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VILLAGE SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN KAMUGANGUZI SUB-COUNTY KABALE, DISTRICT, UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

The study carried out was entitled “Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) and socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people in Kamuganguzi Sub County, Kabale District. According to UBOS 2018, Kamuganguzi Sub County which was the study area was among the poorest sub counties of Ndoorwa County, Kabale District where a total of 3,516 people were food insecure, 769 people had no access to safe water, 691 children (6-17years) were out of school, 1,142 children were involved in child labour and 110 children were currently married. Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) was promoted in Kamuganguzi Sub County by LADA Uganda to empower vulnerable households economically however, information as to whether their socio-economic status was improved was still sketchy and lacking. It was therefore necessary to carry out a study to fill the gap. The research design was cross-sectional in conjunction with qualitative and quantitative approaches. The tools for data collection were both the interviews and questionnaires. The study objectives included; determining the effect of savings on the socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people, examining the relationship between credit access and socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people, and examining the effect of social fund on socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people in Kamuganguzi Sub County Kabale District. The study population was 255 which included LADA Uganda staff and VSLA group members. The key findings were; improving the health status of women in families; credit access and socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people were synonymous with community replacing the damaged property. The conclusion was that village savings and loan associations and socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people were found to be significantly related. The recommendations were; need to improving the health status of women in families as well as children since they are regarded vulnerable in order to let them live happily; there should be improved nutrition and food supply to all families to let children and other members grow healthy and live a happy life; increased household income should be the ultimate goal fostered by credit accessibility in the area which must be done with ease through the start of small and medium enterprises especially women; it is recommended that the vulnerable groups of people have the replacement of the damaged property in case of any loss aiming at keeping standards of living at household level; achieving flexibility to immense development of social capital required the development of the saving culture that promotes regular income to help the community solve their personal problems; the social fund should be a unifying factor that enhances development through increased social networking to allow information flow since information is power.

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INTRODUCTION

VSLA is a group of 15 - 30 people who save together and take small loans from those savings. Members save through the purchase of between 1 – 5 shares every meeting. Members also contribute a social fund, to use for small grants when members are in distress for example funeral, transport to hospital.

At the end of every annual cycle, all outstanding loans are recovered and the loan fund is shared out. VSLA is widely implemented by NGOs as a financial inclusion model towards socio-economic empowerment of persons made vulnerable by HIV and other factors. VSLA is not a resource heavy program. Groups need only training, basic materials and a metal lock box to operate. The VSLA model revolves around skill

acquisition and group-generated capital. Once the group has learnt VSLA methodology, the implementer is able to start giving the group more autonomy, making viral growth possible. VSLA provides members with 3 benefits; a way to save money, a way to earn interest and away to access previously unavailable capital (VSL Associates, 2008). Socio-economic empowerment involves supporting disadvantaged people to gain power and exert greater influence over those who controls access to key resources. This includes equal access to credit services, education, health, environment, shelter and nutrition (Shabbeer, 2016). Many government programmes had been implemented to alleviate poverty and improve the status of poor people in Uganda. These programmes included Youth Livelihood Programme, Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme, and Operation Wealth Creation. According to UBOS (2018), the proportion of Ugandans living in poverty now stood at 8 million which meant that 21% of Ugandans were living in poverty. The chronically poor were in the households residing in rural areas (12%). The public and private sectors sacrificed considerable resources for the provision of credit to the poor. Many microfinance institutions came up to give micro credit to the entrepreneur poor women and men and Government and NGO programs supported the vulnerable people in Kabale district with economic empowerment interventions. Despite all the effort majority of the population in rural areas of Kabale district remained poor.

