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Exploration of Gender, Equity, and Information Access and Utilization of Services and Opportunities: Do Ugandan Universities Empower Students and Foster Belonging

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*Gender and Equity,
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Anchored in social justice theory, this study explored gender and equity perspectives on access and utilization of information on services and opportunities by students in Institutions of Higher Learning in Uganda. The goal was to determine whether such information created a sense of belonging. Information on services and opportunities required by students and sources of information provided by Ugandan HIL were examined. The study used a cross-sectional research design. Quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect data were used from six universities. Data was collected from 162 participants (150 students and 12 key informants) using surveys, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and secondary reviews tools. The study identifies student's representatives and religious leaders as the main sources of information. Although according to social justice theory recommends student's engagement in activities that affect them universities excluded them from identifying, developing, packaging, disseminating, monitoring and evaluating of their information needs on S&Os. Most critical information required by students includes sexually transmitted infections, reproductive health, HIV/AIDs cooperate governance, career guidance and internship and job placement, scholarships and financial literacy. Generally, information on basic S&O provided by universities did not create a sense of belonging. Information on services and opportunities from university administration was perceived as difficult to comprehend, detached, without speaking to student actualities, yet students were not homogenous nor gendered beings. The insensitivity to gender and equity information needs of students affected more female male students, disabilities and those from disadvantaged communities. This article serves as an opportunity to advance discussions on gender inclusive and equity dimensions towards the creation of a sense of belonging in universities. This would require social justice and gender-inclusive trajectories aimed at dismantling gender-insensitive systems in universities.

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, access to information has become a basic need and a right to everyone (General Assembly 1946; Weeramantry, 2023). The right to information is a touchstone of all freedoms of the United Nations Agenda related to Sustainable Development Goals. In Africa, the right to information has been codified in Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The 1995 Constitution of Uganda as amended in 2005 on access to information and records, accords "Every citizen has a right of access to information and records" (The Republic of Uganda, 2005). Article 30 provides that all persons have a right to education and equal opportunities. In this article, basic information at universities refers to any content of messages that conveys meaning about the geographical locations of physical structures like offices, lecture rooms, washrooms, places of worship, health facilities, information centers, student accommodation and others (Pick et al., 2013). Basic information can also be about institutional values, norms, ethical considerations, health living practices, career guidance as well as opportunities in leadership, academics and employment services. Therefore, institutions of higher learning may have the duty to endeavors

and implement gender equality and inclusive environments (Beloskar et al., 2024).

Despite the above legal framework interventions, its not clear how Ugandan universities provided gender and equitable information on access and utilization of services and opportunities to empower students and foster a sense of belonging. This means that universities have not ensured equal access to services, opportunities, and information for all, fostering a sense of belonging (David, 2015; Sheila et al., 2021; Foxx, 2021). This necessitated this study to examine students access to and utilization of sources of information on basic services and opportunities (S&O) as enablers to a sense of belonging in Ugandan universities.

LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL REVIEW

This study examined how access to and utilization information on services and opportunities in universities influences students' sense of belonging, drawing on the principles of gender, equity, and the social justice theory (Rawls, 1971).

Social Justice Theory (Rawls, 1971)

The social justice theory (Rawls, 1971) underscores fair distribution of resources, both

material goods (healthcare, housing) and non-material ones (rights, participation). This thought in universities focuses on access to information about these resources and potential barriers that prevent its dissemination. This study uses Rawls' theory of social justice to Ugandan universities to explore if they provide fair and inclusive access to information on S&O. The purpose is to determine if these universities enhance a sense of belonging for all students, regardless of gender, identity, class or social background.

Rawls social justice theory has been used by Grogan (2000) to understand the principles of social justice in relation to the idea of distribution. Rawls' theory is concerned about what needs to be distributed and arrangements for distribution including “(a) inherent equality; (b) valuation of S&Os in terms of supply and demand; (c) need; (d) inherited rights; (e) merit; (f) contribution to common good; (g) actual productive contribution; and (h) efforts and sacrifices”

According to (Alexander, 2016; Tilly & Wood, 2015; Parker et al., 2011) social justice theory' strength offers a framework for equal access to and utilization of public goods (education, healthcare and opportunities in universities. The theory underscores dismantling obstacles that stop students from realizing their full potential and advocates for fair treatment, respect, and democratic participation in decision-making (Jefferson et al., 2023) - all critical for nurturing a sense of belonging. Social justice theory (Epstein, 1979; Rawls, 1971) is disparaged for its vagueness and boundaries, mainly when resources are rare e.g. in universities (Micheal, 2013; Brody, 2002). Notwithstanding these boundaries, the theory proposes a valuable framework for dipping inequality and promoting equal access to and utilization of S&Os in universities. This study examines how Ugandan universities distribute information on essential services and opportunities to students. It explores numerous information sources (administration, websites, etc.) and investigates if this information enhances diversity, equity, and students' rights, (social justice principles) - all contributing to a sense of belonging.

