ICT and economic empowerment: analysing how youth in Tanzania use social media to facilitate income-generation activities

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ABSTRACT

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has globally played a significant role in facilitating communication that assists various socio-economic undertakings. It presents an opportunity, especially to the youth in Africa, to utilise social media (SM) and contribute to attaining Sustainable Development Goals No 1 and No. 8, such as eradicating poverty and creating decent work. However, this may only happen if SM platforms are utilised appropriately. Hence, this article examined the uptake of ICT in the form of SM in facilitating Income Generating Activities (IGAs) undertaken by youth in Dar es Salaam Tanzania for self-economic empowerment. A total of 46 respondents from the region were purposively selected and interviewed. These involved youth, community residents and local government officers. Primary data were obtained through Face-to-face Key In-depth Interviews (KIIs)and secondary data from various reliable sources, including peer reviewed articles. Data were collected and analysed through a qualitative approach using NVivo software (Version 12). Findings show that youths who effectively use SM in their day-to-day IGAs strengthened their economic undertakings and hence were economically empowered. SM accelerated the spread of relevant information between the youth and their customers and amongst the youth themselves. Notwithstanding such achievements, some youths misused SM due to negative perceptions while others failed to afford to buy smartphones or pay for the internet. The article recommends that youth who can afford access to SM should be mobilised and trained to emulate successful stories to facilitate effective undertakings of their IGA hence economically empowered. The study findings are crucial for youth and youth development stakeholders to improve strategies to promote SM use for youth economic empowerment.
Key words: *economic empowerment, information and communication technology, income generation activities, social media, youth*

INTRODUCTION

Information Communication Technology (ICT) has accelerated remarkable changes in human development, including economic empowerment of marginalised groups. Henry (2012) posits that many of the new benefits occurring globally, in emerging economies, in particular, would not have likely materialised without ICT. Through social media (SM), the world has benefited in terms of improved connections, information sharing and relationships among people across all walks of life (Akanle et al., 2021; Rothe, 2020; Asongu and Othiambo, 2020). According to Harpin et al. (2014), the flow of information through new forms of SM networks such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram have attracted most youth who tend to be early adopters of phones and computers. It was envisaged that by 2021, a third of the world's population would be active SM users, spending on average 135 minutes per day using internet-enabled platforms (Statista 2018). Indeed, youth are more likely to access the internet and use smartphones than adults (Harpin et al., 2016; Ng, 2016). Global literature further shows that the youth cohort has been one of the primary active users of SM, affected both positively and negatively (Patton et al., 2014). As modern communication tools, SM platforms have accelerated multiple direct and indirect economic benefits to various sections of the population. Thus, ICT is very fundamental in propelling development. The use of ICT,

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according to Tjoa and Tjoa (2016), can facilitate the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which can be manifested in addressing the world most immense challenges such as poverty and inequalities. Through SM, various population segments are aided to share positive ideas and gain new knowledge that is critical to help youth facilitate undertakings of Income Generation Activities (IGAs). The concept of SM lends to multiple definitions and interpretations. SM can be defined as 'web-based services that allow individuals, communities and organisations to collaborate, connect, interact and build community by enabling them to create, co-create, modify, share and engage with user-generated content that is easily accessible' (McCay-Peet & Quan-Haase 2016: 17). In this article, the term SM is limited to the application of internet-based technologies in the form of Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp and YouTube among youth to facilitate the undertakings of various Income Generation Activities (IGAs).