According to UBOS 2014, Ndoorwa County, Kabale District had a population of 27, 9140 people. Kamuganguzi Sub County which was the study area was among the poorest sub counties of Ndoorwa County, Kabale District where a total of 3,516 people were food insecure, 769 people had no access to safe water, 691 children (6-17years) were out of school, 1,142 children were involved in child labour and 110 children were currently married (UBOS 2018). Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) was promoted in Kamuganguzi Sub County by partners including LADA Uganda to empower vulnerable households economically however, information as to whether their socio-economic status was improved was still sketchy and lacking. It was therefore necessary to carry out a study to assess the role of Village Savings and Loan Associations on socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people. The study was carried out in Kamuganguzi Sub County, Ndoorwa West constituency, South Western Uganda District of Kabale. It covered a total of ten (10) informal savings groups operating in accordance with the core principles of Village Savings & Loan Associations (VSLAs), with a focus on the VSLA participants. Kamuganguzi Sub County was selected as the study area because most of the households in the sub county were associated with very poor welfare conditions despite participation in VSLA to empower them economically. Kamuganguzi Sub County bordered with sub counties of Buhara, Kitumba, Katuna town Council, and Rubaya Sub County respectively. Since the new wave of microfinance in the 1990s, microfinance came to be seen as an important development policy and a poverty reduction tool (Littlefield, Murdoch & Hashemi (2003). World Savings Bank Institute (2010) showed that microfinance was a key tool to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Microfinance encompassed Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) which provided financial services to low-income clients who generally lacked access to more formal banking services. Microfinance encompassed the provision of financial services, including loans, savings and

insurance to low-income clients who generally lacked access to more formal banking services. The promise of microfinance lied in its ability to empower people to work their own way out of the poverty trap, while avoiding dependency and the 'hand out' shame of conditional aid (Daley- Harris 2009). According to Ferrara (2001), VSLA was a community-managed saving-led model to financial services for the poor and had a long successful history, having been pioneered by CARE International in a West African County of Niger in 1991. VSLA model offered an opportunity for increased economic activity. VSLAs were the first step in financial access among the rural vulnerable populations with the goal to help women participants cope with the numerous responsibilities that they faced in a challenging economic and social environment. Starting out with a very basic model where participants contributed savings to a loan fund which made small loans to group members, this matured into a model of VSLA in which a self-selected group of people (usually unregistered) who pooled their money into a fund from which members could borrow.

The money was paid back with interest, causing the fund to grow. The regular savings' contributions to the group were deposited with an end date in mind for distribution of all or part of the total funds (including interest earnings) to the individual members. This lump-sum distribution provided a large amount of money that each member could then apply to his/her own needs. From this perspective a VSLA was primarily a savings' club, which had proven popular worldwide. In Uganda, the VSLA intervention, which was an improvement on traditional savings clubs like Rotational Savings and Credit Associations, was introduced through trainings provided by NGOs like CARE International. Rural household's participation in the savings schemes *Vis –a – Vis* their welfare was a policy issue which required careful examination/analyses in order to contribute to the debate of empowering the vulnerable people as an effort to alleviate the problem of poverty (Kohansal, 2008).

Inglehart (2002) stated that self-help groups were formed across countries as an effective strategy for poverty alleviation, human development and socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people especially the youth, orphans, HIV victims and the poor. But there were conflicting views about the impact of these informal groups (savings schemes. While the existence of the informal services highlights the general demand for financial services, the services were usually not sufficient to seize economic opportunities in rural areas to the full. People who didn't have access to the formal labour market could often benefit from pooling resources and working in groups Ferrara (2001). Members of the VSLA borrowed from the savings' pool and the money was paid back with interest, causing the money to grow. The savings, insurance and loan facilities allowed the members to meet their small, or short-term financial needs without having to borrow from money lenders, took an expensive supplier advance, or relied on their relatives (Nwanesi, 2006). UBOS (2014) showed that the national average monthly household income was UGX. 303,700 and regionally, the central region stood at UGX. 389,600 with the Northern region having the least average household income of UGX. 141,400 per month. Overall, the Kigezi, Northern and Eastern regions dominated the lower income classes in the country and majority of households in the Kigezi region fell in the lowest income class with 2.84 persons estimated to be poor. This income level in