Information on Services and Opportunities required by Students of HIL

Most information provided to students in universities in Uganda focuses more on classroom achievement or inclusive educational experiences (Omekwu et al., 2014; Triana, 2015) than information on S&O necessary for student's daily life at the university. Students require information on how to achieve their academic and career goals (Manca & Ranieri, 2017; Madaiah et al., 2016) and how to prepare for labor market dynamics and career guidance in their early years of study to strengthen their employability qualities in their lifetime at university (Betts, 1996; Mortimer, 1997). Whereas students also need information on how to manage and respond to gender-based violence and sexual harassment (Allison, 2019; Rubiano-Matulevich, 2019) as well as health-related information e.g. mental health and services, many times this information is not provided to them (Yorgason et al., 2008).

To their credit, although information of S&Os in universities in developing countries, Uganda is not provided in an inclusive manner, they have put in place a number of structured sources of formal and informal information resources. These include media websites, university radios and television shows, printouts of student handbooks, virtual learning spaces, periodicals. Others include social media accounts through which university information is provided and accessed by students (Ferguson, 2017; Jones-Bodie et al., 2020). University prospectus and open days as well as student information centers (Olaimat et al., 2020) are other sources of information on S&Os. Despite these information sharing channels, it's not clear whether students are involved in the creation and dissemination of the above modems of information channels; nor whether the information provided is inclusive and equitable to addresses information needs of students on S&Os.

Studies show gender differences in information access and utilization (Dissen et al., 2022; Ori & Berry, 2022). Female and male students frequently search for information on sexuality

from parents and peers respectively or they both seek fitness information from social media (Nakanishi et al., 2022). Public health websites can empower users but leaflets, though less used, are seen as more reliable (Nakanishi et al., 2022).

Sources of Information on Services and Opportunities provided by Uganda HIL

Universities have also established strong library resources and services (Waha & Davis, 2014) to support and empower students beyond their academic needs. These resources include blended information systems that cover online and face-to-face activities at university (Waha & Davis, 2014). However, the main criticism is that most of universities base their choices of information to provide to students on technological possibilities and availabilities rather than educational needs. In so doing, this excludes the most disadvantaged students from access to and utilization of basic information (Sarkar, 2012). Most literature on access to and utilization of information on S&O and various sources that support information in universities have not focused on gender and equity perspectives of female and male, students with disabilities, and those from most disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Being sensitive to the information needs on S&Os of these categories of students is important in creating a sense of belonging in university spaces.

At departmental levels, Secretarial staff and Deans of Students in universities also provide information to students on welfare, accommodation, feeding, healthy living, rights and responsibilities within the university spaces and beyond (Agholor & Agholor, 2020; Mubiru, 2022). Hilliard (2010) argued that Student Guild leadership (elected student representatives that sit at the student's guild council to advance student concerns and rights) is instrumental in providing information on academic, social and cultural development of students to both students and the administrative structures. However, this information may not address Gender and Equity needs of students that may create a sense of belonging. With this current study, we intend to contribute to scholarship of student's affairs by

exploring the gender and equity perspectives on access to and utilization of information on basic services and opportunities as enablers to sense of belonging at institutions of higher learning in Uganda.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study was conducted in the central region, Uganda from June-August, 2022, and adopted a cross-sectional research design. The design offered several advantages: It was inexpensive and was quick to conduct, allowing researchers to examine multiple variables simultaneously. Qualitative and quantitative approaches of research were used.

Sampling

This study targeted 6 Universities in Uganda (three public and three private universities). The study adopted a purposive sampling technique and sampled 234 respondents. The survey purposively targeted student leadership structures where 150 students (second to fifth-year continuing students aged 20 and above) were interviewed using semi-structured questionnaires. Respondents were purposely selected from Student Guild representatives, Minister of gender, culture and religious affairs, students with disabilities, students with albinism, students living with HIV/Aids and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The sample size included 12 Key informant interviews with 6 female Directors of Gender Mainstreaming/Gender Focal Persons and 6 (3 males and 3 females) Dean of Students. Six (6) focus group discussions (FGD) n=12 in each group were conducted with male and female university students.