Several studies examined various forms of social media's contribution to facilitating socio-economic activities, including business and IGAs among unemployed youth and women. For instance, Asongu and Othiambo (2020) unveiled that the proper uptake of SM is crucial for undertaking IGAs, which are part and parcel of inclusive human development. Several kinds of literature show that diverse groups of people in Tanzania largely use SM for various purposes; these include but are not limited to social, health and the economy (Ross et al., 2018; Pfeiffer et al., 2014). According to Wakkee (2018), the improvement of internet connections and SM in Tanzania has reduced information costs for young graduates who aspire to become entrepreneurs. The National ICT Policy in Tanzania emphasises the need to address the misuse of SM and facilitate its practical use for financial inclusion for most Tanzanians (URT, 2016:7-9). As such, this is in line with target number 8 of SDGs intending to promote, among other things, full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men (Frey et al., 2016). Yet, despite the previous studies and recognition of the potentiality of ICT to empower marginalised groups, there is a dearth of literature exploring youth and local government officers understanding of SM and their positive impact on youth empowerment. Against this backdrop, this article intended to fill in the gap and contribute the knowledge creation by examining how youths undertaking IGAs in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, use SM to economically empower themselves. Specifically, the article has four objectives; to explore the understanding of SM by youth and local government officers; to examine the leading SM outlets used by youth; to examine how youth use SM to facilitate IGAs and examine challenges hindering them from using SM to facilitate IGAs. Following this introductory section, the rest of the paper is organised as follows: section two reviews the literature, followed by section three on methodology. Section four presents study results, and section five discusses the key findings, while the last part provides conclusions drawn.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Social media and socio-economic empowerment
Social Media has been globally advocated as one of the catalysts to empower marginalised groups such as youth. Empowerment, which in other words refers to power for the powerless, is at the heart of social change and development (Drury & Reicher, 2009). According to Asongu and Othiambo (2020), SM is a crucial tool to improve digital literacy and income generation, which are part and parcel of inclusive human development. For instance, Haight et al. (2014) purported that digital democratisation on female entrepreneurship has significantly contributed to the achievements of self-enterprises owned by women. Such modern communication tools significantly contributed to their business success. SM promotes positive health behaviour by instilling positive attitudes and norms (Dunlop et al., 2016). On top of that, SM has the power to

connect the depressed population to work together by harmonising their limited available resources and making positive changes to their lives (Cullinane et al., 2014). A study by Micheli (2016) examined social networking sites (SNSs) and low-income teenagers and unveiled that the SNSs provide unique opportunities for low-income teenagers on how to use the sites' communication and rational features.

Marginalised groups like youth can use ICT tools for self-empowerment in various ways. Nemer (2016), examined mobile internet use by the low-income communities in Brazil. The study showed that the community technology centres (CTCs) were used for capacity building and informal routes of skill transfer. According to Rice and Barman-Adhikari (2014), the use of the internet and SM among homeless youth had significant positive impacts on their lives. The benefits included access to connections through maintaining and bridging social capital established by social ties. These, in turn, assisted the homeless youth to get jobs and housing services through the online platforms compared to those who were not using SM. In addition, SM facilitates interactive and informative links that create a learning environment and build confidence and self-empowerment (Sanyal, 2000). According to Louge (2006), the internet is an essential resource for information sharing among the youth. Indeed, the internet supports the use of SM that, in turn, assists in the formation and sustenance of established social networks, particularly among the homeless youth (Servon and Pinkett, 2004).

In the contemporary world, SM has widely been applied by youth to facilitate various socio-economic activities. The growth of numbers of people in Africa, youth in particular, exposed to the use of ICT facilities such as cell phones, has also skyrocketed the use of SM that has made interpersonal, social connections and efficient service delivery by various governments much more accessible than before (Akanle & Omotayo, 2020:165; Bartels & Ritin, 2014; Kagoya & Mbamba, 2021). Bryant, Sanders-Jackson and Smallwood (2006) stressed this by stating that 'socially interactive technologies (SITs) such as instant messaging and text messaging are beginning to redefine today's social networks youth'. ICT development in Africa has significantly contributed towards liberating marginal groups who, in most cases, may not be served by mainstream commercial media or who have limited access to these media (Bosch, 2014). In Kenya, the Shujaaz project used SM platforms to improve the lives of Kenyan youth in various aspects (Hutchinson et al., 2019). According to Gray and Silver-Pacuilla (2011), SM helps youth express their ideas that influence various socio-economic undertakings. SM helps youth from disadvantaged communities expand their social capital, share beneficial information potential to get various opportunities such as works, and improve their income generation undertakings (Brough et al., 2020).