the south western part of the country reflected a very poor state of well-being of most households in the region (Mohammed, 2016). The VSLA model therefore addressed such challenges that the rural poor did experience by allowing these poor people to access financial services in the rural setting or in a setting that was more convenient for them. However, the contribution of VSLA to economic empowerment of people in Kabale district had not been documented. By conducting this study, the researcher found out the role played by VSLA in economic empowerment of vulnerable people in Kamuganguzi Sub County, Ndowa West, Kabale District where the model had been implemented by LADA Uganda and other development partners Ferrara (2001). The objectives of the study were to determine the effect of savings on the socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people in Kamuganguzi sub county, Kabale district, to examine the relationship between credit access and socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people in Kamuganguzi sub county, Kabale District and to examine the effect of social fund on the socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people in Kamuganguzi sub county, Kabale District.

Literature Review

The Effect of Savings on Socio-Economic Empowerment of Vulnerable People: When the income of households increases as a result of the VSLA, the family members are enabled to buy and use more nutritious food which has a positive effect on health. CARE Afghanistan identified the following indirect effects of saving in VSLA on households' health situation: Using and providing nutritious food for their families and children; Enabling women to go to hospital or have a consultation with a qualified doctor in case of illness and emergencies at an earlier stage while in the past they could not because of lack of resources (money); Using quality medicine; In the group meeting besides saving, debate and income generation activities, women discuss different topics and life skills so the considerable topic is personal and environmental hygiene and health (Mustapha, 2017). Ronald (2015) revealed that VSLAs have impacted farm productivity in various ways.

This is so because savings are an asset, not liability, and therefore reduce livelihood risks. It was also found that many people in the rural areas who accessed financial services have been able to purchase agricultural inputs; maintain infrastructures; contact labour for planting/harvesting; transporting goods to market; make/receive payments; manage peak season incomes to cover expenses; invest in education; shelter, health; or deal with emergencies. VSLA increased farmers' income levels, caused availability, and access to food processing facilities, and farm labour. When farmers have easily available source of financial service, it increases their farm income. This in turn, enables farmers to have access to food processing facilities, because they are able to pay for the services rendered. Likewise, once the income of the farmer increases, he/she is able to hire labour in addition to their family labour (Reynolds, 2015). Research shows that the VSLAs impacts, at different levels, affected farmers' saving capacity; storage facility; and ability to plant different crop varieties. The levels at which VSLAs activities affect farm productivity among farmers in rural areas vary from one farm activity, household, or community to another. The different levels of impact emphasize the importance of availability of finance in farm productivity and household livelihood of farmers (Obademi, and Samson, 2018).

The Relationship between Credit Access and Socio-Economic Empowerment of Vulnerable People: According to Mustapha (2017) access to credit has been considered a means through which farmers especially small scale ones can alleviate poverty, boost agriculture productivity, and face the transition from subsistence farming. With credit access, farmers can increase the use of external inputs as well as finance their operating expenses in the short-run, while in the long run, ability to make profitable investments is enhanced. He shows that total credit significantly and positively influences the level of agricultural production. He concludes that 1% increased access to credit in Sub-Saharan Africa increases agriculture output by 17%. Village savings and Loan Associations are thought to play a critical role in bringing financial services to rural areas of developing countries, where access to formal financial services are typically very limited (Muhammad, 2016). In times of disaster: being part of the group provides them with a safety net/ supporting network. For example in case of illness, treatment or an urgent car repair, loans are being taken which prevents the members from selling assets (Chavan and Ramakumar, 2002). Beaman, et al (2014) found out that although credit can be an important resource for the poor, other tools, particularly savings and insurance, are also likely important for improving the household food security and welfare of the poor. The availability and access of the VSLA on farm productivity in lower Banta Chiefdom, Southern Sierra Leone lead to food security. Households have meals more than twice per day which is an indication that there is an improvement in their household food status, especially where the households have access to well-processed and properly prepared nutritious foods (Jack and Ronald, 2016).

