

**X AS A TOOL FOR PEER-TO-PEER NUTRITIONAL ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS AMONG  
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN UGANDA**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
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## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, certify that the study project I am submitting is original to me and has not been submitted to Uganda Christian University or any other college, institution, or university for academic credit or other consideration.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Georgine', written in dark ink.

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Date: 27<sup>th</sup> May 2024

## **APPROVAL**

In accordance with Uganda Christian University policies, this proposal has been done under my supervision and it is accepted in partial fulfilment of the Master of Arts in Strategic Communication requirements.

Signature: .....

**DR. ANGELLA NPAKOL, SUPERVISOR**

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> May 2024

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## **DEDICATION**

To Mama, Cheptengan Evaline Idewait, you have been my unwavering support throughout. I recall your encouragement, where you expressed that my undergraduate degree belonged to you and urged me to pursue further education. Thank you for motivating me, believing in me, and cheering me on to achieve greater heights.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Communities of nutrition advocates have emerged globally, with young people, especially university students, actively engaging in nutrition advocacy by contributing their voices and opinions to the decision-making process. However, nutrition advocacy has often overlooked the nutritional needs of university students, whose diets are often compromised by poor eating habits, food choices, and sometimes low socio-economic status. This study aimed to investigate the role of X as a tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy and awareness among university students in Uganda. To achieve the study objectives, a qualitative approach was employed to identify the factors motivating students to use X for nutritional advocacy and awareness. The study also examined the effects, challenges, and opportunities associated with the use of X for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy. The findings revealed that students were motivated to use X due to its high believability and wide reach among their peers. In conclusion, X has been positively embraced by university students for conducting nutritional advocacy and awareness initiatives, as it provides easy access to nutrition information, facilitates interaction with other advocates, and fosters community-building. Students value the accuracy and authenticity of the information shared through X and are receptive to receiving and sharing healthy eating habits and recipe tips via the platform. The study provides valuable insights on ways to effectively leverage X for nutrition advocacy and awareness initiatives.

**Key words: University Students, Nutrition, Advocacy, X, Peer-to-Peer, Awareness**

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

<b>CISANU</b>	<b>Civil Society Alliance for Nutrition Uganda</b>
<b>COVID-19</b>	<b>Coronavirus Disease 2019</b>
<b>FAO</b>	<b>Food and Agricultural Organization</b>
<b>HIV</b>	<b>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</b>
<b>ICN</b>	<b>International Conference on Nutrition</b>
<b>MAAIF</b>	<b>Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries</b>
<b>MFSNP</b>	<b>Multi-sectoral Food Security and Nutrition Project</b>
<b>NACS</b>	<b>Nutrition Advocacy and Communication Strategy</b>
<b>NCD</b>	<b>Non Communicable Disease</b>
<b>NDP</b>	<b>National Development Plan</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organization</b>
<b>N4G</b>	<b>Nutrition for Growth Summit</b>
<b>OPM</b>	<b>Office of the Prime Minister</b>
<b>SUN</b>	<b>Scaling Up Nutrition</b>
<b>SDGs</b>	<b>Sustainable Development Goals</b>
<b>SME</b>	<b>Social Media Engagement</b>
<b>SNS</b>	<b>Social Networking Services</b>
<b>STI</b>	<b>Sexually Transmitted Infection</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>Unite Nations</b>
<b>UNAU</b>	<b>United Nations Association of Uganda</b>
<b>UNAP</b>	<b>Uganda Nutrition Action Plan</b>
<b>UNFSS</b>	<b>United Nations Food Systems Summit</b>
<b>WHA</b>	<b>World Health Assembly</b>
<b>WHO</b>	<b>World Health Organization</b>

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

In the effort to advance the global nutrition agenda, the United Nations (UN) proclaimed the Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), known as the "Nutrition Decade," following the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) in 2014 (UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, 2016 – 2025). The Decade aims to achieve the global nutrition and diet-related Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) targets set by the World Health Assembly (WHA), thus contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Its overarching goal is to ensure access to affordable, diversified, safe, and healthy diets for all people, at all times and of all ages (UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, 2016 – 2025).

During the first half of the Nutrition Decade, communication and advocacy work on the significance of nutrition and healthy diets increased awareness. The evidence demonstrating that unhealthy diets and malnutrition are significant risk factors for illness and mortality worldwide is indisputable (Mahy & Wijnhoven, 2020), making the global concern for healthy diets and improved nutrition highly prominent as being witnessed at the moment. However, for progress against malnutrition to be achieved, it requires a collective effort from all stakeholders, including university students, through advocacy. With the current advancement in technology, young people are taking advantage of online platforms precisely social media to promote health. Social media platforms are low-cost tools that can be used to address issues in public health nutrition to create impact on the population. In 2012, WHO introduced its global e-Health strategy to promote, develop, and assess activities involving online platforms (Ojo et al., 2021). These platforms comprising X among others are some of the tools used to enhance population health and wellbeing. Over the past ten years, people have been finding, communicating and sharing information because of access to the internet (Lee et al., 2015).

For instance, social media has become a popular tool for sharing knowledge including that on nutrition which has grown rapidly (Fassier et al., 2016; Palomo-Llinares, et al., 2021). According to the current analysis there are 4.80 billion social media users around the world, equating to 59.9 percent of the total global population (DataReportal, 2022). Interventions involving social media can influence behaviors to improve lifestyles and metabolic indicators of non-communicable diseases. Due to the widespread usage of social media, these tools have become effective in changing behavior through a variety of data-driven and targeted techniques (Appel et al., 2019; Araujo et al., 2017). This study was conducted to examine the role of X as a tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy and awareness among university students. This is due to the fact that social media platforms are powerful tools and they are capable of influencing public opinion and potentially changing people's behavior. The tools also encourage citizens' participation without necessarily converging in one physical area, enhance health systems, support health policies, and encourage healthy behavior (Mendoza-herrera et al., 2020).

### **1.1 Background of the study**

University students' well-being is influenced by a number of factors as they transition to maturity (Patton et al., 2016). Poll et al., (2020) elucidates that significant adjustments are capable of taking place in the nutritional behavior of individuals in their youth. Lifestyle developed in youth can define a person's health and life conditions for that reason, continuous health monitoring is crucial since the choices made can have an influence in future (Sawyer et al., 2018). Health threats are different during the phase of youth, adding to biological development which happens rigorously and are regularly ignored by health systems and society (Patton et al., 2016).

Scholars including Chaput (2020) have alluded that sedentary lifestyle is rapidly growing amongst young people globally and this is having repercussions in the look of present socio-cultural developments which often amplifies appreciation of inactive behavior, particularly screen time (comprising smartphones, computers, electronic games) that continuously compete with active time. Embracing a healthy lifestyle involving a balanced diet and consistent physical exercise ought to be supported from infancy all through youth, since it quickly affects health promotion and risk reduction that can influence the health of future generations (Poll et al.,

2020). It is only important to pay keen attention to the health and well-being of the young population as they are being swayed by exceptional global forces.

In the face of low consideration given to young people, there is a surge in nutritional demand during this phase (Nabugoomu et al., 2018). A lot of popular nutrition interventions concentrate on children, mothers and adolescents leaving out youths' demands (Christian & Smith, 2018) yet, nutrition remains the top risk factor contributing to the major reason of adolescents and adult morbidity and mortality (Black et al., 2013; Christian & Smith, 2018). According to Kennedy et al., (2010) when there is an increase in individual dietary range, then nutrient adequacy of the diet does increase as well. An assertion that has been reverberated by Povey et al., (1998) who reveals that eating healthy comprises of a balanced and varied diet that is made up of foods such as fruits, vegetables and those having vitamins, minerals. Polivy & Herman, (2005) mention that it also embraces good eating habits that bring about physical and psychological wellbeing. Nevertheless, diets of students in universities is often compromised by poor eating habits, poor food choices and sometimes low socio-economic standing. There is a scarcity of information on the burden of nutrient adequacy among young adults in Uganda, but also not adequate data is available on the nutritional status of young people. Malnutrition in all its forms (under and over nutrition as well as non-communicable diseases) remains prevalent in Uganda and it is one of the major issues holding back development.

Nutrition advocacy can be particularly challenging, that is why it is key to have champions or promoters such as university students to ensure it is not unheeded by those who occasionally yet unintentionally have the authority to better nutrition outcomes. Uganda's Nutrition Advocacy and Communication Strategy (NACS) is the framework currently guiding nutrition advocacy with a purpose of laying out how communication can provide a sense of urgency and serve as the fiber weaving a new understanding of nutrition. The framework focuses on communication activities related to the reduction of chronic under-nutrition emphasizing improving nutrition for women and children during the first 1,000 Days. The target of women and children clearly alienates young people particularly university students thus confirming how little information is known on the nutritional status of young people as alluded to earlier. Furthermore, the guide has 4 pillars as indicators for advocacy and social change communication activities with pillar 3 discoursing on promoting positive role models; embracing the use of evidence of people



adopting the critical behaviors and changing their attitudes towards positive social practices from individuals.

Therefore, nutrition advocacy forms the bedrock of driving and empowering nutrition outcomes. It is through nutrition advocacy that communities are sensitized and policy changes are influenced. University students are keenly developing a strong understanding of nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable diets. They are equally appreciating the challenges associated with poor diets and in turn sharing their ideas for transformation to make the right food choices and live a healthy life. In the context of the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) convened in September 2021 and the Nutrition for Growth Summit (N4G) convened in December 2021, under Civil Society Alliance for Nutrition Uganda (CISANU) a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) promoting nutrition advocacy, I took part in country wide dialogues with youth to capture their voices and know what they think about nutrition issues in Uganda. During the dialogues I realized youth who majority were in higher institutions of learning are already involved in nutrition advocacy in one way or another specially within themselves. They are also advocating for opportunities to share their views and participate in developing solutions for better nutrition. This initiative is building a community of peer-to-peer nutrition advocates whom through engagements, are getting to the center of nutrition advocacy and becoming change agents.

The UN 2030 Agenda has created a demand for advocates to push for development agendas including nutrition. At the same time, the opportunity to end malnutrition has never been greater. The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition and the SDGs provide global and national impetus to address malnutrition. Communities of nutrition advocates especially youth have been built across the globe including the Global Youth Leaders for Nutrition Program under the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. Information on these initiatives and developments is constantly being shared on social media platforms especially X partly because of its features and how it has been perceived to be used by elites. This propagation has attracted young people to validate their involvement in nutrition advocacy through having their voices and opinions included in the decision making process. Equally, since diets of university students is compromised by unhealthy eating habits and poor food choices, they are rallying themselves to make known of their nutritional needs and their ability of recognize and contribute to solutions for better

nutrition outcomes. From the dialogues, I also established that young people are deliberately choosing to engage through social media because they feel they do not have the opportunity to directly engage with decision makers and duty bearers to have their views heard.

Subsequently, when asked what they advocate for, nutrition is not really the go-to choice because it is not as popular among them as climate change, sexual reproductive health, HIV/STI and drug abuse despite its importance. It is common for most young people to not quickly recognize that nutrition affects them daily through food choices. But since its now gaining momentum as a cornerstone for building strong human capital and foster sustainable development, with influence from some individual nutritionist who have taken it a notch higher to digital media, there is need and demand to speak up and promote nutritional advocacy. Arguably, it's a novel area that has not had much going on in the past years especially in research, however, the appetite and appreciation from young people to advocate for it is existent with a good number of them already engaged in it, now with the presence of social media.

From a public health perspective, interest in using social media for health outcome improvement for young people, especially in universities is on the rise. This is being done through awareness campaigns and support groups using hashtags, trends, hosting spaces for conversation as a way of disseminating information in the community (Potnis & Tahamtan, 2021). The use of X as a source of health information may be of special relevance. The microblogging site enables users to interact with a large number of people, sharing similar interests and concerns about their health and nutritional concerns. With an increase in the number of X users, health providers, patients and patient advocates comment on a diverse array of topics making the platform gain momentum in the 21st century as there is interconnectedness among the users (Lee et al., 2015). Since diet and lifestyles are major determinants of population health, social media network contents related to diet and lifestyles may have significant implications for health promotion and public health (Bristow et al., 2020)

Social media platforms are crucial information sources for decision-makers since they are updated often, providing up-to-date indicators for analysis and implementation of health policies. Videos, texts, photographs, and maps coupled with messages have been used to monitor public health, improve policy initiatives, raise awareness, and locate vulnerable populations in need of help in form of resources and counseling, and designing policies that are people centered.

Through media channels like X, people are able to share ideas and exchanges views so that policy makers can have ground to make sound policies to address the pressing challenges (Mendoza-herrera et al., 2020).

Current policy making process and advocacy has focused on improving quality and timely information to guarantee the wellbeing of communities through providing reliable information, and social media acts as an interdisciplinary platform where information is shared across different disciplines and expertise (Smailhodzic et al., 2016). X's influence as a hub for health information and advocacy, was showcased during the COVID-19 pandemic and since then this has not slowed down but rather has continuously gained momentum especially among young people, this is due in part to ease of access, ability to reach policy makers and other people of influence as well as wide and timely coverage. The growing wave of nutrition advocates are exploiting X as an open space to take part in nutrition discussions arguably because the platform is characterized by short (limited to 280 characters and frequent updates by users which makes it suitable for microblogging (Hromic & Conor, 2019). X users frequently use Hashtags (#) a feature used to discuss any topic of interest as well as retweets, likes, tagging other people and following them, especially those who can influence the topic. This act enables the spread of information and conversations to reach far and different areas on a social network (Potnis & Tahamtan, 2021).