Likewise, an increase in the number of internet users in Tanzania has facilitated the uptake of SM. Indeed, SM in Tanzania is one of the dominant forms of ICT through which society communicates using different languages, including Kiswahili (URT, 2016:7). According to the Citizen newspaper (2020), Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) report released in January 2020 shows that internet penetration in Tanzania reached 43 per cent in 2018, with 48.77 per cent of the mobile phones subscribers being internet users. In other words, out of 43.62 million mobile subscribers, at least 23.14 million were internet users. Statistics further show that 13.8% of internet users engage in SM. The total number of Facebook users in Tanzania reached 682,000 and grew by more than 56,580 in six months in 2012 (Socialbakers. Tanzania Facebook Statistics, 2014). According to Mramba and Rumanyika (2020), informal traders in Tanzania have significantly benefited from using Instagram as an alternative marketing SM platform by posting their products

through images and photos, showing testimonials from satisfied customers. Hence, the new sets of SM platforms have increased opportunities in the creative industry that can empower youth economically.

Challenges of social media among youth
Social media use has multiple outcomes of various facets to diverse groups. Youth are facing numerous forms of challenges associated with both misuse and limited accessibility of SM. Limited access to SM among some groups, such as the disadvantaged, is a common phenomenon given associated costs such as internet access and gadgets such as mobile phones or computers. According to Salem and Mourtada (2012), time and financial resources, which are highly needed to promote relationships between customers and SM also among the key challenges. The aspect of financial problem is supported by Virtanen (2015), who posits that mobile phone use is associated with device costs and an internet connection to engage in SM. For instance, Temu (2019) observed that using the internet to send photographs, a commonly appreciated way of advertising, is very expensive. Coupled with an unreliable network, it becomes a huge challenge for traders to promote their businesses and improve their income levels. Indeed, the digital divide is still the main issue for Africa, particularly in exploring the use of internet-based technologies. It is estimated that 4.1 billion people (53.6%) of the global population used the internet at the end of 2019 (ITU, 2019). As of March 2020, the African continent shared only 11.7% of people with access to internet penetration globally (Internet World Stats, 2020).

Poor time management on the part of youth is also a challenge. The challenge is manifested through spending too much time on SM for chatting with customers and friends (Beninger et al., 2016). According to Barefoot and Szabo (2010), the use of SM to market goods and services requires relatively enough time to make an investment successfully. On the other hand, some SM policies like Facebook are disputed as they tend to reduce the effectiveness of facilitating business by blocking their users under the pretext of running afoul (ibid, 2016). It usually happens when youth advertise their products directly on Facebook, which is said not to be allowed. As a result, charges are incurred if one wishes to get the services, which reduces income status, especially when entrepreneurs solely depend on one type of SM outlet.

Besides that, the use of SM exposes an individual to various risks as it discloses their personal particulars as well as the products they sell to individuals to various threats. With regard to the risks associated to the products when exposed to the online forum, Nadaraja and Yazdanifard (2013) contended that SM can lead to illegal copying, stealing and misuse of one's brand, products, or services which can have a direct negative on one's business and hence income accrued. According to Venkatraman (2017), the use of ICT in its various forms, such as SM, is associated with challenges such as cyberbullying and posting of unsuitable pictures, which show the need to be keen on social networking platforms and internet use. Hence, awareness of SM misuse and untrustworthiness of users due to wider exposure of SM forums while working to facilitate youth economic empowerment is crucial. In addition, some customs and traditions, such as gender discrimination, have caused limitations in ensuring better IGAs. Restricting access to devices such as mobile phones to use for income generation unveiled to be one of the key challenges facing unmarried young women in India (Venkatraman, 2017). Stevens et al. (2017) emphasised that various stakeholders like researchers and government practitioners to support youth to enable them to use well and hence prevent them from misuse.