Households that access credit from VSLA, have better nutrition and health statuses compared to no-VSLA participating households. VSLA participation has a substantial positive impact on meal quality, evident through an increase in consumption of both well processed and prepared nutritious food, eaten more than twice per day. The VSLA program also appears to improve access to health services for member households, by facilitating a higher level of spending on healthcare (Mustapha, 2017). According to Inkleles and Smith (2014), it has become clear that empowering women economically does not only increase the wealth of the nation but also provide the necessary conditions for improved gender equality which enables women to have access to income as well as increased capacity for control of economic resources. Access to savings and credit facilities potentially strengthens women's economic decision making capacity; improves their skills, knowledge, support networks and enhances their status in the society. The above assumptions is rooted in the belief that micro credit schemes enable women make economic investments and earn income with the potential to initiating series of virtuous spirals of economic empowerment, increased well-being, social and political empowerment (Jack and Roland 2016).

The effect of social fund on social economic empowerment is lacking yet social fund is a key ingredient of VSLA model. VSL has been promoted in Kabale district by many partners to empower vulnerable households economically however, literature as to whether their socio-economic status has been improved is still sketchy and lacking. It has not been documented as to whether VSLA leads to improved household incomes, access to education and health services in Kabale District. Most of the available literature indicates research

done in other countries of World with little literature on VSLA model in Uganda and Kabale in particular. Other researchers having been using case studies but this research shall use cross-sectional research design.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researcher employed a cross-sectional research design. This design was used in studies to estimate the prevalence of the outcome of interest for a given population. In this way cross-sectional studies provided a 'snapshot' of the outcome and the characteristics associated with it, at a specific point in time. A cross-sectional study design was used when the purpose of the study was descriptive. Kamuganguzi Sub County had a total population of 2054 people. Out of this, the study population considered 250 members of VSLAs and 5 staff of LADA Uganda making a total of 255 people from whom the sample size was got. Sampling was the process of selecting a sufficient number of elements from the population so that the study of the selected elements (sample) would make it possible for the researcher to generalize the findings to the entire population (Kumar, 2014). In this study the research used Simple Stratified Sampling and Purposive Sampling. This study employed purposive sampling and simple stratified sampling techniques to come up with the appropriate sample. The sample size was 157 staff and group members of the target population determined using statistical tables by Krejcie & Morgan (1970). Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze quantitative data hence created frequency tables. Qualitative data from interviews was presented using narrative texts according to the sub-themes of the study objectives and was given codes that enabled it to be treated with the data from the questionnaire that was quantitative.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents:

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were manifested truly basing on the features including; respondents' category, gender and age respectively. The descriptive statistics here played a vital role in showing the levels to which these contributed to the study success. In this case therefore, the frequency and percentage business took root to articulately advance the gist of matter in the study prospect as indicated in Table 4.1 below

Distribution of Respondents by Category (n=157)

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Group Members	152	97	97	97
Field Agents	3	2	2	99
Supervisors	2	1	1	100.0
Total	157	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data, 2019

The category of respondents was presented in such a way that group members were 152(97%) respondents, field agents 3(2%) respondents and supervisors were 2(1%) respondents respectively all from the total number of respondents 157(100%). The analysis indicated dominance in participation among the group members because they were the definitive group that was dependable for which the implication of village savings was tremendously able to shape their livelihood by ensuring the socio-economic empowerment at household level.

Distribution of Respondents by Gender (n=157)

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Females	99	63	63	63
Males	58	37	37	100.0
Total	157	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data, 2019

From Table above, gender of respondents was represented by 99(63%) female respondents and 58(37%) male respondents all from the total respondents' number 157(100%). The analysis illustrated the majority of the respondents as females on the expense of males. This was because, females were decisive enough to accept the deal of indulging in the study compared to males since they were named among the vulnerable persons in the community. Males were actually of low numbers because they were not largely involved in the vulnerable groups of the people labeled in their local society.