In Uganda, X gained prominence in 2009 (Kanyoro, 2015), with over 4.74% subscribers however, with increase in the number of people joining X the user number has increased to 36.39% as of 2022 (DataReportal, 2022). Today more businesses and individuals have opted for social media as a primary tool to reach out to the community and other target groups. There is an increase in the use of X among organizations and government ministries who share information on projects for example the “Multi-sectoral Food Security and Nutrition Project (UMFSNP)” under Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries - MAAIF is one of the projects using X as a tool to disseminate information to the general public. As more Ugandans embrace social media including X, doors have been opened for nutritionist and other advocating groups to utilize the opportunity to conduct advocacy and increase awareness on nutrition issues to the public. Moreover, social media sites are relatively inexpensive platforms making it feasible for organizations and individuals to participate on common ground. There has been an increase in

the adoption of X as an advocacy and awareness tool about cancer, dangers of smoking, fighting depression through hashtags and hosting spaces, however, little is known about its impact on peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy among university students.

It's upon this background that this research sought to examine X as a tool for nutritional advocacy and awareness. Several scholars including (Alvarez-Mon et al., 2022) have explored interests and sentiments of the general population regarding certain health problems on X. Others Nguyen et al., 2018 have also demonstrated that social media post analysis can disclose health environment indicators linked to local mortality and health habits, particularly when it comes to food and heart disease mortality. Similarly, Smailhodzic et al., 2016 and Yeung et al., (2021) allude that using X in the medical field determined various implications of patients using social media for healthcare-related reasons within the healthcare system. For instance, by enhancing the information provided by medical professionals and by offering psychosocial support, social media can benefit patients by fostering their autonomy (McCaughey et al., 2016).

Drawing from this, X has emerged as one of the social media sites for promotions, awareness creation and advocating for a common cause. Since X is interactive it has facilitated dialogues and its user friendly features have enabled nutritional experts globally to join the discussions (Mikolajczyk, 2020). Because of the real-time nature of the material and the simplicity of accessing and reviewing publically available information, X offers public health researchers a distinctive big data source. Every day, about 500 million tweets are sent by more than 300 million active users globally, expanding the reach and amount of data (DataReportal, 2022). X users do not necessarily represent the entire population, but a variety of demographic groups are represented as more and more users of various ages prefer X over other social media platforms (Sinnenberg et al., 2017).

On that note, there has been growing acknowledgement in Uganda over the years on how malnutrition is an impediment on both human and economic development as well as a problem in the lives of many Ugandans. Government is taking measures to reduce its prevalence among citizens, but the problem is still persistent and serious. Challenges comprising lack of operational capacity at various levels, low national budget support for nutrition action, insufficient political commitment, lack of multi-stakeholder coordination among public and private entities and poor

prioritization of nutrition issues has seen limited progress in addressing the problem. Several initiatives to address malnutrition have been put in place including advocacy, policies like Uganda Nutrition Action Plan – UNAP, National Development Plan – NDP and NACS plus institutions to oversee the implementation of these policies.

However, there are still limited effective engagements at adequate scale to address the issue. To begin with, the NACS, the guiding nutrition advocacy strategy emphasizes improving nutrition for women and children during the first 1,000 Days. The target of women and children clearly alienates a critical constituency of young people from directly benefiting from nutrition advocacy and communication. Yet young people comprise the majority in population with potential of significantly contributing to the workforce and development of the country.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Current nutrition advocacy often overlooks the dietary needs of university students, who face compromised diets due to poor eating habits, suboptimal food choices, and low socio-economic status. Scholars like Ukegbu et al. (2019) and Gallegos et al. (2014) highlight the vulnerability of these students to food insecurity, which negatively impacts their health and academic performance. They emphasize the need for targeted advocacy to address these issues. This neglect has resulted in a lack of data on the nutritional adequacy and status of university students in Uganda. Isabirye et al. (2020) also note the scarcity of information on nutrient adequacy, pointing out that while a third of adolescents globally are obese, over 10% in low and middle-income countries are underweight. Despite these alarming statistics, nutrition advocacy has traditionally focused on influential individuals such as politicians and cultural leaders, rather than engaging university students who have innovative ideas and energy.

In response, young people have begun to advocate for better nutrition, ensuring their voices are heard and actively participating in solutions that affect them directly. They are using social media platforms, particularly X, to express their nutritional needs and concerns. Studies like "Mediterranean Diet Social Network Impact along 11 Years in the Major US Media Outlets" by Alvarez-Mon et al. (2022) examine the use of X in the health sector, but there is limited research on its effectiveness as a tool for nutritional advocacy and awareness. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the use of X for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy among Ugandan university students. Understanding how social media can be utilized for nutrition advocacy is

essential for creating interventions that cater to the dietary needs and behaviors of university students.

### **1.3 General objective**

The key objective of this study was to examine the role of X as a tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy and awareness among university students.

#### **1.3.1 Specific objectives**

1. To identify the factors that motivate university students to use X as a tool for nutritional advocacy and awareness.
2. To examine the effects of X as a social media tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy among university students.
3. To establish the challenges and opportunities associated with the use of X as a social media tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy among university students.

#### **1.3.2 Research questions**

1. What are the factors that motivate university students to use X as tool for nutritional advocacy and awareness?
2. What are the effects of X as a social media tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy among university students?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities associated with the use of X as a social media tool for per to peer nutritional advocacy among university students?

### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

#### **1.4.1 Geographical scope**

Kampala was the location of the study, specifically at Kyambogo and Uganda Christian Universities. The preference of the two study areas was based on the assumptions that they are urban centered with insights and experience in use of social media.

### **1.5 Justification of the Study**

There is need to examine the role of X as a tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy and awareness among university students as this will contribute to providing information and fill the gap on the unavailability of adequate information.

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

The study will provide information on how X influences the spread of information among university students and how it can be leveraged as a major channel of communication to promote nutritional advocacy and awareness. Similarly, stakeholders including government, academia, civil society, nutrition advocates, and social media influencers will be informed on the benefits of using X for nutritional advocacy and awareness. Furthermore, it will assist policy makers to comprehend the relationship between X and nutritional advocacy as this will aid in the development of policies and practical strategies towards improving nutrition of university students. It will also provide information on how X is useful in the promotion of health, nutritional advocacy and awareness.

### **1.7 Operational definitions**

**Advocacy:** is described as any action that speaks up for, suggests, justifies, defends, or cries out for someone else (Malik & Lee, 2020).

**X:** refers to a news and social networking website where users can post and reply to messages called "tweets.

**Social media:** is characterized as user behavior patterns, practices, and interactions among online user groups that employ conversational media to exchange knowledge, ideas, and opinions (Sharma, 2023)

**Peer-to-Peer:** denotes the direct interaction among individuals of the same group, age and career without intermediary parties

**Nutrition:** is defined as the practice of taking-in food which is then broken down by the body and used to promote growth and repair.

**Nutrition Advocacy:** refers to a strategic, organized and thoughtful process of forming a drive by a community (governments, development partners, civil society organizations, individuals, private sector) with the aim of communicating toward better social and political obligation for nutrition issues.

**Awareness:** refers to being knowledgeable or well-informed of a situation or issue by understanding it based on information or experience.

**University:** institution of higher learning certified to award academic degrees in various disciplines.

**Student:** a person studying in a university, college or high school.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

Aligned with the study's objectives, this chapter critically assesses the works of various authors and academics. The chapter is organized into distinct sections, including media and health advocacy, social media and health and nutrition advocacy, X and nutritional health advocacy, motivational factors for the use of X in nutritional advocacy, effects of X as a social media tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy, challenges and opportunities in using X for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy, theoretical review, and a conceptual framework.

#### **2.1 Media and health advocacy**

The media has a significant role to play in promoting and igniting change in both small-scale communities and larger societies. The media, particularly the news media, can place subjects onto the public and policymaker agendas thereby introducing new topics or encouraging new ways of viewing issues (Samuels et al., 2007). The mass media can exert positive and negative effects on both individuals and populations, and these impacts may be either intended or not (Brown, 2002). For those who receive the information and are able to comprehend and apply it for themselves or for family and friends, the media may provide information on health conditions and treatments, including nutrition that is available on a number of health websites as well as in newspaper and magazine health columns and articles. (Samuels et al., 2007). The media may also convey harmful health messages, such as advertisements for alcohol and cigarette goods, especially when they are directed at youngsters (Engle et al., 2006).

In general, media has been found to have an impact on public health issues such as diet, mental health as well as substance use and abuse (tobacco, alcohol, prescription medicines, and illicit drugs) (Engle et al., 2006). As cigarette and alcohol control campaigners watched the policy successes of public interest and consumer groups working on comparable issues, media advocacy, the deliberate use of mass media to assist community organizing and advance healthy public policy, developed in the late 1980s (Dorfman & Krasnow, 2014). Those implementing



primary prevention policies that change settings can use media advocacy as a tactic. Public health advocates must be able to demonstrate that factors other than heredity and personal choice also have an impact on health if the debate's parameters are to be changed in a way that upstream policy initiatives are fairly taken into account. (Dorfman & Krasnow, 2014). According to a report by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, there are a number of ways that television and some other forms of media in general, may contribute to childhood obesity, a condition of excessive calorie intake that raises the risk of serious illnesses like cardiovascular disease, hypertension, cancer, and type 2 diabetes. Children's media use, particularly television viewing, takes up time that could be spent exercising. Children's food choices are also influenced by food and beverage advertisements on television and other forms of media. The foods that are frequently promoted are high-calorie, low-nutrient foods. Children frequently eat somewhat unhealthy snacks when using the media, and they may eat more of these foods when dining in front of the television. Television may also slow down children's metabolic rates, though the evidence for this is mixed (Kaiser et al., 2003).

Research has reliably established the effects of food advertising on young people. Recent studies have put forward that food advertising may also have an expansive influence on children's and adolescents' diet and health (Harris et al., 2009). Scholars like Harris (2013) argue that experts in public health reason that poor diet is not an issue to be fixed without intense alterations in the current food setting that surrounds young people and to which food advertising is a major contributor. In a bid to safeguard youth from exposure to unhealthy food advertising, advocates have suggested an array of public health apparatuses including nutrition and media literacy education, industry self-regulation, public health and industry advertising to promote consumption of healthy foods, government legislation and regulation as well as litigation. However, solutions like education and counter advertising alone cannot outcompete the \$1.6 billion spent per annum by the food industry to target young people with unhealthy foods but a decrease in unhealthy food advertising directed to youth is needed (Institute of Medicine Food Marketing to Children and Youth, 2005)

## **2.2. Social media, health and nutrition advocacy**

Over the past few decades, there has been a substantial advancement in our understanding of health and the effects of behavioral, sociocultural, and systemic factors on health outcomes

(Edington & Schultz, 2016). Technology advancements are crucial to this evolution as the adoption of mobile Internet-connected devices continues to rise across socio-demographic categories and geographical areas. Social media is a technological advancement that is frequently used, with about 2.82 billion users worldwide (Stellefson et al. 2020).

Of that, approximately there are 372.9 million users globally on X, implying that 5.9% of all people aged 13 and above around the world use X today. In East Africa the number of active X users is 2.9 million (DataReportal, 2022). In a recent survey, it is mentioned that over 2.67 billion users have accounts on social media platforms, an equivalent of one-third of the world's population, that is, every third person is a social media user (Ali et al., 2019). For instance, in Uganda, there is *Kahill Insights* a social media agency that exploits technology to market online brands as well as guide consumer behavior. Owned by Kahill Kuteesa who is a mental health wellness advocate, the agency offers first aid knowledge on mental and other related health issues to interested parties.

Currently, social media and mobile health are playing outstanding roles in health promotion, underlining the need for secure data management that can support more equitable public health policy (Odone et al., 2019). Without social media, it is becoming relatively difficult to conceive public health. Social media is regarded as acceptable and practical for use by a variety of audiences and has great promise for advancing health and nutrition fairness by fostering advocacy among underserved people (Welch et al., 2018). Interactivity is a crucial aspect of social media. Through an online conversation where individuals can produce their own material, social media encourages more information sharing and community building. Health education specialists who are looking for formative research to plan, adjust, and assess programs and campaigns with key audiences might greatly benefit from this information (Stellefson et al., 2020). For example, CISANU a multi-stakeholder civil society platform has exploited and leveraged social media spaces to share information on nutrition issues in Uganda thus attracting diverse communities of similar interest.

Social media engagement especially on X<sup>1</sup> has made CISANU a highly effective advocacy platform focused on contributing to ending malnutrition. Besides social media the organization is also using main stream media to engage stakeholders like parliamentarians, divisional mayors of

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<sup>1</sup> [https://X.com/cisanu\\_uganda](https://X.com/cisanu_uganda)

Kampala district, communities as well as global leaders such as Ms. Gerda Verburg, UN Assistant Secretary General, Coordinator of the SUN Movement to highlight key nutrition issues.<sup>2</sup> Social media regularly offers users the chance to communicate strategic health messages through a variety of modalities on well-known social media platforms like X, Facebook and YouTube, (Zhao & Zhang, 2018). Specialists in health and nutrition education, like Dr. Paul Kasenene in Uganda, are essential to developing, implementing, and overseeing nutrition promotion. Health education professionals are challenged to become more proficient in computer-mediated environments that optimize both online and offline consumer health experiences as health promotion becomes more firmly ingrained in internet-based programming (Stellefson et al., 2020). The creation, planning, and reform of health and nutrition policies have all benefited from the use of social media. Advocating for health and nutrition policies requires interaction with advocates, and social media offers a forum for attracting new supporters and making the general public aware of the crucial concerns (Guo & Saxton, 2014). For instance, currently the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) that is responsible for coordinating nutrition initiatives in Uganda is developing a national nutrition policy aimed at guiding the process of addressing nutrition issues in the country. As a nutrition advocate I have been part of this process and I have used social media, X<sup>3</sup> in particular to create awareness about this proposed policy so that the public can be aware and contribute to the process too. The ability to disseminate information about health and nutrition policy issues affecting constituents is another benefit of social media technologies for public officials, many of whom have their own social media websites. Social media can be used in addition to traditional advocacy methods to change the focus of government initiatives and support both nutrition and health policies (Smailhodzic et al., 2016).