Theoretical framework

This article applies the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), focusing on the SM context. The origin of Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G) was first developed in research to analyse radio communication's effectiveness in the 1940s (Huang, 2008). However, in the internet era, the theory has gained relevance whereby SM development has also gained prominence (Raacke, Bonds-Raacke, 2008 in Tanta et al., 2014). The theory focuses on understanding individuals' motives to use specific media and the gratification gained thereat (Tanta et al., 2014; Blumler & Katz 1974; Katz & Foulkes, 1962). It posits that consumers purchase or use media products for entertainment, social interactions, information, personal identity and escapism, or fulfilling tension free needs. According to Ko, Cho and Roberts (2005), the theory is relevant in explaining how individuals can choose specific media that satisfies their needs, allowing one to realise gratification such as knowledge enhancement, entertainment, social interaction and rewards or remuneration. Blumler and Katz (1974) also pointed out that recipients can obtain numerous types of gratifications when using particular media, which can satisfy different needs of different individuals. Therefore, it is imperative to use UGT to explore how the uptake of SM among youth undertaking various IGAs in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, help to facilitate quick information sharing to empower them economically. In that regard, in the context of the present study, the theory helps first to understand how SM facilitates interactions between customers and youth who sell various products and second, and how sharing of business ideas among the youth undertaking IGAs is enabled. The main argument is that as opposed to traditional media outlets (such as news articles, radio and televisions), the contemporary SM outlets (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and YouTube) provide a wide range of opportunities to its consumers, to accelerate easy access to information for economic empowerment of youth engaging in IGAs. Therefore, given the prominence of SM use in the contemporary ICT world, the significance of using the theory in this study cannot be overemphasised.

METHODOLOGY

Research approach

A qualitative approach was used to collect and analyse data. The approach was relevant to obtain detailed information from key respondents involved in the study to understand the meaning attached to their responses (Creswell, 2012). The main focus of the approach is to learn what the problem means to the participants rather than the meaning that the researcher may have.

Participants

A total of 46 respondents participated in the study. A purposive sampling design was used as it was found to be useful to obtain key respondents with a detailed understanding of the topic under investigation. Respondents involved were youth users of SM and non-users while undertaking IGAs, Community residents (CRs) in selected wards where youth conducted their IGAs and Local government officials (Community Development Officers and Mtaa Executive Officers and District Business Officers). Local government officers assisted researchers in identifying respondents at the ward and '*mtaa*'/street levels. They were also involved as key informants given their role in implementing various youth development initiatives, in particular, supporting IGAs. They are knowledgeable about policies, strategies, plans, and day-to-day practices of IGAs, such as actions undertaken by the youth to generate self-income.

Research site

Data were collected in various wards from three districts (Ilala, Kinondoni and Temeke) of the Dar es Salaam region. Dar es Salaam was chosen because it is the leading business city in Tanzania. It

is a region where major socio-economic activities occur. It was deemed that the youth in this region would have likely received and applied SM platforms relatively better. According to Masese (2021), Dar es Salaam region is one of the areas where there has been a growing rate of ICT adoption in the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Sources of Data

The primary data source was face-to-face Key In-depth Interviews (KIIs) conducted between March and September 2020. Secondary data were obtained from various sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles from trusted databases like Google Scholar, Emerald, Ebsohost, Wiley Online Library and Springer Link. District and regional economic profiles and government policy documents relating to the subject under investigation were also used. The policies include but are not limited to the National ICT Policy (2016), the National Youth Development Policy (2008) and the National Employment Policy (2008).

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected from interviews using Kiswahili, the Tanzanian national language, were audio-recorded, fully transcribed, and translated into English. Secondary sources from various trusted sources were also relevant as they constituted a review of literature and discussion. Qualitative analysis of data was done thematically through Computer analysis called NVivo Version 12, software. The use of the software provided several advantages, like quickness in exporting data from a word processing package and codes these on screen. Hence, facilitate an accurate and transparent data analysis process by identifying who said what and where to fit in a specified theme. The information was carefully re-read to identify the keywords and concepts and organised into themes (nodes) related to the study's objectives. The coding process in this qualitative analysis was based on the inductive analytical approach (bottom-up), based on respondents' perceptions in their given contexts rather than the researcher's preconceptions. Braun and Clark (2006) stressed this by arguing that the analytical approach is a data-driven analytical framework.

FINDINGS

This part focuses on presenting the key findings regarding how youths in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, use SM to facilitate their income generation activities to empower themselves economically. Based on the study's objectives, four main themes emerged: understanding of social media, types of SM platforms used and their attributes, the role of SM in facilitating youth income-generating activities and challenges hindering youth from exploiting the use of SM.