Data Collection

The study employed mixed research methods. Data was collected from male and female students using surveys, key informant interviews (KII), focus group discussions (FGDs), and Website searches. KIIs participants were purposely selected based on their knowledge of handling student's information daily needs and were also a

link between students and university management that is responsible for providing information on basic S&O to students. The study further conducted a website review for 26 (twenty-six) universities in Africa, Europe, Asia, and North America to establish how they provide gender and equity-responsive information on basic S&O to their students.

Data Analysis

Data collected using questionnaires was edited, coded and classified based on research objectives. This involved examining the acquired evidence and probing patterns of information (Kombo & Tromp, 2006; Kothari, 2004). Descriptive and inferential statistical data were employed to present, analyze and interpret data using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (17.0). Data was presented in graphical and tabular formats and cross and multiple tabulations. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Using content analysis, qualitative data was organized based on patterns, repetitions and commonalities into themes. Interpretations of data were based on evidence, reasoning and judgment.

Ethics and Procedure

Prior to conducting the study, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), in Uganda wrote to the Vice-chancellors of each University informing them about their mandate of section 14 (c) of conducting research and organizing public discussions on equal opportunities. In the same letter, EOC in partnership with Kyambogo University set 6th June, 2022 as the

commencement date of conducting the study. The research team used this letter to introduce themselves to the universities where the research was conducted. Permission was granted in accordance aforementioned management hierarchy of those universities. The aim of the study was explained to participants. They were also that they were free to withdraw their participation from the study at any point should they feel uncomfortable. Participants were also assured of confidentiality and privacy of information obtained from them.

The research team involved Research Assistants selected from among (University graduates of social sciences). Research Assistants were trained in gender-focused research methodologies and analysis prior to fieldwork. All interviews were conducted in English. KIIs were physically interviewed by the first and second authors assisted by Research Assistants in notetaking. The time taken to administer questionnaires ranged between 20-30 minutes while individual interviews with KIIs ranged between 30–50 minutes.

FINDINGS

Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 150 (51% female and 49% male) undergraduate students participated in the survey. Majority of the students (88%) were aged between 20-30 years old, while 12% were above 31 years old. The study targeted students from the second (2nd) year to the fifth (5th) year

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

		Year of Study				
		Second Year (n=50)	Third Year (n=46)	Fourth Year (n=14)	Fifth Year (n=10)	All Year Groups (n=114)
Age Brackets	20-30	44	32	8	5	89
	30-Above	3	5	1	1	11
Male		15	19	5	4	49
Female		32	18	4	3	51

Category of Information on Basic Services and Opportunities Accessed by students

Table 2 shows that the most accessed information on basic S&O was guild representation (92%)

followed by religious and spiritual information (89%). The least information accessed was on student regulations (35%) and information on locations (35%).

Table 2: Information on Basic Services and Opportunities Accessed by Students

Basic information	Females (n=77)		Males (n=73)		Total responses	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	Total %
Guild representatives	71	92	68	93	139	92
Religious & spiritual information	69	89	64	88	133	89
Internships & fellowships	71	92	58	80	129	86
Health	68	88	61	83	128	86
Scholarships	65	84	52	71	117	78
Dean of student office	55	72	55	76	111	74
Government opportunities for youth	43	56	62	85	105	70
Housing & accommodation	57	74	40	55	97	65
Job opportunities	43	56	53	73	96	64
Academic counseling	39	50	48	66	87	58
Restaurants & canteens	50	65	37	50	87	58
Information on locations	25	32	28	38	52	35
Student regulations	21	27	31	43	52	35

Table 3: reveals information required by students but not provided by the university. This means a general exclusion of students from accessing

strategic information and needs of diverse categories of students may not be equitably addressed.