Distribution of Respondents by Age (n=157)

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
1-30 years	80	51	51	51
31-40 years	54	34	34	85
41-50 years	19	12	12	97
51 years+	4	3	3	100.0
Total	157	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data, 2019

From Table above, the distribution of respondents by age was evident in a way that, the respondents between 1-30 years registered 80(51%); 31-40 years registered 54(34%) respondents while 41-50 years had 19 (12%) and 51 years+ had 4(3%) respondents respectively. All the age brackets of the respondents radiated from the total respondents' number 157(100%). The analysis made indicated that the respondents in the age-bracket below 1-30 years were the majority in the study while the minorities were aged 51 years+. It was believed that the majority were young women who wanted savings culture in order to change the shape of their economic empowerment for a good living. However, the least scores from the respondents aged 51 years and above indicated that they could no longer save a lot due to the fact that they had more to spend on than to save as exemplified in fees payment for their children.

Household Monthly Income before and after joining VSLA (n=157)

Variable	Income	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Before	1-10,000/=	90	57
	10,001-100,000/=	40	25
	Above 100,000/=	27	18
Total		157	100
After	1-10,000/=	4	3
	10,001-100,000/=	65	41
	Above 100,000/=	88	56
Total		157	100

Source: Primary Data, 2019

From Table above, the household income per month before and after joining Village Savings and Loan Associations had mixed up income rates. For the monthly income before joining the VSLA, it was found out that community members used to have different income rates of which those earning between 1-10,000/= were 90(57%); those earning between 10,001-100,000/= were 40(25%); the respondents earning above

100,000/= were actually 27(18%) all from the total number of respondents 157(100%). The implication here was that the respondents from the vulnerable groups who earned more than 100,000/= were less than 20% where actually, such people were poor and so nothing was positive in their lives as regards their way of living. The majority of the respondents were found in those who were earning between 1-10,000/=. This meant actually that such people were unable to meet the basic necessities for their homes and families and so were even unable to pay fees for their children.

Effects of Savings on Socio-economic Empowerment on Vulnerable People: The effects of savings on socio-economic empowerment were realized using descriptive statistics where the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) was adopted. The findings were presented in Table above after a thorough analysis of the assortment of individual finding's performance. The following mean range guide was influential towards the verdict deliberated from the results for this objective.

Mean range	Response mode	Interpretation
3.26-4.00	Strongly agree	Very satisfactory
2.51-3.25	Agree	Satisfactory
1.76-2.50	Disagree	Fair satisfactory
1.00-1.75	Strongly disagree	Unsatisfactory

Effects of Savings on Socio-economic Empowerment on Vulnerable People

Variable	N	Mean	S.D
Improving the health status of women in families	157	3.54	0.874
Increased household income	157	2.99	1.040
Improved nutrition and food supply	157	2.87	0.851
Purchase of agricultural inputs	157	2.81	1.058
Women have invested in small enterprises and farming.	157	2.65	0.940
Mean Response	157	2.97	0.953

Source: Primary Data, 2019

From table above, improving the health status of women in families' viewpoint was the first ranked finding with the mean score of 3.54 and the standard deviation of 0.874 interpreted as very satisfactory. It was observed that as a result of income generation activities, women got money and therefore their income increased which promoted them to have a variety of food (balanced diet) that changed their health status. The second in rank was the finding "Increased household income". This got the mean score of 2.99 and the standard deviation of 1.040 interpreted as "satisfactory". The researcher noted that because of different families' engagement in numerous enterprises, their household income increased. This brought their standards of living high which led to wealth generation component. Third in rank was "Improved nutrition and food supply" that fetched the mean of 2.87 and the standard deviation of 0.851 interpreted as "satisfactory". It was noted by the researcher that because of the savings culture, most women and other family members became engaged in agriculture vis-a-vis other enterprises where they got to learn about supplying enough food to their homes and families. The nutritious food supplied, boosted their families in terms of health leading to good health. Purchase of agricultural inputs was the fourth in rank and it had the mean score of 2.87 and the standard deviation of 0.851 interpreted as "satisfactory." The researcher observed that the soil productivity was nowhere in case of failure to add the inputs like fertilizers in addition to other inputs. Lastly, the fifth ranked component was the fact

that "Women have invested in small enterprises and farming which had the mean score of 2.65 and the standard deviation of 0.940 interpreted as "satisfactory." The researcher affirmed that because of children and the rest of the members in the family passing through home based violence, they were advised to invest in small enterprises that could help them even when they were no longer in their families.