### **2.3 X and nutrition health advocacy**

Internet use has significantly changed how people share personal experiences, find information, and make decisions about their daily lives, notably those about their health care, more than ever before (Horrigan & Rainie, 2006). Today social networking technology is more frequently being used in that, online services where material is created and altered by internet users is referred to as "social media," which is mainly synonymous with the words "Web 2.0" and "participatory

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<sup>2</sup> [https://X.com/cisanu\\_uganda/status/1424695174567919616](https://X.com/cisanu_uganda/status/1424695174567919616)

<sup>3</sup> <https://X.com/GeorgineObwana/status/1463802129533980673>

media (Ajijola, 2023). As for microblogging or X, it has recently gained popularity as a new social media option that internet users can access. Microblogging is a social media tool that enables users to communicate and trade brief texts and media files (Zhao & Zhang, 2018).

X is one of the many sources of health-related information where people can quickly investigate online debates taking place outside of conventional health arenas (Ola & Sedig, 2020). Health organizations are currently using X to promote healthy lifestyle choices, spot disease outbreaks, study human behavior, and gauge how the general public views health issues. X is used for health promotion, particularly with regard to nutrition-related issues, by organizations like CISANU in Uganda. In addition, individuals, news organizations, interest groups, and a host of other entities discuss health issues on X. About 500 million tweets are published daily and following an organization's X account, or "handle," as it is more commonly known, may be helpful for learning about a specific health issue for stakeholders especially those trying to understand the social discourse on nutrition issues (Ola & Sedig, 2020).

For X to be an effective tool for health promotion, people need to be equipped to understand and appraise health information on the platform (Ola & Sedig, 2020). Inaccuracies can be addressed and people can be given a better conceptual framework to evaluate how health issues are conveyed with the aid of a thorough understanding. In addition to assisting the public's information-seeking activities, social scientists and health professionals can gain from an analysis of the health discourse on X by giving them a lens through which to better understand the public's perception of these issues and utilize X for health promotion (Pauff & Miller, 2012). For instance, in the nutrition discourse, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) uses X to move its agenda of building partnerships to increase access to food that is safe, nutritious and affordable to all through working together to advocate, align and add for Zero Hunger. Similarly, the global SUN Movement also uses X in advancing health and development through improved nutrition.

Researchers who studied how doctors used X for professional purposes discovered that while doctors successfully disseminated medical information to the public, there were also instances of unethical behavior and inappropriate content. More often than specific medical data, participants within this network typically posted experiential health information, reporting on daily life events, practical guidelines (e.g., checking blood sugar), and problems in maintaining health

activities (Winston et al., 2012). Online users looking for healthcare information are interested in learning about particular diseases, symptoms, interventions, health behaviors (such as diet, nutrition, and exercise), medications, complementary treatments, and the healthcare system (Ola & Sedig, 2020).

## **2.4 Motivational factors on the use of X for nutritional advocacy**

Early adulthood is a time when young people transition into independent life, and this is when dietary habits also have a tendency to deteriorate. Over time, this can increase the chance of developing chronic diseases including diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic illnesses (Mikkilä et al., 2005). This developmental stage, while historically overlooked in traditional nutrition interventions and considered a relatively healthy period of individuals' lives, is receiving increasing attention as epidemiological evidence emerges showing poor outcomes for weight gain, physical activity, and dietary intake (Woodruff et al., 2018). In recent years, the use of computing and information technology, particularly mobile platforms and social media, has increased for nutrition education interventions. Teenagers and young adults are equally disposed to such solutions since they use smartphones and social media frequently and are therefore more likely to be open to using these sites for health-related purposes (Goyal et al., 2017).

In order to provide nutrition-related educational content, to make counseling and communication easier, to promote behavior change and self-evaluations, and to deliver nutrition-related educational content, computing and mobile-based platforms for health and nutrition take advantage of the popularity of mobile technologies among youth (Monk et al., 2013). A growing variety of nutrition-related technological treatments use social networks to tap into peer influence. During youth and the early years of adulthood, people can have a big impact. Studies have indicated that peer food choices particularly with regard to dietary behaviors, have an impact on how often young adults eat fast food and snacks (Pauff & Miller, 2012). In the long run, peers may have a greater impact on obesity risks due to their ability to adopt unhealthy habits and behaviors (Ali, Amialchuk & Heiland, 2011). Still on X, users can establish and

maintain connections with people based on shared interests and activities which integrates Social Networking Services (SNS), blogging, and text messaging (Ellison, 2008). It appears that even marketing activities on X go far beyond merely maintaining brand presence; instead, marketers aim to humanize their businesses in order to encourage direct communication with customers and improve their customer connections (Kwon & Sung, 2011). By offering appropriate nutrition and dietary knowledge, population-wide health interventions seek to increase both the quality and quantity of dietary choices.

Informed, healthy decisions can be made by the target group with the help of interventions that offer accurate, balanced information. People's motives for using social media have been highlighted by a number of motivational studies (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Klein, 2004). People enjoy participating in online communities for five reasons including enjoyment, social advancement, preserving interpersonal connectedness, purposeful benefit (i.e. informational/instrumental value), and self-discovery (Dholakia et al., 2010). X is more focused on "content," and users choose which brands to follow depending on their interest in the information that is given (Kwon et al. 2015). According to research, internet chitchat and the sharing of common experiences can help people find things in common and bring people together (Donath, 2004). Prior nutrition programs have benefited from interpersonal connections to promote healthy behaviors; however, the majority of these interventions relied on in-person peer group meetings and activities to offer support (Smith et al., 2014).

Likewise, it has been shown that social media platforms that permit content creation, sharing, and networking are excellent for fostering peer relations (Best, Manktelow & Taylor, 2014). The public is driven by their demands for social support, integration and coherence, self-reinforcement through social contacts, and psychological well-being, which includes self-esteem and life satisfaction (Chi, 2011). People may also be motivated by gratifications including convenience, financial or non-financial incentives, exposing identification, and exhibiting enthusiasm (Buzeta et al., 2020). Similar to other SNSs, X enables users to create an online presence to satisfy their innate desire to interact with others through its primary features, including tweeting, messaging, retweeting, liking, and following (Chen, 2011). X provides highly visible social signs of indicating popularity (such as follower counts) and endorsement, making it possible for regular users to rapidly and easily find people around the world who share

their interests (e.g., likes, comments, and shares) (Jenkins et al., 2020). However, the vastness and scope of the internet raises questions about the legitimacy and reliability of the nutrition and dietary information available. X has enabled a two-way communication between users, creating a platform for cooperation, sharing, and socializing (Siegert et al., 2020)

According to data, those who use social media for health-related information are more inclined to read than to create or contribute. The fastest-growing outlets for younger people to learn about nutrition and health are social networking sites like Facebook, X, and YouTube (Thackeray et al., 2012). The ability to reach more people as internet usage has increased has made it appealing for the distribution of dietary treatments. Government and not-for-profit health organizations increasingly use the internet for population-wide health interventions (Cugelman et al., 2011). Effective nutrition interventions require use of timely and appropriate delivery channels for dissemination. An understanding of the population and their current media use assists with selecting appropriate communication channels (Jung et al., 2012).

In addition, two-thirds of adults from 40 different countries use the internet, and 76% of them use social media platforms, so social media reaches millions of users on free access platforms (Oshima et al., 2021). Therefore, using these technologies strategically to promote health and nutrition can maximize resources typically used for costly campaigns in traditional mass media (Mendoza-herrera et al., 2020). Scholars may also use X to find articles so as to learn about literature (Priem & Costello, 2010) making it a tool for disseminating new literature and for highlighting impact; the popularity of a published work on X has been shown to correlate with the number of times it is cited in scholarly publications (Eysenbach, 2011). X may also allow the sharing of information about nutrition with people who may not traditionally have access to the academic literature. Most academic journals are expensive to access for those outside of academia, which means that platforms such as X allow academic knowledge to be made accessible and from a ‘trusted voice (Schnitzler et al., 2016).

## **2.5 Effects of X as a tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy**

Online health interventions have the capacity to influence voluntary behavior change and have the advantage of lower costs and increased reach when compared with more traditional channels, such as print media, with similar impact (Cugelman et al., 2011). Researchers have used social media to monitor sleep disorders, public health disclosures on X, and patient perceptions of care quality. Information generated via X can be useful in the examination of beliefs, attitudes, and sentiment towards certain health topics (e.g., vaccines) as well as health-related activities and status (Nguyen et al., 2018). Public health issues including nutrition are also being studied through social media. Researchers are increasingly tracking health behaviors and doing health monitoring (such as outbreak detection) using social media and user-generated data (Pollard et al., 2015). Malik & Lee, (2020 ) asserts that X is a good tool for both broadcasting and communication as it facilitates and promotes communication between many parties in a public setting, enabling peers to receive immediate reaction from users. It's interaction also quickly reaches a sizable population. As a result, an X-savvy person, health group, or health promoter can rapidly measure reactions and provide feedback by promptly reacting to any complaints, inquiries, or concerns. (Jordan et al., 2019). According to Soboleva et al., (2015), X is a fresh new way for peers to share their thoughts on nutrition issues thus advocating for it. It allows peers to appear trendy and up-to-date while enabling them to reach those who are interested in their advocacy. When a famous person or an influencer, for example in Uganda Dr. Paul Kasenene tweets or hash tags information on nutrition or diet, instant exposure is gained, leading to more visibility and following.

Utilizing X in the digital era is a sound practice that some health organizations and individuals / peers can exploit in nutrition advocacy (Soboleva et al., 2015). 8 million users visit X each month, and 500 million messages are uploaded per day, according to (Kwon & Sung, 2011). Peers and individuals have entered the world of social media to promote their nutrition advocacy and awareness as well as products after seeing a variety of possible benefits (Zaglia, 2013). Brand visibility on X draws in customers, creates awareness and familiarity, and makes it possible for peers to communicate with them directly (Kwon & Sung, 2011). Through advocating for proper nutrition, nutritionists also market their products through explanations and tweets indicating their value to the human health. This practice creates product awareness which expands the market base as more consumers become aware of the products (Kwon & Sung,



2011). For example, in Uganda *Nella Organics*, an NGO is creating awareness on nutrition and wellness at the same time marketing its health products on X to consumers. X has also been used for disease surveillance and tracing the origin of the disease as well as its mode of spread. This includes the use of a disease surveillance system called M-Eco that processes social media data for relevant disease outbreak information (Jordan et al., 2019). The M-Eco system allows for searching and filtering the signals using various criteria (Jordan et al., 2019). Also, X is a great tool for giving a brand a voice and personality. To be effective in tweeting, a person or peer must showcase their personality and distinctive flair. Because of this, X can get more followers and become a successful tool for nutrition promotion (Coursaris et al., 2014). According to Kwon & Sung, (2011) tweets can be viewed by subscribers, which are commonly referred as followers; using X terminology, if one user follows another, he/she is considered “follower”, and they are deemed "friends" if they both follow each other”. Following other users causes their X pages to automatically receive tweets from people they follow (Kwon & Sung, 2011).

Currently, X is being used to advocate for nutrition as seen in information shared by world bodies such as WHO, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), UNICEF among others, as well as policy makers and people in influential positions like WHO director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. This is successfully raising awareness about nutrition related issues (Liu & Woo, 2021). X is a helpful resource that can be included to the medical curriculum. It can be beneficial for the medical community because it offers a practical forum for debate and content sharing during conferences (Zaydman, 2017). It may also foster a feeling of community and enable people to support one another through tweets, likes, and comments, which can help individuals and peers (Liu & Woo, 2021). The microblogging is an excellent platform for social science research as it provides a public record of peoples’ attitudes, beliefs, and activities over a long-time horizon (every public tweet is in a searchable archive). The longitudinal nature of X enables research about how discourse is changing over time with a degree of continuous observation which would be difficult to achieve by other methods. Additionally, the public network of X makes it possible to see who is influencing the conversation such as those about nutrition (Zaydman, 2017).

Health providers’ and nutritionists inclusive educate followers about disease prevention and cure. This makes the participative nature of X to level off the playing field for knowledge sharing.

Individuals with varying degrees of expertise and authorities from medical experts to laypersons can seek and disseminate nutritional information (Xu et al., 2014). For example, professional health bodies such as the Center for Disease Control (CDC), use X to alert the public about epidemic outbreaks (Thackeray et al., 2012). X also allows for social support, collaboration and contribution of stakeholders. This means among stakeholder events, patients, students and healthcare professionals can actively be involved in discussions about a study, network with those with similar interests, help to share news and raise the study profile (Morrow et al., 2010) . It is anticipated that because the use of social networking platforms is growing so rapidly, they have the potential to significantly enhance health research (Burke-Garcia & Scally, 2014). X in particular offers creative ways for professionals to communicate and share information, advancing and strengthening nutritional advocacy (Xu et al., 2014).