Table 3: Information required by Students but not provided by Universities

Theme	Information required by students but not provided by studied universities	
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functions of dean of student’s office • Students strategic Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functions of the student’s guild • Empowerment services
Campus life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacts & maps • Health & wellness • Student support services • Learning & working • Student achievements • International relations office • Public & campus security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation, leisure and entertainment • Student mentorship • Innovation • Entrepreneurship and outreach • Diversity & inclusion • Ethical life

Theme	Information required by students but not provided by studied universities	
News & Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility & sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events (exhibition & galleries)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 information • Mental health • Guidance & Counselling • Campus news & media information/ announcements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News achieves

Access to and Utilization of Health and Physical Infrastructure related Information

FGDs participants (86%) reported that health services were available to students and surrounding communities. However, information on sexual reproductive health and sexually transmitted infections was not exclusively discussed during student orientation nor such information disseminated in print form. Information on information services for the deaf and epileptic and disabled students was reported lacking to the detriment to the affected students as stated by FGDs (865) who found health services available, but sexual health info and resources for deaf, epileptic, and disabled students were deficient, deterring their well-being as stated:

A deaf and epileptic student unfortunately died after dropping from a dorm bed. He died of negligence due to nonexistence of medical emergency contact information. We were not helped also due to after-hours medical staff. This incident climaxes the university's insensitivity to students with exclusive health needs. FGD Public University 2, June, 2022.

Universities lack accurate information and experience challenges with unclean, insufficient, and socially insensitive water and sanitation facilities. Absence of awareness campaigns further deteriorate these amenities, straining budgets and compelling some students to circumvent them overall, affecting their health and education outcomes as stated:

We do not have adequate information on functional toilet facilities. Water in the universities toilets is on and off which makes toilets dirty. This institution has not developed a schedule on water flow. Inadequate water supply led to high rates of urinary tract

infections among students and such condition is even worse especially among female students and students with disabilities. We do not want to belong to a stinking university FGD 3 public university, June, 2022.

KII across universities revealed a mutual grievance that newly enrolled students and visitors struggled locating their way around due to insufficient signage for key locations like administrative buildings, academic departments, and essential services e.g. recreation centers and medical facilities.

Security-related Concerns for University Students

Our students are vulnerable to thieves and conmen, sugar daddies/mummies who take advantage of limited information e.g. on reporting and banking facilities and registration procedures. Students and parents have lost registration and tuition fees to these unscrupulous individuals. How can a student develop a sense of belonging to a university when on their first time of entry are robbed? FGD public university, July, 2022 & 2 KIIs private university 4, July, 2022.

Information on Academics and Career and Opportunities

KII revealed that Public universities in Uganda offer varied prospects and stimulate inclusion through affirmative action strategies, like awarding (1.5) extra points to female students joining universities. This strategy has amplified female enrollment narrowing the gender gap in admissions. KII revealed in table 4 more information on opportunities.

Table 4: Information on opportunities provided by HIL

S/N	Institution	Information on opportunities offered
1.	Makerere University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Makerere University Female Scholarship Foundation ▪ MasterCard foundation scholarship ▪ The Chinese Embassy scholarship ▪ e-VBAB Project scholarships- Indian Government ▪ Madhdvani Foundation Scholarship ▪ Pan African Capacity Building Program
2	Kyambogo University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employment under the students' work-study scheme ▪ Early-Career Research Fellowships ▪ Scholarships for a 5-Months Exchange Program ▪ HEED - Africa: The Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scholarship Program ▪ KFW EAC Scholarship Program ▪ Science, Technology and Innovation Scholarships ▪ Business Incubation Center (Entrepreneurship program) ▪ PAGEL – Speech and Language Therapy Interventions
3	Makerere University Business School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Academic Excellence Programs ▪ Entrepreneurship and Innovation Hub ▪ Disability Centre ▪ Forum for Women Educationalists (FAWE) scholarship ▪ Vice-chancellors list ▪ MUBS Women Forum
4	Kampala International University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bursaries for the Bright and Needy students ▪ IUIU alumni to support vulnerable students ▪ Mempro Program (Mentoring and Empowerment Program for Young Women)
5	Uganda Christian University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No opportunities reported at the time of this study
6	Islamic University of Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Established the first female campus in Africa ▪ IUIU alumni program to support vulnerable students

Gaps in information dissemination

The study revealed limited access to and utilization of opportunities. Universities had information on scholarships and jobs for both male and female students, but was not made available to some students as stated:

There is unequal access to and utilization of scholarship and job opportunities. Universities disseminate information on such openings almost at call closer time. As a result of lack of transparency, only students with connections within the universities get priority to such opportunities. Those who secure scholarships lack financial management skills especially students from underprivileged backgrounds who lack financial literacy putting a strain to family