Credit Access and Socio-Economic Empowerment of Vulnerable People

This was realized by regression analysis where each category of the respondents was looked at independently.

Regression Coefficients^a for Group Members

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-5.840	1.845		-3.166	.034
	X	1.321	.285	1.362	4.638	.010
	Y	.735	.197	1.069	3.734	.020
	Z	1.029	.292	.726	3.526	.024

a. Dependent Variable: SEE

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.928 ^a	.860	.756	.32355

a. Predictors: (Constant), X,Y, Z

The regression model predicted 86.0% ($R^2 = .860$) of the variance in Credit Access and socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people. This meant that 86.0% of credit access to socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people had surfaced. The results of the regression also indicated that credit access alone as a predictor explained 75.6% (adjusted $R^2 = .756$) of the variables in socio-economic empowerment with other variables being constant. The regression results further indicated that credit access construct insignificantly and positively affected socio-economic empowerment (Beta=1.362, sig >0.01), implying that a change in credit access would lead to change in socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people by 1.362. The regression results also indicated that credit access construct insignificantly and positively affected socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people (Beta=1.069, sig >0.01), implying that a change in credit access would lead to change in socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people by 1.069. Finally the results also indicated that credit access construct insignificantly and positively affected socio-economic empowerment of people (Beta=0.726, sig >0.01), implying that a change in credit access would lead to change in socio-economic empowerment of people by 0.726.

Regression for Field Agents

This model was able to bring to light the regression analysis for the relationship between credit access and socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people. It was prudent that the results from this tool were ably explained to determine the direction for this part. The regression model predicted 34.5% ($R^2 = .345$) of the variance in job satisfaction. This meant that 34.5% of credit access was considered important. The results of the regression also indicated that credit access alone as a predictor explained 33.5% (adjusted $R^2 = .335$) of the variables in socio-economic empowerment with other variables being constant.

Table for Regression Coefficients^a for Field Agents

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.960	.442		6.693	.000
	X	.341	.079	.283	4.307	.000
	Y	-.413	.066	-.410	-6.299	.000
	Z	.063	.073	.051	.867	.387

a. Dependent Variable: SEE

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.587 ^a	.345	.335	.70863

a. Predictors: (Constant), X, Y, Z

The regression results further indicated that accredit access construct significantly and positively affected socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people (Beta=0.283, sig <0.01), implying that a change in credit access rates would lead to change in socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people by 0.283. The Credit Access construct significantly and negatively affected socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people (Beta= -0.410, sig <0.01), implying that a change in credit access would lead to change in socio-economic empowerment by -0.410.

Correlational Coefficient^a for Supervisors

	Description	A	B
A	Pearson Correlation	1	.426
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.292
	N	2	2
B	Pearson Correlation	.426	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.292	
	N	2	2

Source: Primary Data, 2019

Results from the above table; indicated an insignificant positive correlation between Credit Access and Socio-economic Empowerment of Vulnerable People with ($r=0.426$ P-value>0.01), meaning that credit access contributed to socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people in a positive manner. However, the level of this contribution was insignificant because the p- value was > than 0.01.

In summary, it was clear that empowering women economically did not only increase the wealth of the nation but also provided the necessary conditions for improved gender equality which enabled women to have access to income as well as increased capacity for control of economic resources (Roland 2015). In support of this, Izugbara (2004) suggested that access to savings and credit facilities potentially strengthened women's economic decision making capacity; improved their skills, knowledge, support networks and enhanced their status in the society.

The effect of social fund on socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people

Social fund was found to have effects on socio-economic empowerment with the base on the underlying findings generated from the field. All these were done with the focus on the key areas of mean and standard deviation respectively under the guidance of the mean range guide indicated below.