Understanding of Social Media

Exploring the understanding of social media among the youth and government officials was considered important because for the youth to decide to use or not to use, they need to understand what it entails positively or negatively. Also, it informs the officials in charge of youth programmes how they can influence or mobilise youth to use SM effectively. It was found out that some government officials had relatively better knowledge of the concept. Respondents mentioned SM key functions. The following statements came from government officials who managed to provide multiple meaningful explanations regarding the term SM.

> *'Any form of a telecommunication network in an electronic form whereby the whole community or citizens within the nation or group can communicate through electronic device'. (KII TMK CDO 01)*

> *"Any form of network such as Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, Email used through smartphones for communication purposes among friends and relatives, inform one another on various issues and events. These give people socio-economic opportunities. To get information among the youth of what is going on in the world, where a world becomes like a village through social media, where it is easy to get information and work on it" (KII KND MG CDO 03).*

The quotations below stating definitions of SM substantiate further how youth also understand the concept of SM:

> *'A system that helps share information and ideas involving individuals with a particular goal or intending to meet a particular objective. It is a place (forum) where individuals can access various information to help them meet various targeted goals. (KII KND MKC Y07)'*

> *SM, in my understanding, are communication tools that make people closer, facilitate communication, and get information quicker in a specified period. (KII TMK WAL Y05)*

> *The way I understand SM is one of the ways to communicate through Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. (KII TMK WAL Y04)*

The above statements offer evidence on the general understanding of the concept of SM among both youth and government officers. Explanations provided by the youth and local government officers mentioned several similar issues related to the concept. The main idea that emerged about SM was a tool or a system that helps to facilitate communication easily among many people and between two parties related to the use of the internet.

Types of SM platforms used and their attributes
It was critical to know the predominantly used SM outlets to examine further their contribution towards facilitating quicker information sharing. Participants were requested to mention the main forms of SM platforms used and reasons for their preferences. The main platforms mentioned by respondents were; WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Snap chat, Telegram and YouTube. Out of these, WhatsApp was the most used SM, followed by Facebook and Instagram. Respondents stated that each of the platforms has advantages and disadvantages. Youths stated to have preferred WhatsApp mainly due to its ease of joining and connecting with people with smartphones. It does not require some procedures like creating an account that needs a password and user name as used in some other SM platforms. The majority of the youth with smartphones acknowledged using WhatsApp to make connections between individuals and among members in various groups. The platform provides a better way of sharing information through a group and on a one-to-one basis. As such, negotiations provide room for price reductions or increase benefiting the parties accordingly, as explained by one of the ardent youth SM users:

> *'When I am the one who is buying, I always try to negotiate for a reduction in the price of the products or services that I want to buy, but when I am the one selling, I also ensure that I negotiate for a price that I know will make me gain a reasonable profit.' (KII ILL BGR CDO 07)*

This reveals that the platform provides room for quicker and private negotiations without influencers to disrupt the deal between the parties. On the other hand, some respondents stated that they preferred Facebook. Respondents stated that the advantage of using Facebook was manifested in the users' ability to extend their connections to the broader network of followers across the globe. The youth also reported using Instagram and Snapchat to share relevant information to facilitate their IGAs. Some youth commended the use of Instagram given its advantages of editing and uploading shot videos and photos that facilitate sharing of business information. Below are statements from the interviewed youth who use Facebook and Instagram SM platforms to undertake various socio-economic activities:

> *I mainly use Facebook for communication with my fellow youth, sending pictures of products and getting updates from them, especially things that I do not have.'* *(KII TMK TMK Y06)*

> *'Facebook 'Facebook is one way of communication I use to advertise my entrepreneurship venture of selling shoes and clothes to communicate with people' (KII TMK MBG Y03).*

> *'I use Instagram for advertising my activities, downloaded movies. I post pictures of covers and posters with details such as the film's name, length, country of origin, and other relevant information I find necessary for my customers'. (KII KND MKC Y05)*

The statements show that Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram were among the critical SM outlets used by youth to promote communications for various purposes. Hence, the predominance use of the mentioned SM platforms among the youth narrates a better understanding of the same and their importance in facilitating interactions among them and between them and various individuals.