## **2.6 X use, peer to peer nutritional advocacy, challenges and opportunities**

A key component of community organizing is advocacy, which is used to influence a range of systems at different levels (McNutt, 2011). Activities and approaches used in advocacy include lobbying, direct organizing, public awareness campaigns, policy advocacy, coalition building, and many others (Schroeer et al., 2021). Recently, new concepts and methods have been developed from across professional disciplines to integrate the use of these technologies within advocacy and activism due to the emergence of information communication technologies like cell phones, mobile devices, and the Internet (Chauhan & Panda, 2015). Over the last decade, policy advocacy has made critical contributions towards the development of nutrition policies, laws and strategies in many countries with high burdens of malnutrition. Translating and safeguarding these policy achievements into results on the ground requires nutrition advocacy to be pursued across administrative levels and throughout the policy cycle (te Lintelo & Pittore, 2020)

Within the last ten years, nutrition has received strong attention as a global development problem. Advocacy has made critical contributions towards the development of nutrition policies, laws and strategies in many countries with high burdens of malnutrition (te Lintelo & Pittore, 2020). The ability of social media to promote health even with minimal resources is demonstrated by this experience. Accounts created get higher levels of interaction metrics reflecting the importance of social media adoption and most big food companies, which use

social media to advertise their products have attained popularity (Mendoza-herrera et al., 2020). This marketing is difficult to counteract, considering that health institutions do not sufficiently promote healthy practices and governments have not allocated equivalent resources for health promotion on social media (Harris et al., 2013).

Meanwhile, misleading information that is frequently reinforced by fake accounts presents another problem for nutritional advocacy on social media (Sommariva et al., 2018). On social networking sites, users can spread content without regard to its accuracy and, in certain situations, do so to the same extent as traditional media in terms of readers reached (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). The so-called "fake news" problem, whose effects on information-sharing on SNSs are becoming more and more well-documented, is a topic of intense debate (Sullivan, 2019). Moreover, social change initiatives typically require a lot more time and money than can be invested by social media alone, according to critics of digital activism, who see social media as encouraging a false sense of accomplishment and altruism among individuals at the expense of those efforts (Brady et al., 2015). Social media technologies have facilitated people to use digital advocacy in community organizing by creating global connections and raising awareness of social issues, but they have also contributed to the misconception that only using digital advocacy can result in social action and social change (Choi, 2016). Some community organizers have adopted X and digital activism, but others believe that social media technologies have led to increasing apathy, which is sometimes referred to as "digital slacktivism." (Hu, 2014).

Digital slacktivism is a term used to describe a growing trend where people use social media instead of traditional on-the-ground organizing and activism (Id et al., 2020). Social media, where nutrition advocacy falls under digital activism, is criticized for giving peers a false sense of accomplishment and generosity at the expense of social change initiatives, which often requires a considerably larger time and resource commitment (Id et al., 2020). There are risks and potential downsides to using X for nutritional advocacy. The first and most obvious concern relates to privacy as well as amount of information being divulged. With open discussions on X with thousands of people reading the content posted, privacy of say some sensitive information is very hard to protect (Sharma et al., 2014).

### **2.6.1 Youth, social media, nutritional advocacy**

Young people are progressively turning to social media for health-related information in areas of diet, nutrition and physical exercise (Richards et al., 2015). They are keen users and drivers of this contemporary, participatory and user-driven online culture. To a certain level youth can be understood as vastly skilled and well-informed about social media (Goodyear et al., 2018). Lately the phrase “If you want to reach a lot of young people, your best target is social media,” is common. A number of organizations like CISANU are believing that to employ a holistic approach to address nutrition issues, there is need to involve youth who can in fact tweet and get information out to the general public and policymakers. The internet has provided a stage where many people especially the young can be reached through the power of social media. Social media’s abilities to reach far more people is beyond that of traditional media. With just a hashtag, there is a high chance of getting many young people to see what is happening in terms of nutrition in Uganda and how they can engage. Strategic nutrition advocacy assists interventions and when it comes to nutrition, leveraging the voice of young people and the power of social media helps a cause. Understanding the health-related opportunities and issues associated with X from the perspective of young people is an essential starting point for developing new and more effective health promotion interventions (Third et al., 2017)

## **2.7 Theoretical Review**

This study was anchored on the Social Media Engagement (SME) Theory. Devised by Prahalad & Ramaswamy in 2004, SME theory refers to the concept that individuals engage with content on social media platforms through active participation and interaction. This can be in form of comments, likes, shares, follows, retweets and other forms of engagement that allow users to express their reactions and views about the content they encounter. Central to this model is the idea of user engagement. The fundamental tenet of SME theory is that increased user involvement promotes increased platform utilization on social media. Usage is characterized as the regularity with which a person contributes to, retrieves from, and/or explores material on a social media platform (Kankanhalli et al., 2005). Users' participation in a variety of activities increases the social media platform's value to the company and to other users, leading to the co-creation of value (Li & Bernoff, 2012). The social media engagement hypothesis is connected to this study since it is based on social interaction and assumes that users may direct their attention to issues that interest them while filtering out content that is not significant or pertinent to their own interests. For instance, favorable user attitudes grow, leading to better pleasure and personal

relevance, which results in more user engagement, when users see the interactions as being tailored to their unique interests.

In this study, the theory is being used to examine using FGD data experiential assessment of the factors motivating X usage, its effects to users and challenges as well as opportunities of using X as a social media platform for nutrition advocacy. According to the theory, user engagement increases with social interactions with other users, which results in greater utilization of the social media platform. The SME Theory takes into account how technology serves as the foundational platform for enabling social connections among users who are geographically and chronologically dispersed.

It is obvious that the development of technology to offer a distinctive user experience that allows users to connect in new ways that were before impractical has played a significant role in the rise of social media. The user experience that is being discussed in this study adheres to the concept of experience as the subject of first-hand observation or involvement in an event. The user experience in social media is made up of two essential components: the experience derived from social interactions and the experience derived from technical features, where experience is defined as a noun, referring to the content deriving from direct participation. Social interactions are characterized as user-to-user conversation on social media (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Social interactions let users develop individualized relationships with one another, serve as an open channel of communication, give users access to social resources like friends, acquaintances, and family members, and define the potential advantages and disadvantages of using social media. (Jensen & Aanestad, 2007).

The users' social interactions with one another give the system purpose and help the user decide how deeply involved they want to be. The capabilities of the technology are referred to as technical features. Users are given the resources via technical features to enable interactions and influence the breadth, direction, and scale of benefits for both individual users and an organization (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016). Technical features include the extent to which users may interact and access information, the adaptability of features to different uses, the capacity to integrate content, and the features' ability to change to accommodate users' changing demands as they gain experience using the platform. Higher user engagement occurs when businesses

encourage the development of the user experience to suit users' requirements. To date there has been much discussion about how to define user engagement (Ray et al., 2014).

"A holistic psychological state in which one is cognitively and emotionally motivated to socially behave in ways that exemplify the positive ways in which group members prefer to think of themselves," is how engagement is defined (Ray et al., 2014). The antecedent influences user involvement, which in turn influences behavior. Our notion of user involvement makes a distinction between the mental state and behavior that Park et al., (2018) discuss through participation and involvement while making distinctions between the experience environment and engagement as a state of mind by (O'Brien & Toms, 2008). This separation aligns with the recent work of Ray et al., (2014) to suggest engagement is a holistic psychological state of involvement to derive personal meaning.

Therefore, user engagement is divided into two psychological components: 1) individual involvement and 2) personal meaning. Individual involvement is defined as the intensity with which a user perceives his/her role within the social media platform (O'Brien & Toms, 2008; Ray et al., 2014). Additionally, increased user engagement is not a function of the quantity of contacts but rather the quality of those interactions, which are based on the sharing of information that is pertinent to the user. Users consider their position as more significant and meaningful when a tailored experience is produced for them, and this enhances their overall satisfaction with the website. Therefore, users alter, distribute, and reuse material via social media, regardless of the original intent or meaning of its creators. This suggests that the act of remixing content represents a generational shift in user communication. Users can now express their own thoughts on what they find personally meaningful.

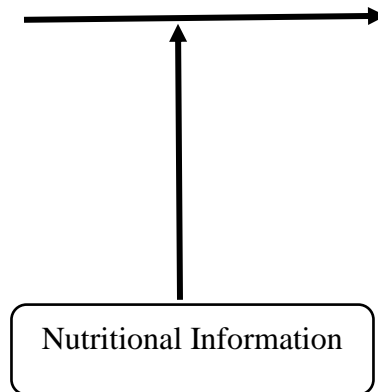
## 2.8 Conceptual Framework

### **X as a tool**

- i. Use of Hashtags (#)
- ii. Space hosting
- iii. Trends
- iv. Frequency in Communication

### **Nutritional advocacy and awareness**

- i. Behavior change achieved
- ii. Mindset change achieved
- iii. Brand awareness
- iv. Advertising achieved
- v. Health promotion realized



**Source: Researcher 2022**

The conceptual framework of this study shows that X as a tool can be used with the help of hashtags and space hosting to share nutritional information and this is likely to contribute to the achievement of behavior change, mindset change, brand awareness, health promotion as well as advertising. The relationship between X as a tool and nutritional advocacy and awareness is that when X is effectively used to communicate nutritional information it has a likelihood of enhancing opportunities for nutritional advocacy and awareness especially among peers in regards to this proposed study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The research methodology investigated X as a tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy and awareness among university students. This chapter delineated the research design, study area, population definition, sampling method, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis approach, a comprehensive list of obtained ethical approvals, and associated limitations.

#### **3.1 Research design**

The research design delineates the research procedure comprehensively, scrutinizes the research problems, and endeavors to address the research questions (Shiferaw et al., 2022). In this study, a cross-sectional design was employed, where data was collected from a subset of the population at a specific point in time (Sekaran, 2003). This design was chosen because meeting participants

for data collection was feasible only once. Qualitative research, as defined by Busetto et al. (2020), entails the examination of the characteristics, contexts, and perspectives of phenomena. As a fundamental principle, qualitative research often relies on verbal data rather than numerical data. The decision to adopt a qualitative approach was grounded in the aim of gaining insights, experiences, understanding, feelings, reasons, awareness, and motivations regarding the usage of X in peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy and awareness among students. Similarly, my continuous interaction with these students during UNAU chapter activities, particularly on health advocacy, mentorship, and leadership, inspired me to conduct a qualitative study to delve deeper beyond the usual interaction and potentially contribute to the field of nutrition and health promotion and advocacy in general.

### **3.2 Study area**

The research primarily focused on Kyambogo and Uganda Christian Universities within the Kampala metropolitan area. These study areas were selected based on convenience, as well as my frequent interaction with students in these universities through my involvement in United Nations Association of Uganda Chapter activities, which include, among other things, nutrition and health advocacy.

The choice of universities in the Kampala metropolitan area is rooted in the documented increase in the double burden of malnutrition in Uganda. Mendez et al. (2005) found that overweight Ugandan women accounted for as high as 23% in urban areas, nearly four times the occurrence of underweight, and 9% in rural areas. University students, in particular, are considered susceptible to dietary deficiencies due to their eating habits, food choices, and sometimes their income status, placing them among the groups vulnerable to nutrient deficiencies.

### **3.3 Study population**

A population encompasses the entire group of individuals or entities from which a researcher seeks to draw conclusions. A sample population, on the other hand, is a subset of individuals or entities that the researcher intends to examine. It is important for the researcher to define a specific sample population and sample size because the overall population is often too large to be feasibly studied in its entirety (Kothari, 2004). In this study, the population consisted of



university students at Kyambogo and Uganda Christian Universities. Additionally, research indicates that young people, particularly university students, are active users of social media platforms, including X. They utilize X to seek information on various topics, connect with peers, and exert influence.

### **3.4 Sample Size, Sampling Procedure and selection**

Bryman (2016) defines a sample as a portion of, or accessible population that has been systematically chosen to represent it, or as a small group or segment of the population selected for investigation. In this study, purposive sampling technique was employed with the aim of selecting individuals or groups experienced in the usage of X as an online nutrition advocacy tool. Six Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted, each consisting of 6 - 8 students, encompassing both male and female participants. Approximately, a total of 42 participants took part in the study. The number of FGDs was determined by saturation, which is reached when no new information emerges from participants. For this study this was established when same themes or categories kept recurring in the data without new information emerging. This exhibited that the data set was sufficiently comprehensive to address the research questions and objectives

### **3.5 Inclusion and Exclusion criteria**

#### **3.5.1 Inclusion criteria**

Students from both Kyambogo and Uganda Christian universities who provided consent to participate in the study were included. The researcher verified their eligibility by checking their identity cards. Participants were required to be above 18 years of age, as they were considered capable of making decisions for themselves. Additionally, the included students were those familiar with the use of X as an online nutrition advocacy tool.

#### **3.5.2 Exclusion criteria**

Students who were not registered with Kyambogo and Uganda Christian universities did not participate in the study. This was ensured by checking for their university identity cards. The researcher first sought consent before any engagement with the participants' and whoever didn't consent did not take part in the study.

### **3.6 Data sources**

Primary data was used specifically from FGDs discussions.