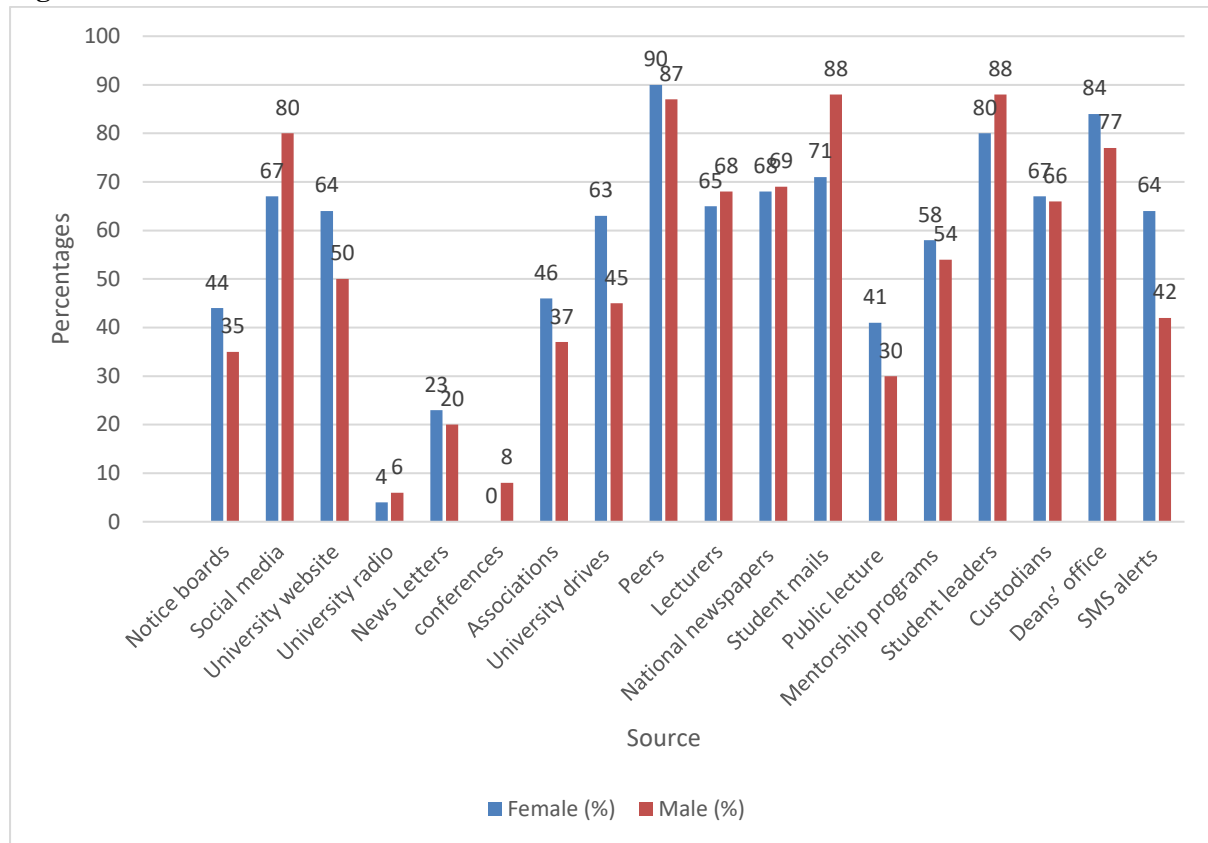
relations FGD public university 1, July, 2022.

A 2016-2017 report by Uganda's Higher Education Students Financing Board indicated a gender inequality in loan beneficiaries 33% (403) female compared to 67% (922) male. Although the scheme increases access, FGDs indicated a focus on STEM fields (except for disabilities) potentially affecting female involvement in loan acquisition.

Sources of Information on Basic S&O Provided Students

A survey (Figure 1) demonstrates students largely depend on peers for information (females 90%, males 87%), student leaders (males 88%, females 80%). University radio (10% - females 4%, males 6%) and conferences (males 8%) were less prevalent opportunities.

Figure 1: Students main sources of information



University Administration as a Source of Information

KIIs reported multiple sources (Directorates of Gender Mainstreaming /Gender Focal Offices and other academic and administrative departments) offered information on sexual harassment prevention, career guidance, and student support services (counseling, etc.), but few students used it. Student governments (guild councils) also informed students on various topics, nonetheless limited female students were selected leaders. Course coordinators expedited communication among students and lecturers, which contributed to a sense of belonging among students.

