility and relevance of such messages before engaging with them.

7.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that radio-based SBCC campaigns targeting university students prioritise credible sources, relevant content, and audience-centred approaches. Campaign designers should consider integrating radio messages with digital platforms to better engage university audiences.

7.3 Suggestions for Further Research

Future research could compare the influence of radio-based SBCC with digital media platforms among university students.

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