### **3.7 Data collection methods**

#### **3.7.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

According to Philipsen & Vernooij (2007) focus group discussions are group interviews designed to elicit information from participants about their knowledge, perceptions, and involvement, as well as their thoughts on how and why people behave in particular ways. Focus groups typically have 6 to 8 participants and are facilitated by a qualified moderator using a topic guide. Focus groups are a comparatively simple, quick, and affordable way to learn about interactions in a particular group. FDGs help to obtain information about human behaviors sparked through interaction (key to understanding community norms) and this was considered important not only for the topic under study but also for the study population who seem to be forthcoming in company of their peers. The researcher used a semi-structured FGD interview guide to manage the discussions. The researcher conducted six focus group discussions with at least three from each of the universities. The FGDs comprised both male and female participants whom I have mostly been interacting with during UNAU Chapter activities. During recruitment of participants no specific study years or courses being pursued was looked into and participants had to be 18 years and above and were members of UNAU. Most importantly, they had to have knowledge of nutritional issues, advocacy and the use of X.

#### **3.7.2 Data collection instrument**

A semi-structured Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide served as the primary instrument for data collection. This choice was made to address specific questions regarding nutrition advocacy while still allowing room for probing and flexibility. Some of the broad categories of questions included: “What is your experience with the use of X as a social media tool for nutrition promotion?”; “What would say about the effectiveness of X as a nutritional advocacy tool?” (See appendix 1 for full guide). Furthermore, the semi-structured format permitted participants to exert some influence over the direction of the discussion. Qualitative FGD is particularly suitable when the researcher aims to explore participants' understanding of the meaning of their lived experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015), and it facilitates the recording of both verbal and nonverbal cues, such as body language, which can enhance the richness of the data. The facilitation of the

discussions involved a trained research assistant and the researcher, both of whom recorded the discussions, with the assistant focusing on capturing cues and non-verbal communication.

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability**

#### **3.8.1 Validity**

In qualitative research, validity pertains to the appropriateness and suitability of the tools, processes, and data utilized. It assesses whether the research questions align with the expected outcomes, if the selected methodology is suitable for addressing the research questions, if the design effectively supports the chosen methodology, if the sampling and data analysis methods are appropriate, and if the results and conclusions are valid within the given sample and context (Leung, 2015).

To ascertain the validity of the instrument, the researcher conducted a pilot study for a focus group discussion, involving one group from each university. Attention was given to the clarity, order, arrangement, and appropriateness of the questions. Participants in the pilot study were distinct from those in the main study. Additionally, the FGD guide underwent review by the supervisor to ensure comprehensive coverage of potential research topics. Feedback on the applicability, clarity, and simplicity of the questions in addressing the study's objectives was valuable in refining the research instrument.

#### **3.8.2 Reliability**

In qualitative research, reliability concerns consistency and dependability of the research findings (Grossoehme, 2014). While qualitative research acknowledges the variability and subjectivity inherent in human experiences, reliable data collection methods ensure that the findings are credible and can be trusted, variation in richness may occur within related scopes, and a certain degree of inconsistency in results is accepted (Leung, 2015). To demonstrate reliability of the research instrument, the researcher employed clear and direct language which facilitated in capturing the nuanced and multifaceted nature of participants' experiences. This depth allowed the researcher to better understand the phenomena, providing a more comprehensive and authentic representation of participants' perspectives. The rich details

obtained contributed to a deeper understanding of the context, motivations, and meanings behind participants' actions and experiences.

### **3.9 Data collection procedures**

The researcher initially conducted a pre-test of the data collection instrument to assess its validity and corrected any identified errors. Students who were members of UNAUA were then contacted via telephone calls, briefed about the study, and invited to participate in focus group discussions, with dates communicated to them. Subsequently, the researcher, along with a male trained graduate research assistant, organized the FGDs.

Before commencing each focus group discussion, the researcher and the trained assistant provided a clear explanation of the study's purpose to the participants. Participants were asked to provide consent to participate, with the option to decline at any point during the discussion. Consent was also obtained prior to recording the discussions, and participants were requested to sign a consent form as an indication of their willingness to take part in the study. The researcher recorded the discussions and supplemented with notes as needed to facilitate effective transcription.

### **3.10 Presentation and analysis of data**

#### **3.10.1 Data analysis**

The process of organizing, synthesizing, and presenting data to facilitate comprehension is commonly referred to as data analysis (Bryman, 2016). According to Bryman (2016), this phase follows data collection and culminates in interpretation and processing. Following focus group discussions, the data was transcribed and readied for analysis.

Thematic analysis was employed, involving the examination of transcribed data for recurring codes, categories, and subsequent organization into themes.

#### **3.10.2 Data presentation**

Data was presented following the outstanding themes in each study objective.

### **3.11 Ethical considerations**

This proposal underwent ethical review by the Uganda Christian University Research Ethics Committee to obtain approval. Given the involvement of human subjects, ethical review and clearance were deemed necessary. In addition to seeking ethical approvals, the researcher obtained informed consent from the participants, respecting their choice to decline participation.

Similarly, consent was obtained before recording discussions. Participants were requested to sign a consent form, indicating their willingness to participate in the study and be recorded. The researcher provided information to participants regarding the purpose, objectives, and benefits of the study, emphasizing that participation was voluntary and posed no harm.

Permission was also sought from both universities to collect data within their premises. Additionally, all participants were assured of full confidentiality regarding the information they shared. All research materials will be stored for six (6) months after the study's completion and will be destroyed thereafter.

### **3.12 Limitations of the study**

This study was not without limitations. The primary limitation here is the focus on X instead of other social media platforms. Similarly, participants of the study were those who had access to X, indicating that individuals without access to this platform were unable to participate in the discussion despite potentially being affected by the same issues. To address this limitation, further studies could be conducted to examine the perspectives of individuals who do not have access to X. Furthermore, participants were members of UNAUI and were required to possess at least a general basic knowledge of nutritional issues, advocacy, and the use of X. To mitigate this limitation, the study could be expanded to include non-members of UNAUI and students lacking general knowledge of the topic, thereby providing additional perspectives.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

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

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter provides the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the research findings. It commences with an overview of the characteristics of the sample participants. The presentation is organized chronologically according to the research objectives that guided the study. A total of 42 participants were interviewed to capture a diverse range of views, opinions, and perceptions, and the results are presented thematically.

#### **4.1 Nutritional advocacy motivational factors**

Participants demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of nutrition and advocacy, and they exhibited extensive knowledge regarding the use of X as a tool for nutritional advocacy and awareness creation. Throughout the focus group discussions, students shared motivational factors for promoting nutritional advocacy and awareness using X.

##### ***High believability of nutritional information shared on X***

X is perceived as a professional platform with users of an average age, and it is commonly believed that the platform is predominantly utilized by elites. Consequently, nutrition information shared through X is considered genuine, credible, and truthful, as the platform is equipped with filters that verify the authenticity of posted information. Due to this perception, participants expressed a higher level of trust in the nutritional information shared on the platform.

*“X has educated people and because of these group of elite people, nutritional information shared tends to be more authentic because some even have links to deeper content, you find researchers have posted their nutritional work there, basically X is more organized to use for nutritional advocacy”* (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023).

##### ***Ability to discuss nutritional issues using X spaces***

Listening and being able to contributing to nutritional discussions via audio on X spaces has made it easy as well as interesting to share ideas, views, opinions and experiences concerning nutrition especially on topics of diet, weight and physical exercise without necessarily convening in one place. This means there is a possibility of engaging a specific target audience relevant to the topic of discussion. One of the participants’ conveyed that;

*“I have personally engaged in X spaces discussions; this was about what foods to eat to keep healthy and maintain a proper weight. It was being hosted by Dr. Kasenene and the conversation was lively and engaging because the participants seemed to have an idea of the topic. So, I believe X as a tool has made nutritional advocacy interesting and lively because of the online discussions and there is also the ability to see who is*

*participating. So generally this motivates me to engage more in nutritional advocacy and awareness” (Student, UCU, 2023).*

### ***Easily achieve mind set change on nutritional issues - diets***

As noticed from current trends, young people increasingly consuming more fast foods which is regarded unhealthy by experts. Being actively present on X, the platform thus offers a fertile ground to propagate nutritional information that can easily be consumed by young people especially university who arguably use the tool frequently thus achieving mind set change towards diets, dietary diversity, lifestyle, body weight and physical exercise. Participants’ were quoted;

*“Yes, it is true that a bigger percentage of the youths especially university students have X accounts and this makes it a suitable platform for nutrition advocacy because of its ability to reach a specific target audience” (Student, Kyambogo university, 2023).*

*“Generally, youth consume junk foods, yes, the chapatis, ‘kikomando’ (loosely meaning a mixture of beans and chapati) on a daily basis, however at times it’s not our wish, at times we are financially constrained and fast foods become the last resort because they are cheap and readily accessible. I think X is the best platform to be used to bring about mind set change on nutritional issues especially amongst the youths or university students like us” (Student, UCU, 2023).*

### ***Accessing personalities with influence on nutrition matters – role models***

Personalities who contribute to and influence the nutrition agenda was also pointed out as one of the reasons why university students are motivated to engage in peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy using X as a tool.

A participant believed intellectuals for example from government institutions like Ministry of Health or Agriculture, professional organizations, individuals such Dr. Kasenene command a following because of their popularity and easy accessibility on the platform either influenced by their positions to create change in the system or through the kind of information they share.

*“.....at times it’s the kind of persons we find on X, especially influential ones in the nutrition space who make it attractive to conduct nutritional advocacy while using this*

*tool. X has serious people whom we think are intelligent enough to post authentic and credible nutritional information for example the likes of Dr. Kasenene, he always posts nutritional advice on X. Also as advocates we can easily find personalities we want our information to reach to simply by tagging them and they will see the post...*” (Student, UCU, 2023).

Specialists in nutrition education and promotion such as Dr. Paul Kasenene in Uganda, are key in developing, implementing and overseeing nutrition promotion. Therefore, such experienced and influential personnel are perceived as role models and thus attract people including young people from universities to emulate them. Similarly, at the discussion participants’ disclosed that the online site also builds a brand which is attractive, as a student becomes known with a distinctive flair. Because of this, university students are motivated to use the site for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy and awareness with the optimism of being like Dr. Kasenene.

### ***Informative satisfying nutritional tweetorials***

During group discussions, a student of public health and an active X user who keenly engages in peer to peer nutritional information sharing noted that it is easier to craft nutritional information on X because of its ability to break it into threads making it easier to read and understand.

*“You cannot get bored when reading tweets about foods or diets, it is actually fun because the long stories are broken into short sentences some with even pictures, we call them threads which are easier to understand and follow the conversation”* (Student, UCU, 2023).

The ability for X to enable users create short paragraphs is commonly known as threads and this is because the platform limits characters to 280, thus when a tweet goes beyond this limit it can then be broken down into independent paragraphs successively following each other. This then generates a continuous conversation giving users an opportunity to logically track discussions. This knack has made the micro-blogging too quite attractive to users including university students who frequently share information with their peers.

### ***Reaching fellow peers hustle free***



Emerging as an innovative medium, particularly highlighted by events such as the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, X, a micro-blogging service, facilitates users to follow others or be followed. Unlike most online social platforms, the association of following and being followed requires no mutual agreement; a user can follow any other user without the need for reciprocal following. Being a follower on X means that the user receives all messages (referred to as tweets) from those they follow. The conventional practice of reacting to a tweet has evolved into a distinctive markup culture: 'RT' signifies a retweet, '@' followed by a user identifier addresses the user, and '#' followed by a word denotes a hashtag. The retweet feature allows users to disseminate information of their choice beyond the original tweet's audience, enabling wide information dissemination in a short period, reaching a large number of peers worldwide, including nutrition-related information such as healthy diets. During the discussions, participants highlighted how X reaches a wide population simultaneously without altering the information posted. One respondent commented on this aspect, stating;

*“doing nutritional advocacy using X is easy and convenient unlike other social networking online sites, nutrition information on X reaches very many of my peers in a short time. Also it’s easy to engage with different people on X through discussions about nutrition and other topics from anywhere in the world much as we do not meet physically”* (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023).

#### ***Aware of my nutritional advocacy trajectory***

*“.... actually the thing I have noticed and which influences sharing posts of nutrition information on X is that the tool contains a feature that shows the number of people that viewed the post, those who liked, retweeted and replied. Of course, when you get more views and replies it shows that the information was received and appreciated. As a tool that we use for nutritional advocacy, it is easy to identify the number of views and replies on your post quite quickly thus being able to tell the direction of how we are performing in the advocacy space”* (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023)

During the discussion, students expressed that their ability to assess their performance in advocacy often serves as motivation to continue, facilitated by X enabling them to evaluate their information. X analytics provides users, including university students, with access to a comprehensive set of metrics regarding audience engagement with posts related to food, eating

habits, diets, and weight loss. The analytics dashboard presents metrics such as follows, retweets, likes, replies, and other activities, breaking down this data to assist users, such as health promoters and nutritionists, in tracking performance and refining their strategies for nutritional advocacy and awareness campaigns. X analytics offers insights into audience reactions to content, identifying what is effective and what is not.

### ***Wherever you are, you can share nutritional information***

X is characterized by its user-friendly interface and serves as a convenient hub for various activities for its users. The platform offers real-time information, often faster than other sites, which is utilized by media organizations, journalists, and influential individuals to disseminate breaking news and publish information promptly. Similarly, university students involved in peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy and awareness activities noted that;

*“...gradually I picked interest to post information about eating healthy for campus students after following Dr. Kasenene for a while, then I realized X was actually enabling me to do this faster and my posts would be liked in an instant. Even certain organizations not in Uganda I knew nothing about who advocate for proper nutrition would randomly comment on my post. Tweets spread in minutes. Information moves very quickly ....”* (Student, UCU, 2023)

*“ .... also you do not have to be with people physically when discussing or sharing about nutrition issues. Wherever you are, you can share this information without seeing or knowing anyone and it will show impact....”* (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023)

### ***Information on nutrition is freely accessed***

X provides a platform where individuals, whether it be Dr. Kasenene in Uganda or a nutritionist from the United Kingdom, Russia, or South Africa, are easily accessible to every X user. Messages or posts on X are direct, ensuring their authenticity and purity. Similarly, the platform enables students to freely access nutritional information as long as they have internet access.