Websites, Social Media, Students Peers and Leaders as Sources of Information

While university websites and social media provide materials on student support services (academic help, mental health, financial aid, amenities), students in distant locations might face a dearth internet access. Students with disabilities be challenged physically, language, or technological obstacles.

Ugandan universities have continued to admit students with diverse multilingual resource needs. universities are not offering devices to students that foster their access to and utilization of S&Os. Apart from English as a universal medium, it is not easy to have information on websites and social media translated in other languages, FGD, Public University 2, August, 2022.

FGD participants reported that students trusted and utilised more information on S&Os obtained from their student leaders and peers. For example, electronic information on S&Os was exchanged through social media (WhatsApp, email, facebook, instagram, youtube, twitter, linkedin, snapchat tik tok etc) by their leaders or peers. Participants reported that some information on academic programmes, new events, student leadership campaigns, registration or public holidays was being shared publically on social media platforms. Students reported preference of this mode of communication because it was reported to be effectiveness and efficiency in reaching wide audiences.

Student leaders and peers help fresh enrolled or deprived students. Such students sense welcomed and supported at the universities. Information provided includes guidance, fostering a responsive environment, and supporting them to access and utilize S&Os. This was reported to promote trust, connection, and a sense of belonging for new and deprived students. Information on health, guidance and counselling and relationships were however being discussed and shared in private or smaller groups or at individual level as stated:

Students never want to expose their health or love affairs to university managers. They may not even open up to the health or psychosocial service providers within the university. Instead they prefer to seek help from their peers who may provide credible information on the solutions about the problem or they use their own past experience to solve the current and pressing problem. This is especially true where the information required is about management of HIV/AIDs, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), sexual harassment from university managers/lecturers or in case a student is struggling with tuition, FGD, Public University 2, August, 2022

Although the universities provide some information, some of the student's population are not aware on where to obtain this information from.

The university does not market information it offers accessible to us students. For me apart from receiving information from my peers about increase in university functional fees or about an emergency like outbreak of disease or death of a student or graduation, I have never accessed practical information on services and opportunities from the university management, Key Informant Private University, August, 2022).

Another key informant stated:

We need targeted information. For example, we need the university to come up with student

media tailored information that communicates explicit student needs, interests, or lived experiences. The use of videos, infographics or interactive content creates vigor and internalization. Our Guild Minister of Information is very good at relaying information that promotes diversity and inclusivity on student's access to services and opportunities like scholarships, career opportunities, mental health resources, or upcoming events and from diverse backgrounds benefiting from university resources and opportunities to promote inclusivity. Because of the way information is packaged, you find that you have appetite to read his whatsapp postings. addressing student information-seeking behavior, UNIVERSITIES can establish a more appropriate and appealing media presence that may effectively influence the information seeking behavior of the student's community, Key informant, Public University 2, August, 2022.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated how male and female students accessed information on S&Os that influenced their sense of belonging at universities. On access to and utilization of information on S&Os and sense of belonging, students depended more on guild representatives and peers or religious leaders for information on S&Os than official universities channels even when the sources were perceived to be discriminatory due to campus politics and social trajectories with male students. This finding collaborates with Riley & White (2016). The authors postulated that people receive, appreciate and understand information more from their peers due to the strong associations they have within their communities. In universities students could properly have perceived information provided by universities as difficult to comprehend, detached, and limited to speaking to student actualities. Foxx, (2021) maintains that access to and utilization of information is vital. In universities, such information may contribute to student

success and creation of a sense of belonging in their communities.

However, male students dominated leadership positions. Female students lacked leadership training, skills and mentorship. Madsen (2012) reported similar findings with fewer women in leadership positions worldwide. Social cultural norms and values, gender stereotypes, inadequate networking and sexual harassment were cited barriers to female student's participation in leadership. Butler-Henderson, et al. (2022) noted similar challenges and proposed that in order to increase female participation in academic leadership positions, women and men should work together and dismantle the aforementioned barriers.