The role of SM in facilitating youth income-generating activities
With regard to how SM has facilitated the success of youth IGAs, respondents revealed that SM platforms facilitated information sharing among the youth in sharing business ideas and opportunities and accessing their customers. All these enabled the growth of the market base and more profit from their IGAs. For instance, it was mentioned that youth who were selling clothes used audio and video clips to describe and showcase their products. Likewise, youth who provided services, such as those who engaged in building houses and decorating, used SM to advertise their works. This attracted some clients who purchased their products and services. Respondents further stated that SM offers an online networking platform that enables youth to access and exploit numerous available economic opportunities. The extract below from youth explains how SM outlets have been helpful in promoting their IGAs:

> *'I use Instagram mostly to advertise my business; I have a recent vivid example. I received about ten customers yesterday because I posted women's clothes like purdah, which I order from Oman through Unguja and then Dar es Salaam. I had provided my mobile telephone numbers on my Facebook page and was contacted by clients who had caught the attention of the posted products. I have a plan to open my YouTube account to put online more business advertisements and grow my clientele base'. (KII KND MKC Y08)*

The above extract shows the advantage of SM platforms such as Facebook to ease communication between sellers and buyers. As such, it shows how SM enables creating comprehensive information systems that facilitate activities that generate income to take place easily. Local government officials' responses corroborate youths' views regarding how SM have served as a potential tool to facilitate IGAs. The quotations below from Mtaa Executive Officers from different areas verify the views from the youth.

> *'There are so many benefits that can be accrued through SM, but economically, it is a forum where a person can advertise business or activity to get customers'. (KII KND MAK MEO 02)*

> *'Yes, I know, many youths use SM in their IGAs or entrepreneurship activities. For instance, in their groups, they inform each other about better business opportunities for success. We can see people like Masanja (a popular Tanzanian comedian) who posts his farming activities. Through SM, youth can advertise and sell their products such as television, mobile phones. Through SM, individuals can sell and buy any product'. (KII ILL GRZ MEO 05)*

These revelations indicate that the youth can assess potential customers from their posted advertised products and services. Hence, through SM, youth accelerated their business undertakings. They were able to share new business ideas and get up to date information on available economic opportunities. Through SM, sellers in Tanzania could order products from within and overseas by specifying customers' needs to see and verify available products instantly. Hence, creating additional customers and profit as opposed to the used of conventional media such as print media and radio

Challenges hindering youth from exploiting the use of SM
Examining challenges facing youth regarding the use of SM was essential to inform the youth and various development stakeholders about relevant measures to ensure that SM becomes a useful platform for youth economic empowerment. Major challenges which were revealed included the cost of internet charges, lack of education and misuses of SM platforms which will be deliberated upon in this section. Lack of proper education to use smartphones on some youth has led some to waste time and adopt anti-social and immoral behaviours. One community resident interviewed stated that *'Some youth fail to use SM to advertise their IGAs because they lack proper education (KII KND MAK CR01).* Indeed, knowledge is power; hence, a lack of appropriate education makes people unable to use available opportunities. The statement below from youth further narrates the challenges facing youth regarding SM use:

> *Some youth have negative perceptions of SM use, that it is used for sending pictures, showing to others about their life, even fake life to show people that they are rich, while in reality, they are not. Others view SM as used for searching for women or men online (girl/boyfriend), you see! (KII TMK MBG Y01)*

The statement unveils how some youth abuse SM outlets by sharing inappropriate pictures, which are detrimental to their positive development. In addition to that, it shows that other youths engage in anti-social behaviours that are likely to promote prostitution or fornication among them leading to moral degeneration.

Incapacity to pay for services and products to enable the use and application of SM was noted as another factor hindering the use of SM profitably. The study noted that some youth could not afford the costs associated with the use of SM. Notably, SM users need to be with money to connect to the internet. Emphasising this, community resident from Magomeni ward stated the following:

> *'Apart from irresponsible use of SM, you can find that others fail to meet the cost of MBs. (megabytes) to use them positively'. (KII KND MG CR06)*

Although the article unveiled evidence regarding SM's benefits, the above quotations clearly show that some youth may not be able to use SM platforms and therefore may miss engaging effectively in these forums.