*“I can access information about nutrition without restrictions anytime anywhere as long as I have data bundles, that also means I am able to share information concerning nutrition freely because X reaches anyone”* (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023)

### ***Suitably hassle-free to share information about nutrition***

Arguably, it is difficult to assert that X is complex. The micro-blogging site is simple to navigate through as it offers an array of tailored topics as well as access to people with whom anyone wants to keep abreast with. Participants said;

*“You can have X on phone and the computer too, and it is suitably handy and hassle-free when accessing information or posting messages about nutrition. You see that is why am able to always see Kasenene’s posts even 5 minutes after he has shared...(giggles)”* (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023)

*“...first of all with X I can send private or direct texts to someone. I can also block people whom I don’t want to see their information, still I can also piece together parts of topics I am interested in to make it easier to keep myself informed, like nutrition topics or topics about physical exercise to lose weight”* (Student, UCU, 2023)

### ***Comfortably speak up my mind***

At first glance, X embodies characteristics of a democratic platform as it encourages personalized expressions, facilitates the formation of communities of practice, and fosters public debate on nutritional matters. For instance, X handles for organizations such as the global Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (SUN Movement), World Food Program (WFP), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), UNICEF, and Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Network (SUN CSN), among others, actively engage in public discourse, analyze information, and advocate for improved nutrition. This innovative online space has promoted the sharing of diverse perspectives on nutrition and other relevant topics. As one respondent expressed;

*“I can comfortably speak up my mind on X if I realize any type of information, including nutritional ones are not correct” (seemingly confident)* (Student, UCU, 2023)

## **4.2 Effects of X as a tool for nutritional advocacy**

The majority of students acknowledged that in their nutritional advocacy endeavors using X, they have observed certain effects. During the discussion, participants shared that engaging on X influences their eating habits and lifestyles based on the information they encounter regarding nutrition.

### ***Change in eating habits and lifestyle***

During the discussion, significant insights were shared regarding changes in eating habits and lifestyle among the students. A majority of participants acknowledged having modified their dietary habits and lifestyles, both positively and negatively, after encountering diet-related information on X. It became evident from the discussion that the recent surge in diet-related chronic ailments such as diabetes, obesity, and heart diseases partly stems from past practices and the responses of industry and consumers. Increasing evidence elucidates various complex factors beyond individual decisions that strongly influence dietary choices and patterns. At a personal level, dietary practices are influenced by individual preferences, beliefs, teachings, income, health status, cooking knowledge, and abilities. Psychological factors, including attitudes towards food and health, beliefs, and motivation, were also cited as contributing to changes in eating habits and lifestyle. Some participants mentioned that their changes were influenced by food preferences acquired after obtaining information from X, as well as by past life experiences.

Similarly, extensive socio-cultural factors and individual selections, such as television watching habits, social pressures, sleep patterns, social class, and social networks, play significant roles in lifestyle patterns. Mechanisms such as the reinforcement of social norms governing healthy behaviors, the arousal of new interests, political advocacy for resource access, emotional support, and the dissemination of nutritional promotion information, particularly on X, through social processes and networks, can impact health and nutrition.

*“...it is sad that most unhealthy behaviors specifically on feeding habits and lifestyle among the youth is learnt from social networking online sites like X, because X is used as a marketing tool for different organizations and businesses without any regulations, there is a surge in misinformation thus contributing to poor diets and lifestyles...”*  
(Student, UCU, 2023).

*I learnt from Dr. Kasenene that tomatoes need to be peeled first when going to cook them, because peeling removes the top layer which has been sprayed on with chemicals and pesticides to preserve them. So X has contributed to a change in the way we eat, what we eat, how we eat through following posts shared by nutrition experts. (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023).*

### ***Building communities of nutrition advocates***

X serves as a comprehensive platform for users seeking to stay updated on current trends and discussions or to access nutritional information. According to the participants, this micro-blogging tool facilitates interaction and discussion on various topics, including nutrition, enabling them to reach a large and diverse audience in a short period. Additionally, they noted that the platform allows them to customize messages and promote interactivity based on specific topics of interest, increasing the likelihood of reaching intended peers or groups of peers who are likely to engage. Given the growing influence of X, nutrition advocates have actively embraced it to promote their campaigns and engage with their peers. Participants acknowledged that X fosters communities that convene to discuss nutrition issues of mutual interest. This initiative represents one of the most identifiable and appreciated efforts, providing an opportunity to build a community of nutrition advocates and enhance brand visibility.

*“Actually, I got to know about nutritional information because of organizations, individuals particularly nutritionists and programs I follow on X. I even joined a group on X where topics concerning nutrition issues are regularly discussed. Experts are invited to share in-depth ....”, (Student, UCU, 2023).*

What nutritional advocates share on X has the ability to create an effect on people who follow them.

### ***Clear-cut way of sharing nutritional information***

X facilitates the rapid sharing and exchange of information about nutrition among peers, as the social site promotes real-time response and interaction from its users. The platform embodies a concise and direct mode of communication, enabling users to communicate thoughts and facts

about nutrition effectively to their peers. According to the discussion, this feature represents a significant advantage in today's fast-paced world, where individuals often face time constraints.

*“These days short and direct messages is the new normal to save on time and X has provided this real time interaction while getting instant feedback. Even through short texts we save ourselves from grammatical issues”* (Student, UCU, 2023).

### ***Uniting the globe on one podium***

One of the effects of using X for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy is its capacity for reaching a wider audience. Nutritional advocacy aims to disseminate information widely to improve nutritional status, and leveraging X for this purpose has facilitated a unique peer reach. Reach indicates the extent to which a tweet has spread. Even if a user only has 500 followers on X, if their tweet is retweeted by an account with 5,000 followers, it significantly extends their reach. X seamlessly facilitates this, empowering peers and bringing the global community together on a single platform. As one participant stated;

*“One thing about X is that a person’s thoughts, views, suggestions about nutritional issues can reach millions in minutes, just check how Dr. kasenene’s posts reach very many people. Because you at least hear or know someone who has seen his messages on not eating red meat or stopping to take sugar and salt (laughs)”* (Student, UCU, 2023)

### ***Keep scrolling nonstop***

Just like any other social networking online site, X can be addictive. Majority of participants’ revealed that they have become attached to X for their advocacy initiatives. The discussion had participants’ disclosing that;

*“When am bored and lonely I just go to X and keep scrolling nonstop reading almost everything I come across and I also regularly checkout what Dr. Kasenene keeps posting”* (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023)

*“If I don’t check X in a day I really feel bad as though I have missed so much”* (Student, UCU, 2023)

*“I like X it keeps me entertained with information on how to stop eating red meat. Yet I really love eating meat (laughs)”* (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023)

Research has revealed that online social networking sites, including X, have the potential to induce addiction due to their ability to generate feelings of "social well-being" among users. Scholars suggest that individuals who are heavy users of these sites often develop a tolerance to these feelings, leading them to seek more exposure to achieve the same effect. Tristan Harris, a former Google employee and prominent advocate for "humane technology," has consistently argued that social media apps are designed like slot machines, making them inherently addictive to users: Every time someone swipes down on X, they are rewarded with new posts, videos, or photos, which keeps users coming back for more. The platform has encouraged peers, especially those in university settings, to appear trendy and up-to-date, enabling them to reach individuals interested in their nutrition advocacy and awareness efforts.

#### **4.3 Related challenges and opportunities**

Over the past decade, policy advocacy has played a crucial role in shaping nutrition policies, laws, regulations, and strategies in numerous countries grappling with high burdens of malnutrition. However, X has emerged as a widely used and trusted tool for nutritional advocacy, though not without its challenges, which ultimately impact peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy. During group discussions, participants referred to various challenges encountered in their advocacy efforts when utilizing X, despite its large user base. These included;

##### ***Misrepresentation of nutritional messages***

Misleading information, exacerbated by parody accounts, poses a significant challenge to peer-to-peer nutrition advocacy initiatives on X among students. Users often share content without verifying its authenticity, intensifying the prevalent 'misinfodemic' situation on the micro-blogging site. This phenomenon adversely affects nutritional advocacy among peers in universities, as there appears to be a lack of regulation to counter the spread of inaccurate information on nutrition issues. The majority of participants highlighted misinformation as a major challenge in their advocacy initiatives. Some responses included;

*“The problem with using X for our advocacy is that everyone can post what they want whether researched about or not, this has increased unlicensed and fake nutritionists and dietitians on the platform masquerading as professionals, affecting consumers as they cannot tell whose information to trust (seemingly upset)”* (Student UCU, 2023).

*“The challenge with X as a tool we rely for our advocacy is actually not content but distortion of reality, misrepresentation of the nutritional messages shared by some other people (looking sad)” (Student, Kyambogo, University 2023)*

### ***Breeding a lazy generation of nutrition champions***

X facilitates connectivity, fosters communities of nutrition advocates, saves time, and streamlines communication, leading peers to feel satisfied and believe that discussing nutrition issues on the platform alone will suffice to create an impact, assuming that the audience will have received the message. Social media technologies have enabled the current generation to employ digital advocacy in community organizing by establishing global connections and raising awareness of social and developmental issues, including nutrition. However, they have also perpetuated the misconception that digital advocacy alone can lead to social action and change, as many conversations remain confined to X without translating into physical action on the ground.

*“Be it political activism and other forms of awareness youth including us university students have not fully engaged on ground as most of our time is spent on X carrying out conversations instead of going on ground to physically interact and make our voices be heard so as to create tangible impact (showing displeasure)” (Student, UCU, 2023).*

*“....as advocates all we do is sit here create hashtags for nutritional cause, which I don’t mean is bad, but we can do more than just tweet. We can even organize with the guild council and the nutrition department, ask for support from the administration and organize cooking demonstrations here at campus. It will help our fellow students know how to prepare nutritious healthy meals” (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023)*

This account evidently indicates that peers are convinced that it’s all done and dusted on X and physical appearance is a necessity as such because they have effectively discussed and shared nutritional information online to cause impact. This has made nutritional advocacy challenging because there is no physical involvement on ground causing an “echo chamber” at the end of it all.

### ***Favors elites - what happens to those who are illiterate?***



Scholars have argued that X is not entirely what it appears to be. The micro-blogging platform portrays itself as a neutral space for the exchange of ideas and nutritional information; an agora where journalists, celebrities, academics, politicians, nutrition advocates, business leaders, and ordinary individuals can engage in discourse without being constrained by gatekeeping elites. Participants noted that illiterate individuals are excluded from this platform, despite their need for the same nutritional information being shared. The majority seemed to agree that while X is widely used, it primarily benefits those who are literate, whereas their advocacy initiatives should be inclusive of all. This suggests that individuals who are unable to use X miss out on crucial nutritional information from awareness campaigns. Participants reported that;

*“...X mostly favors educated users who can read, write and make sense of the nutrition information tweeted, but then what happens to those who are illiterate?” (Student, UCU, 2023)*

*“As peer advocates of nutrition here at campus, we can endeavor to go beyond using X much as its convenient, and also employ other strategies to share information. For instance, I have joined the Nutritionists Society in Uganda a platform which encourages physical meeting and engaging population face to face” (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023)*

### ***Competition from other social media tools***

X faces significant competition from other platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. These platforms attract users by offering features such as the ability to share numerous videos and photos and to edit content to fit specific purposes, features which X lacks. This competition puts pressure on X to innovate in order to attract and accommodate more users for conducting nutritional advocacy. Moreover, X imposes limitations on the character count for information posted in a single tweet, which creates restrictions. Participants reported that due to such challenges, their initiatives on nutritional advocacy are limited, with inadequate engagement from fellow peers whose attention is drawn to platforms like TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram.

*“We young people these days prefer TikTok, Snapchat or Instagram because they allow use of videos and photos which have been filtered and edited to look nice. We may not be*

*so much into X because it requires a lot of thinking to create nutrition messages to share. Yet the other platforms just require photos and videos which is easy. And remember we like to look at beautiful pictures... (smiles)* (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023)

The phrase "I am going to tweet about it" has become universal in recent times, evoking immediate association with X, the prominent platform where information can rapidly gain attention. Looking at the broader context, X can be seen as a hallmark in the digital media landscape. Its unique features and environment consistently draw people to the platform, establishing a brand image that is challenging to replace. This presents several opportunities for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy and awareness among university students, including;

### ***Keeping up with the latest nutritional news, information and conversations***

Trending topics related to nutrition are readily observable on X, often appearing on the right-hand side of a user's homepage before the full information is released. These trending topics vary throughout the day depending on the users online and their tweet activity, resembling a continuous global poll of current conversations. For example, in the lead-up to the annual release of the Global Nutrition Report (GNR), which analyzes nutrition commitments from various stakeholders, tweets about it are commonly circulated weeks in advance, informing the public and generating anticipation for the report. During the discussion, a participant shared that;

*"When I realize there is a topic about nutrition, I quickly click on it and follow the conversation and also contribute where I think I can. I realized I learn a lot, meet people of similar interest"* (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023)

### ***Learning from nutrition experts***

*"...there are many nutrition experts on X, they keep sharing bits and pieces of their wealth of information especially when it comes to analysis of issues. I follow these people of course including Dr. Kasenene, read what they blog. Am also able to implement some of their advises about healthy eating and maintaining a proper lifestyle. Believe me, it will change the way you think and perceive issues of nutrition"* (sounding certain) (Student, UCU, 2023)

### ***Opportunity to be influencers***

Through use of hashtags ‘#’ which assists in many purposes it is vital to generate and consistently use a custom hashtag for tweets. During the discussion participants’ revealed that X presents the opportunity to build a brand identify for advocates making them to eventually become influencers because of their known distinctive flair.