The social justice theory requires student's participation in information development, packaging and dissemination. However, this study revealed that universities were marred with gender inequities and non-inclusive sexually transmitted infection (STI) and Reproductive Health (SRH) information, unreasonably affecting more female students and those with disabilities. According to Chuene & Kgarose (2023) absence of gender-inclusive information on SRH & STI presents a number of risks. The risks may result into increased prevalence of STIs & SRH in communities including universities. To Byansi et. al, (2023), irregularities and insufficient reproductive health information create gaps in actual access to and utilization of STIs & SRH services, amplifying adolescent girls' risks to adverse sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Social justice theory (Rawls, 1971) and Morsing & Schultz (2006) both urges communities including universities to include male and female students in STI/SRH information identification, creation, presentation in a gender inclusive and comprehensive way to capture, disabilities, and mental health aspects as a way of creating a sense of belonging universities. This is essential especially when female students and those with disabilities make life choices about sexual health, and promote health outcomes and futures.

The study revealed lack of systems and structures created unequal access to information on water and sanitation, female student and those with disabilities were more affected. This generates gender-based health problems in universities, a situation prohibiting creation of a sense of belonging. Accordingly, Kebirungi et al. (2018) established universities students risk the burden of safety when water and sanitation infrastructure information is gender insensitive to student's needs. This situation skews creativity and efforts to expand water and sanitation infrastructure to meet the high demands of access and utilization to clean water for all university students, making everybody vulnerable to waterborne infections (Kebirungi et al.,2018).

Information gaps on S&Os affected student support services. For example, real-time career guidance, limited informed and democratic decision-making among students. Non-aware and transparent economic opportunities like scholarships became inaccessible to the universities deserving students. Internet support for accessing such information especially from disadvantaged backgrounds students and those with impairment disabilities made it had for students to process applications on real time. Relatedly, opportunities obtained from social media can be a prejudiced and undependable source of information. Nonexistence of career guidance information positions female students at a detriment in the job market. Anxiety is bloated when graduates fail to find jobs or even when job opportunities are available, may not be able to process their curriculum vitea to match market demands. Arthurs (Dubeau & Chochard, 2024; Mutevere et al., 2024; Peng et al., 2024; Tsambou et al., 2024) exhibit value for employment is enhanced for men and women graduates that enjoyed scholarship and internship placement opportunities compared to those who had no similar opportunities. Gender inequalities that promoted by office bearers to provide information on scholarships and internship opportunities created inequalities in the form of missed opportunities. This would may be explain the persistence gender wage gaps with females in

lower wage positions of their first employment and may influence their life-cycle earnings (Kießling et al., 2024). A sense of belonging is invariably achieved when trust in the universities systems, reduced self-confidence and acceptance from their peers (Zamora-Polo et. al., (2019) is abused.

Findings revealed nonexistence of information on cooperate governance and universities structures (administrative, academic offices, banks, health centers, emergency contacts and other amenities). This exposed universities to security threats with thieves and assaulters taking advantage to rob tuition fees from students and parents. This risky situation affects more female students, students with disabilities and first-time student and parents and other visitors especially those from disadvantaged locations. Mohd (2018) supports this finding that electronic bank services and security information significantly affect students' banking option decisions with female students being more affected compared to their male counterparts. To promote a sense of belonging, Liaqat et al. (2021) advances awareness trainings to impart financial knowledge among universities students.

Social media platforms were also sources of information on S&Os. Students found it fast, allowed real time and promoted visual interactions from social media networks and social trust from peers. Bharuthram & Heerden (2022) though had similar finding but differed on the understanding student peer emotions and feedback to such information. Although social media reached a wide audience, it may regard students as homogenous and gendered beings, not comprehensive to address the needs of diverse student communities or may be subjective in nature characterized by personal feelings, experience and biases rather than objectivity and empiricism (McLaughlin & Silence, 2023). Other sources of information acknowledged by the study were student guild councils, course coordinators, lecturers and dean of students. King et al. (2022) agree with this finding on student organizations providing information on S&O. However, such sources were limited by campus politics. King et

al. (2022) agrees with the finding and reported that some students were excluded from the benefits of the community service initiatives by their own fellow students during COVID campaigns.

CONCLUSIONS

Although information access and utilization is a human right, universities generally don't provide information on S&Os. Universities should provide such information without reservations. To promote social justice and gender inclusive information, universities should involve students in information identification, development and dissemination. Information should be obtainable in a way that is gender-inclusive and addresses the needs of diverse students. To create a sense of belonging, universities should provide comprehensive information on various topics including social justice principles, gender inclusive and innovative leadership information, sexual health, disabilities, and financial literacy.

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