In relation to the above, another stated challenge faced by youths was the lack of access to tools to use on SM platforms. It was pointed out that some youth engaging in IGAs lacked gadgets such as smartphones, IPad and computers. Considerably, it hindered them from actively and effectively engaging in and expanding their SM networks, likely to promote their income-generating activities. The extracts below from community residents and youth narrate further on these challenges:

> *'There are youths who don't have money to own smartphones, so many youths own phones which can't access the internet, this hinders them from engaging in SM'. (KII TMK MBG CR 03)*

> *'There are several challenges among youth. The first challenge I can say is the lack of income among them. One challenge is to get the phone that can be used to get access to SM like YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. To afford credit is another challenge'. (KII TMK MBGK Y02)*

The above extracts substantiate youth's limitations in using SM in IGAs to promote their activities. Unaffordability of relevant gargets limits youth engagement in SM platforms because they are useful tools to expand their economic opportunities. Lack of capacity to afford smartphones or relevant equipment like laptops definitely hinders most use in SM, especially WhatsApp. Although one may use public internet cafes for internet connection and access other platforms like Facebook and Instagram, this also comes at a cost. However, with the dominance of smartphones, even public internet cafes are almost phasing out, as one of the government officials lamented:

> *'Some youth understand clearly the importance of SM to support their IGAs, but the challenge is accessing internet services. Internet cafes that helped many youths access various information relating to education, sports, economic and various recreational issues no longer exist in many parts. People are now relying on smartphones. Nevertheless, not all youth can afford smartphones that can support them in facilitating their IGAs'. (KII ILL BGR CDO 5)*

In a situation where some youth struggle to make a living, the lack of such opportunities becomes a more critical challenge; youth without smartphones and lacking access to public internet are significantly missing the advantages of opportunities compared to their counterparts who have. Access to the internet is one of the significant factors of youth involvement in SM technology.

DISCUSSION
This article has set out to examine how social media has been helpful to facilitate various income generation activities undertaken by youth in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to empower themselves

economically. Several issues were unveiled regarding understanding SM, types of SM platforms used and their attributes, the role of SM in facilitating youth income-generating activities, and challenges hindering youth from exploiting the use of SM and will be discussed below.

Youth understanding of the SM concept was expressed through youth mentioning basic defining features such as a tool for communication and sharing information and practical use of SM. SM outlets such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and YouTube were quite popular among the youth working in various IGAs. Notably, this study finds out that SM has played a significant role in facilitating youth income-generating activities. WhatsApp and Facebook platforms were the key SM outlets used that boosted youth IGAs. These facilitated better information sharing among various population segments than conventional media such as television and radio in terms of financial costs and time. In relation to the present findings, a previous study by Abubakar & Dasuki (2018) showed a clear association between the use of WhatsApp among women and their empowerment in various aspects of their lives. According to Agrawal (2020), in the contemporary world, WhatsApp is one of the most important platforms that facilitate customer relationship management (CRM) whereby members could easily stay connected and access important information circulating in the group by virtue of their membership. Each platform has its key defining features and advantage. Hence, they complemented each other in terms of assisting youth to facilitate various positive undertakings.

Given the advantages of the SM platforms, youth and the communities appreciated the importance of SM empowering marginalised groups. With regard to the way and extent to which SM facilitated IGAs, the present study unveiled that youth who used SM relatively well among themselves and between them and their customers enhanced their IGAs than those who did not. With available smartphone features, which facilitated sharing of still pictures of products, sending voices and posting the video, the youth managed to access potential customers, sharing business ideas on economic opportunities. Such accrued advantages of better internet use and information technology tend to increase youth participation in various socio-economic activities (Eboh, 2015). According to Stevens et al. (2017), youth development stakeholders like SM developers, researchers, and practitioners are responsible for designing strategies to leverage SM's benefits as a tool to facilitate beneficial networks and prevent them from the misuse. Olaore et al. (2020) narrated that we live in a digital era, making access to nearly everything online. In this regard, it is acknowledged that increased use of smartphones and laptops by youth is an opportunity to facilitate them to engage in various economic activities (Shead et al., 2014). Wakkee (2018) argues that improving internet connections and SM in Tanzania reduces information costs for young graduates who aspire to become entrepreneurs. Further, Gavino et al. (2018) purported that SM technology is a viable tool in creating customer relationships and quickening communication connections than face-to-face interactions.