*“You see how Kasenene is, X has the opportunity to make some of us influencers if we continue tweeting regular and use hashtags too. We will also build a big name with many followers”* (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023)

### ***Marketing - unbelievable nutrition recipes***

A lot of nutritionists do market their products too as they carry on with advocacy campaigns and this has built well-known brands who leveraged the power of X to market and grow their business, involve their audience and build a community. A participant shared that;

*“Because I have been open to nutritional information, I have had a rich experience with X. I have found unbelievable nutritional recipes which I will start sharing”* (Student, Kyambogo University, 2023)

Having a vast number of opportunities to leverage, university students in their peer-to-peer nutrition advocacy can cast their line and they will get a bite. However, the technique to find the most accomplishment with X is to be open to what one catches.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

#### **5.0 Discussion of study findings**

This chapter discusses the study findings as per the objectives delivering a conclusion and recommendations.

#### **5.1 Motivating factors**

The study established that the perceived high believability of nutritional information shared on X served as a motivating factor for students to utilize the platform for nutrition advocacy. Moreover, there is a common perception that the platform is predominantly used by elites, leading to the nutrition information shared through it being viewed as genuine, credible, and sought after. This perception is reinforced by the platform's filters that verify the authenticity of posted information. By providing accurate and balanced nutrition and dietary knowledge, population-wide health interventions aim to improve both the quality and quantity of dietary choices. Informed and healthy decisions among the target group (peers) can be facilitated by interventions that offer reliable information. This assertion is consistent with Welch et al.'s (2016) argument that social media is considered acceptable and practical for use by various audiences and holds great promise for promoting health and nutrition equity by encouraging advocacy among underserved populations.

Additionally, the ability to discuss nutritional issues using X spaces was also identified as a motivational factor. University student's majority who are young people are active X users interacting with each other while sharing nutrition information in their nutrition advocacy and awareness initiatives. X has offered a creative ground through X spaces to propagate nutritional information with influence from organizations like SUN Movement, UNICEF, individuals or influencers like the UN Secretary-General António Guterres or Dr. Kasenene who regularly post messages. This is in agreement with Khandelwal & Salathe, (2011) who stated that health organizations, individuals, news organizations, businesses, interest groups, and a host of other entities discuss health and nutrition issues on X. X is used for health promotion, particularly with regard to nutrition-related issues by organizations like CISANU in Uganda.

Besides, findings also indicated that reaching fellow peers with ease is among the motivators for students to use X for nutritional advocacy initiatives. The retweet set-up on X permitted students to spread information of their choice beyond the reach of the original tweet's followers. This offered a wide reach of information in a short period of time implying that a relatively big number of peers were reached with information on nutrition such as healthy diets across the platform. Participants' emphasized how X covers a wide population at the same time without difficulty. X users frequently use Hashtags (#) to discuss nutrition topics as well as retweets, likes, tagging other people and following them, especially those who can influence the topic. This act enables the spread of information and conversations to reach far and different areas on a social network (Mchugh et al, 2019).

## **5.2 Associated Effects**

While utilizing X as a tool for conducting nutritional advocacy, a noticeable change in eating habits and lifestyle was observed among students engaged in awareness initiatives. Many of them, interacting on the micro-blogging site, were able to improve their eating habits influenced by the posts they read. This finding is supported by Cugelman et al. (2011), who emphasized that online health interventions have the potential to induce voluntary behavior change. However, unhealthy behaviors have also been adopted, including poor dietary practices such as consuming junk or highly processed foods, influenced by posts from popular fast food outlets and their promotional incentives. Additionally, habits like alcohol consumption have intensified due to aggressive online marketing of alcoholic products by breweries. Students often do not conduct thorough due diligence on the nutrition information posted on X, leading to a likelihood that the information is not well researched or authentic, thus contributing to unhealthy behaviors that can have serious consequences, including loss of life. This aligns with Quynh C Nguyen et al.'s (2017) argument, which suggests that since harmful habits can be influenced socially, the social environment can both encourage risky behavior and provide opportunities for social control.

The study recognized that using X has built communities of nutrition advocates who come together to discuss issues concerning nutrition which are of interest to them. It is one of the most identifiable and appreciated efforts which has had an effect on the students. Through alleviating interaction on nutrition issues specifically, X has enabled students to discover spaces comprising people of similar interests therefore joining communities that have been formed. Liu & Woo,

(2021) point out that X can raise a sensation of community and allow people to interact as they also offer support to one another through tweets, likes, and comments, which can help individuals and peers, resounding the finding in the study.

Works of Xu et al., (2014), Morrow et al., (2010) reverberate similar views on X's ability to encourage formation of communities allowing for social support, collaboration and contribution of stakeholders while offering creative ways for experts to communicate and share information, advancing and strengthening nutrition advocacy. Similarly, the aspect of sharing nutritional information in a clear-cut way is an effect the study acknowledged. From students' experiences, the tool puts into effect the short and straightforward way of communicating thoughts and facts about nutrition among peers. It enables peers to share and receive quick information as the tool encourages real time response and interaction from users. Scholars such Malik & Lee, (2020) and Jordan et al., (2019) categorically reveal that X aids and encourages real time communication amongst several people empowering peers to receive immediate response from users. It quickly reaches a big population as a result, X-savvy peers can hastily measure reactions and provide feedback promptly. This argument corroborates with the study finding. X's ability to uphold directness and accountability in communication enhances effectiveness since users can see what is said.

### **5.3 Prevailing challenges and opportunities**

The study identified that the misrepresentation of nutritional messages poses a significant challenge to students' nutritional advocacy initiatives among peers when using X as a tool. Misleading information, often spread by parody accounts without regard for authenticity, has exacerbated the prevalent 'misinfodemic' situation on the micro-blogging site. This finding is supported by arguments put forth by Sommariva et al. (2018) and Allcott & Gentzkow (2017), who suggest that users can disseminate content without verifying its accuracy, reaching audiences to a similar extent as traditional media. Sullivan (2019) further discusses the challenge of "fake news," noting its impact on information-sharing on social networking sites (SNSs) and the ongoing debate surrounding its definition and implications. During the COVID-19 outbreak, misinformation became a critical issue for nutritional advocacy campaigns, with X swamped with a plethora of information about nutrition remedies to boost immunity against the illness.

This resulted in many individuals falling victim to misinformation, leading to loss of lives and resources. In addition, much as X supports connectivity, its fast and easy communication while building communities of advocates, there is a fallacy among students who believe that once discussions have been successfully conducted on X then the audience will have automatically received the message. This misapprehension is breeding a generation of lazy nutrition advocates who are active on X but rarely go on ground to implement what they discuss, a finding the study exposed. According to Brady et al., (2015) social change initiatives usually entail a lot more resources in form of time and finances than cannot be put in by social media alone. The author argues that critics of digital activism view social media as encouraging a false sense of achievement and selflessness among individuals at the expense of those efforts. As for Choi, (2016) social media technologies have assisted present peers use digital advocacy by forming global networks and raising awareness of social issues, but they have also contributed to the misconception that only using digital advocacy can result in social action and social change, validating the study's finding.

Id et al. (2020) have emphasized similar concerns, asserting that while some individuals engage in digital activism on X, others view social media technologies as leading to increased apathy, commonly referred to as "digital slacktivism," where people substitute traditional on-the-ground activism with social media participation. The authors argue that nutritional advocacy and awareness campaigns using X as a tool, which fall under digital activism, are criticized for giving participants a false sense of success in social change initiatives, which often require a much larger resource commitment. Moreover, the study's findings reveal that X primarily caters to the literate population, presenting a challenge for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy and awareness among students. This exclusion of the illiterate population deprives them of potential benefits from the shared nutritional information. Consequently, nutrition advocacy predominantly benefits the literate elite, leaving out those who cannot read or write and are not subscribers to the platform. Additionally, the study identifies opportunities for students to stay informed about nutritional news, information, and conversations, as well as learn from experts on X. Trending nutrition topics are easily discernible and followed based on the platform's users and their tweets. te Lintelo & Pittore (2020) disclose that nutrition has received significant attention as a global development issue in the last decade due to advocacy efforts leading to essential contributions to the development of nutrition policies, laws, and strategies.

The authors emphasize the importance of translating these policy realizations into tangible results on the ground, which requires tracking nutrition advocacy efforts. This aligns with the findings of this study, emphasizing the importance of staying up-to-date with expert knowledge in nutrition advocacy on X.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Conclusion**

The study revealed that X, utilized as a social media platform, has been widely accepted by participants for conducting nutritional advocacy and awareness initiatives among peers due to the perceived credibility of nutritional information disseminated through it. Particularly, young individuals value the accuracy and authenticity of nutritional content shared on X, demonstrating receptiveness to adopting and disseminating healthy eating habits and recipe tips through this platform. Nevertheless, participants acknowledge the potential for conducting nutritional advocacy through other social media platforms. Hence, future research should explore strategies for engaging with alternative social media tools to facilitate peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy among young people, thereby promoting healthier dietary choices. Furthermore, there is a need for further investigation into the utilization of social media for disseminating information on non-communicable diseases among young individuals, as well as assessing the credibility of social media platforms in promoting healthy eating behaviors.

#### **6.2 Recommendations**

Effective nutrition advocacy and awareness necessitate the involvement of various stakeholders, irrespective of their socio-economic status. University students, through their leadership structures such as student guilds, play a significant role in this endeavor. Organizing educational sessions like nutrition barazas with support from university administrations enables students to disseminate information and foster behavioral change among their peers. Additionally, forming alliances or coalitions within universities involving multiple departments or faculties broadens the scope of involvement, recognizing that nutrition issues affect everyone regardless of profession, economic status, or age.

Furthermore, university students engaged in peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy should actively collaborate with influential individuals and organizations in the nutrition advocacy sphere. Utilizing social media platforms for advocacy by tagging relevant stakeholders in their posts and conducting research to strengthen their messages enhances the effectiveness of their efforts. Collaborations between universities and nutrition-focused entities can provide students with

training in utilizing social media for advocacy, thereby creating a cohort of skilled nutrition ambassadors upon graduation. Inter-university collaboration can foster the formation of an umbrella network for collective sharing of best practices, joint advocacy efforts, and increased opportunities for funding to support nutrition-related activities. Diversifying the means of sharing nutritional information beyond a single social media platform is crucial, as it allows students to leverage their innovative capacity and reach a wider audience, thereby amplifying the impact of their initiatives.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix I: Focus Group Discussion Guide**

#### **UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

#### **THE FACULTY OF JOURNALISM, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION**

##### **Dear participant**

I am Georgine Obwana, Reg No RS20M54/002 a post graduate student of Uganda Christian University pursuing a master's degree in Strategic Communication. I am conducting academic research titled "X as a tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy and awareness among university students in Uganda". Briefly, nutritional advocacy can be referred to as the process of working to create change in institutional systems and structures as well as people's attitudes with the aim of reducing malnutrition in all its forms. Therefore, you have been identified as a resourceful person in this academic research study and on that note, I humbly request you to provide necessary information regarding the research study and the opinions and information you give will strictly be treated with confidentiality. Note that all the information given will be for academic purposes and it will not be revealed to anyone and anywhere apart from the thesis report.

##### **SECTION A: Demographic characteristics of participants**

**1. Gender**

**2. Age**

##### **SECTION B: Motivational factors for the use of X for nutritional advocacy**

**3. How often do you use X to post or interact with other X users?**

**4. For how long have you been signed to and active on X**

**5. Which age group of people do you often interact with on X?**

**6. Would you say that you have interacted with tweets about nutrition advocacy?**

7. What are some of the most common tweets about health and nutrition on X that you have come across?
8. How do you interact with health information on X?
9. Why do you use X for health/nutrition information? Are there particular reasons as to why?
10. If you use other social media platforms for nutrition advocacy, how do they compare to X?
11. What do you think about the use of X in the promotion of health living?

**SECTION C: Effects of X as a social media tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy**

12. What is your experience with the use of X as a social media tool for nutrition promotion?
13. How do you think X compares in effectiveness in nutritional promotion to other social media tools?
14. X is a social media tool used by a few people, how do you think it has promoted proper nutrition and health living in the community?
15. What are the disadvantages of using X for nutrition and health advocacy?
16. What are the means through which X can properly be used to promote nutrition and health living in the community?
17. What would you say about the effectiveness of X as a nutritional advocacy tool?

**SECTION C: Challenges and opportunities associated with the use of X as a social media tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy**

18. What do you appreciate about X use as a social media tool for nutrition advocacy?
19. What problems have you encountered while using X for nutrition advocacy?
20. What issues do you think others that promote nutritional advocacy face?
21. Are these the same problems you face every time you engage on X with other users?
22. What have you done to solve the problems you face as you engage on X for nutritional advocacy?

**Thank you for participation**

## Appendix II: University Introductory Letter



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
UNIVERSITY**

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

March 20, 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: ACCESS OF PREMISES & AUDIENCE FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES**

This is to introduce to you Ms. Georgine Obwana RS20M54/002, a student of Uganda Christian University (UCU) pursuing the degree of Master of Arts in Strategic Communication.

The School of Journalism, Media and Communication's ultimate goal is to produce students with excellent skills, knowledge and talents in media and communication profession. Special emphasis is placed on sharpening their skills in writing, speaking, management, human and public relations as well as critical thinking. In addition to the normal theoretical and practical instructions offered in class, we require our students to demonstrate their abilities in research through dissertation writing.

The student has identified your office/organisation/institution/company as ideal for them to do their research through the use of questionnaires/ interview sessions.

I am kindly requesting you to assist them in any way possible to access the necessary audience at your institution to enable them carry out this exercise in their areas of interest.

We are delighted in advance for your usual cooperation and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Franklin Adeka  
Assistant Registrar  
School of Journalism, Media & Communication  
Uganda Christian University  
0702704649/ 0784631466  
[fadeka@ucu.ac.ug](mailto:fadeka@ucu.ac.ug)





### Appendix III: Acceptance Letter

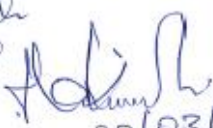
22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023,

To,

Dean of Students,

Kyambogo University,

Dear Sir/Madam,

Permission is granted  
to carry out her research  
with the assistance of  
Lawrence Lugalavu.   
22/03/2023.

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN**  
**KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY**

My name is Georgine Obwana, a Master of Arts in Strategic Communication student of Uganda Christian University (UCU). I have been cleared to undertake my dissertation research which focuses on *"Twitter as a tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy and awareness among university students"*. My research site is Kyambogo University.

The purpose of this letter is to request for permission to undertake the research. Here attached is a copy of my research approval letter from UCU Research Ethics Committee (REC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on Email: [georginemarine@gmail.com](mailto:georginemarine@gmail.com) or Tel: +256 774 354 150.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

  
Georgine Obwana

Uganda Christian University



## **Appendix IV: Informed Consent Form**

**Title of Research:** X as a Tool for Peer-to-Peer Nutritional Advocacy and Awareness among University Students in Uganda

**Principle Investigator:** Georgine Obwana

Tel. contact +256-774 354150, Email: georginemarine@gmail.com

Graduate student at Uganda Christian University, Faculty of Journalism, Media and Communication, Mukono, Uganda.

### **1. Introduction and Purpose of the Study**

I am conducting a study about X as a tool for Peer-To-Peer nutritional advocacy and awareness among university students in Uganda. This study further seeks to identify the factors that motivate university students to use X as a tool for nutritional advocacy and awareness.

The purpose of this study is to get deeper insights on the role X plays as a tool for Peer-To-Peer nutritional advocacy and awareness among university students. In this study participants will be engaged for 15 - 25 minutes.

The information you give us, will be confidential and only used for purposes of this study. In the process of report writing, your name will never be used and so everything you tell us will remain anonymous. I shall ask questions about factors, effects, challenges and opportunities associated with the use of X in per to peer nutritional advocacy. If you do not want to respond to a particular question, you can simply say so, and I will not insist.

### **2. Description of the Research**

This is a cross-sectional study employing a qualitative approach with Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

### **3. Subject Participation**

Participants will be students at Kyambogo and Uganda Christian Universities.

#### **4. Potential Risks and Discomforts**

This is a study involving two-way conversation between the researcher and the participants. There are no any known or anticipated risks associated with your participation in this study. Where such risks a rise in the process of the study, they shall be kept to bare minimum possible.

#### **5. Potential Benefits**

The study will benefit from your ideas and experience. This will not lead to personal benefits for you. The findings will contribute to a better understanding of the factors, effects, challenges as well as opportunities associated with the use of X in per to peer nutritional advocacy among university students.

#### **6. Incentives or rewards for participating**

The study is mainly for academic purposes and the researcher does not give any reward for your participation.

#### **7. Confidentiality**

Your name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written report of the research. All of your information and interview responses will be kept confidential. Our sessions will be recorded to aid in accurately capture your insights in your own words. However, your name will not be recorded on the tape. The researcher will not share your individual responses with anyone other than the research supervisor. If you feel uncomfortable with the recorder, you may ask that it be turned off at any time. Finally, insights gathered from participants will be used in writing a research report, which will be read by my supervisor. Direct quotes from you will be used in the report, your name and other identifying information will be kept anonymous. Every participant will be asked to sign an informed consent form before participating in the study as this ensures voluntarism and acceptability to participate in the study.

#### **8. Authorization**

By signing this form, you will be authorizing us to use the information from this research

#### **9. Participation**

Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide to not participate in this study, it will not affect you in any way.

#### **10. Withdrawal from the Study and/or Withdrawal of Authorization**

As a participant in this study, you can withdraw at any point if you choose not to continue.

**11. Whom to contact in case of ethical related concerns.**

This study was Approved by Uganda Christian University Research Ethics Committee (UCU-REC). In case of any ethical related concerns or inquiries, you can contact UCU-REC chairperson; Prof. Peter Waiswa on 0772 405 357, pwaiswa@musph.ac.ug or UCU-REC Manager, Mr. Osborn Ahimbisibwe on 0775 737 627 or oahimbisibwe@ucu.ac.ug

**I voluntarily agree to participate in this research program; Please tick appropriately**

**Yes**

**NO**

**Name of Participant (Optional): .....**

**Signature: .....**

**Date: .....**



# UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

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UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF RESEARCH & POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

## DISSERTATION CORRECTION COMPLIANCE REPORT BY THE CANDIDATE (POST VIVA FORM)

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Name of Candidate: Georgine Obwana

Reg. No: RS20M54/002

Title of Dissertation: X as a tool for peer-to-peer nutritional advocacy and awareness among university students in Uganda

SN	COMMENTS BY EXTERNAL EXAMINER	ACTION TAKEN	INDICATOR
1	Twitter is sometimes not capitalized. It needs to be capitalized every time because it is a proper noun	This has been addressed in the entire document, and with further guidance from my supervisor, 'Twitter' has been replaced with 'X' because of its rebrand	Entire document Corrected
2	Use of acronyms is widespread but possibly unnecessary	Use of acronyms in the document has been minimized, a list of acronyms and their full forms is provided on page 8 to ensure clarity	Entire document Corrected
3	The page numbers are not the same font as the main text	Updated the formatting of the research work to ensure that the page numbers are now in the same font as the main text, maintaining a consistent and professional	Entire document Corrected

		appearance throughout the document.	
4	<p><b>Introduction:</b> This chapter has many strengths. It is comprehensive, and it presents the research problem well.</p> <p>The chapter generally could be more concise. I've provided an example on page 11 of how a single claim can be supported by two citations. Such synthesis and integration is necessary in an introduction (and in a literature review) to help introduce the reader to the big ideas of the study and how they fit into the broader literature. Just because a second study is cited does not mean that it needs its own separate description and citation.</p>	Chapter 1 has been streamlined to improve conciseness by synthesizing and integrating citations as demonstrated in the example on page 11. This approach has been applied throughout the introduction and literature review to introduce the main ideas more effectively and align them with the wider literature without separate descriptions	Page 1-19 Corrected
5	<p><b>Literature Review:</b> The literature review is quite good in summarizing and integrating existing research. It's not always clear why there are different subsections and how they relate to one another. For this reason, I believe the chapter could be further streamlined. It should be completely clear why different subsections are employed and why they are presenting ideas that are unique and not repeating ideas from other subsections.</p>	Chapter 2 has been further streamlined by expounding the purpose and content of each subsection. Clear headings and transitional statements have been added to ensure that each subsection presents distinctive ideas avoiding replication of content from other sections.	Page 20-35 Corrected
6	<p><b>Methodology:</b> The chapter on methodology is quite good. A few remaining questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you know when saturation has occurred? What guidance is there in the literature for this, and how did you know specifically in this study?</li> </ul>	<p>Chapter 3 has been further streamlined and improved</p> <p>Added an explanation on the criteria and process used to determine saturation in the study comprising the specific pointers observed and references to established guidelines in the literature that informed the</p>	Page 36-41 Corrected

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What were the broad categories of questions in the focus group discussion guide? Also, where can this be found in the dissertation (refer to appendix so the reader can find it)?</li> <li>How does less reliability in the data (due to differences between focus groups and unpredictable interactions among participants), which is expected in qualitative research, relate to the rich details you are able to get from participants' unique experiences?</li> </ul> <p>There is a limitation discussed that research should focus also on people who do not use Twitter. I disagree. The point of this research is to investigate how social media can be used successfully for nutritional advocacy. Therefore, the primary limitation is the focus on Twitter instead of other social media platforms.</p>	<p>methodology.</p> <p>Included a summary of the broad categories of questions used in the focus group discussion guide and referred readers to appendix 1 for the full guide.</p> <p>Elucidated more on how the inherent variability in qualitative data, such as differences between focus groups and unpredictable interactions, enhances the richness and depth of insights gained from participants' unique experiences.</p> <p>This has been revised and the limitation section of the research work clarifies that the primary limitation is the exclusive focus on Twitter. I acknowledge that future research should explore other social media platforms to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how various social media channels can be utilized for nutritional advocacy.</p>	
7	<p><b>Discussion of Results:</b> Sections 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 are excellent.</p> <p>The conclusions could be more definitive. Were the research questions answers sufficiently? Yes or no. To what extent? And how does the study build on previous work to contribute to established theories and frameworks?</p> <p>How do the recommendations provided derive from the data that was reported in the study? It would be helpful to know the direct relationship between the</p>	<p>The conclusion section has been revised to provide more definitive answers to the research questions clearly stating the extent to which the research questions were answered and providing an explanation on how the study builds upon previous work contributing to established theories and frameworks in the field.</p> <p>This section has been revised linking recommendations to findings. This is to ensure a clear and direct relationship between the</p>	Page 61-62 Corrected

	evidence and these recommendations.	recommendations and the data collected, providing transparency and enhancing the credibility of the suggestions put forth.	
8	<b>Conclusion (and Recommendation):</b> There is not a Chapter 6 included in this dissertation	Added Chapter 6 to the dissertation, focusing on the conclusion and recommendation. This addition ensures the completeness of the dissertation and addresses any discrepancies in the content structure.	Page 61-62 Corrected
9	<b>References and Appendices:</b> The use of APA style is mostly accurate. The titles of works should not have every word capitalized, only the first word and proper nouns (e.g., "Twitter") should be	Reviewed and corrected the capitalization of titles in accordance with APA style guidelines ensuring consistency and accuracy throughout the document.	Page 63-72 Corrected

SN	COMMENTS BY INTERNAL EXAMINER	ACTION TAKEN	INDICATOR
1	<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b> - A strong introduction chapter. Clear objectives and research questions. The research problem is clearly articulated. However, the scope is limited to geographical scope and the justification is not clearly highlighted.	Introduction chapter has been revised to provide a clearer justification and the geographical scope including highlighting the rationale behind the chosen scope and its relevance to the research problem.	Page 17-18 Corrected
2	<b>Chapter Three: Methodology</b> - The methodology is simple and straightforward. There is an effort at reflexivity, which is commendable, but it could go further to say how the researcher's positionality could have affected the findings. Also, the inclusion/exclusion criteria are not very clear. The researcher endeavors to explain how validity and reliability are seen differently	This chapter has been enhanced by further discoursing how the researcher's positionality might have influenced the findings. Additionally, inclusion/exclusion criteria have been clarified for better understanding. Moreover, discussion on validity and reliability in qualitative research have been made clear drawing upon Byman. A. 2021 Social Research Methods to provide a more comprehensive treatment of	Page 38 Corrected



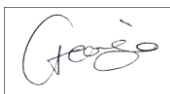
	<p>in qualitative research. I recommend Byman. A. 2021 Social Research Methods on this subject for a more comprehensive treatment.</p> <p>There is some repetition between 3.9 and 3.11 with regards to ethical clearance and ethical considerations.</p>	<p>the topic.</p> <p>This has been consolidated and streamlined merging relevant points to foster clarity and conciseness in addressing ethical aspects of the research.</p>	<p>Page 39-40 Corrected</p>
3	<p><b>Chapter Four: Presentation and Analysis of Data</b> - The data are comprehensive and presented quite clearly, though the wording of the sub-headings could be refined. There is a general need to pay attention to the details of the APA style.</p>	<p>The wording of sub-headings in this chapter has been refined to improve clarity and coherence additionally, reviewed and adjusted details to ensure adherence to APA style throughout the research work</p>	<p>Page 42-55 Corrected</p>
4	<p><b>Chapter Six: Conclusions (and Recommendations):</b> The conclusions are sound and emerge from the data There is a bit of grammatical tightening up required. See comments in text.</p>	<p>Revised the conclusions section, ensuring that the conclusions remain grounded in the data while addressing grammatical issues highlighted in the comments improving the overall clarity and readability of the conclusions.</p>	<p>Page 61 Corrected</p>

SN	COMMENTS BY VIVA VOCE PANNEL	ACTION TAKEN	INDICATOR
1	Refocus problem statement on communication aspect	Problem statement has been refocused to emphasize the communication aspect more prominently ensuring alignment with the research focus, providing clarity on the primary issue being addressed.	Page 16-17 Corrected
2	Clarify objectives' relevance to findings	Objectives' relevance to the findings has been revised to make certain readers understand the purpose of each objective and how they directly contribute to the study's outcomes.	Page 56-60 Corrected

3	Ensure alignment with existing scholars	Reviewed and updated all sections to incorporate relevant perspectives from established scholars in the field further reinforcing the scholarly foundation of the research work and positions it within the broader academic discourse.	Entire document
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**Candidate's Name:** Georgine Obwana

**Signature:**



**Supervisor's Name:** Dr. Angella Napakol

**Signature:**