In the context of African developing countries like Tanzania, where most youths are faced with various poverty-related problems, the benefits deriving from the use of SM unveiled by the present study to connect marginalised groups like youth cannot be overemphasised. Cullinane et al. (2014) also pointed out that SM has the power to connect the depressed population to work together by harmonising their limited available resources and make positive changes in their lives. Similarly, a study examining the connections between gender, economic development, and new media technologies in the Chinese countryside found that media technologies, to a large extent, facilitate micro-entrepreneurship participation in formal websites designed to facilitate entrepreneurship

(Wallis, 2015). Hargittai and Kim (2012) also supported the use of SM platforms such as smartphones by arguing that advanced features available in smartphones facilitate access to information and application. Mobile phones, commonly used by many entrepreneurs, have features that can help youth access opportunities, experiences, skills, and knowledge (Jenkins, 2007). As such, SM are used by youth to help them present and share numerous socio-economic ideas that influence their positive development (Gray and Silver-Pacuilla, 2011). The above studies corroborate with this paper and confirm that the effective use of SM has a significant contribution to facilitating IGAs that need to be embraced to improve the economic status of youth as one of the marginalised groups. In addition, the present findings partially support a previous study by Jose (2018) on the importance of SM in marketing products to customers. It was revealed that SM tools provide an online networking platform that enables youth to access and exploit numerous available economic opportunities and a place to advertise their works and share business ideas to attain decent employment. Indeed, if well used SM is an important tool for youth who are under resourced and with low-income as it helps to build social capital among themselves which support sharing of crucial information such as getting work, connecting to professional contacts as well as gaining career mentorship (Brough et al., 2020).

The present study found out that the misuse of SM by some youth engaging in IGAs was one of the major challenges. Such tendency delayed youth economic achievements in terms of success in their IGAs. However, contrary to the present study results, other studies have shown that SM misuse caused addiction, negatively impacting their health, accelerated lousy and violent behaviours (Wood (2017; Patton et al., 2014). In addition, SM has exposed youth to harmful online content such as excessive alcohol use and drug abuse (Savolainen et al., 2019). Notwithstanding variations between the present findings and previous studies, the negative impacts of SM on positive youth development needs to be given utmost attention. Anshari et al. (2019) posit, when youth have access to and are occupied by SM, there are high chances of developing nomophobia, a form of behavioural addiction towards smartphones, feeling anxiety caused by disconnecting from the mobile network or inability to have access to a smartphone. As a result, smartphone addiction disconnects youth from positive benefits such as income generation and associating them with a health disorder, anxiety, and lack of self-confidence.

CONCLUSION
This article examined how the uptake of SM, defined by social network forms like What's app, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, facilitate IGAs undertaken by youth in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. A better understanding of SM outlets as useful communication channels to promote their products and services was narrated by youth, local government officials, and community residents. Through available features in smartphones and other electronic gadgets like iPads and computers, it has been possible to share relevant information in the form of voice, pictures and videos. Although many youths working in IGAs reported having used SM in their day-to-day activities and strengthening their businesses, the study also found out that some youth misuse them or fail to access the same. In this regard, the article provides both knowledge and practical contributions relevant to promoting efforts focusing on IGAs and youth empowerment through effective use of SM. In that way, the study is crucial to help various development stakeholders gain a better understanding of designing strategies and development interventions to empower youth through SM platforms economically. These may include but are not limited to providing training to create awareness for the youth to use SM profitably and change the mindset of youth who misuse SM. Empowering youth to acquire self-employment opportunities through ICT and SM, in particular, is critical for contributing to the

SDGs (No 1 & No. 8.) of eliminating poverty and creating decent employment opportunities among African youths. Based on the study's findings, further research works are recommended that will focus on rural settings and involve various groups that were not targeted by this paper due to the limitation of financial resources and time. The present study focused on urban areas. Therefore, the involvement of other disadvantaged groups such as women and people with disabilities in various settings can complement the present study findings.

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