Mean range	Response mode	Interpretation
3.26-4.00	Strongly agree	Very satisfactory
2.51-3.25	Agree	Satisfactory
1.76-2.50	Disagree	Fair satisfactory
1.00-1.75	Strongly disagree	Unsatisfactory

The Effect of Social Fund on Socio-Economic Empowerment of Vulnerable People

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Community replaces the damaged property.	157	3.45	1.099
Achieving flexibility to immense development of social capital.	157	3.41	1.067
Increased social networking to allow information flow.	157	3.37	1.093
Social funds support groups of orphaned children.	157	3.37	1.087
Members build new bonds to strengthen decision making.	157	2.90	1.055
Mean Response	157	3.30	1.080

Source: Primary Data, 2019

From the table above, the issue that community replaces the damaged property was the first ranked finding with the mean score of 3.45 and the standard deviation of 1.099 interpreted as very satisfactory. The researcher after understanding how the social funds operated got to understand that the funds actually provided niche for the replacement of the damaged property including the replacing the stolen livestock, demolished houses by natural calamities like wind and heavy rainfall among others. This meant to boost the state to which families had to exist. This statement was in line with CARE (2011) that had it that social fund also known as welfare fund was contributed by every member of VSLA uniformly during every meeting to be used to provide grants to members who encountered serious problems. Achieving flexibility to immense development of social capital followed suit and was actually ranked with the mean score of 3.41 and the standard deviation of 1.67 interpreted as "very satisfactory". The researcher observed with concern that since members contributed funds, it was helpful that whoever had a problem would be helped. This statement was affirmed by Kesanta and Andre (2015) that in terms of social capital, saving groups achieved a state of not only economic stability, but economic empowerment and flexibility was a possible contributing factor to the immense development of social capital in savings versus other types of community groups. Increased social networking to allow information flow was the third ranked finding and had the mean of 3.37 and the standard deviation of 1.093 interpreted as "very satisfactory". It was observed that through various meeting about saving and other social obligations, members themselves got it that the information flow was enormous because of togetherness. This social capital was found to be important since it built a strong bond among the savings groups. This statement was synchronized with Ghorbani (2005) that the social benefits of saving groups, include networking and social bonds that influenced the flow of information to the community.

FINDINGS

The findings generated were captured from objective to objective. In this part therefore, only the well and least performed findings were recorded. This was to show the reader the preference and likes of the respondents. The first was about the effect of savings on socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people whose leading variable was "improving the health status of women in families" that had the mean score of

3.54 and the standard deviation of 0.874 while the least scored finding was “women have invested in small enterprises and farming” whose scores were 2.65 and the standard deviation of 0.940. The relationship between credit access and socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people was the second objective. It had 86.0% of credit access to socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people had surfaced. The results of the regression also indicated that credit access alone as a predictor explained 33.5% (adjusted $R^2 = .335$) of the variables in socio-economic empowerment with other variables being constant. The third objective entailed the effect of social fund on socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people which had the majority of the respondents in support of the community replacing the damaged property. This had the mean score of 3.45 and the standard deviation of 1.099 while the least scores were observed in the fact that members build new bonds to strengthen decision making. This had the mean score of 2.90 and the standard deviation of 1.055.

Conclusions

The conclusions made were based on individual objectives. For the first objective (the effect of savings on socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people) had the issue of improving the health status of women in families as a salient finding. The relationship between credit access and socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people was observed in the performance of the variables where great scores were realized with 86.0% of credit access to socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people. Thus justification was made for the two variables. Further, the results indicated that credit access construct insignificantly and positively affected socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people (Beta=0.051, sig <0.01), implying that credit access would lead to change in socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people by 0.051. The third and last objective was concluded in such a way that the community needed social fund aimed at replacing the damaged property. Therefore, the social fund was actually important to help the masses for better standards of living. To crown it all, having seen the performance of the individual findings, Village Savings and Loan Associations and socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable people, were found to be significantly related and therefore there was need to bless. It was justified that the community members were helped especially women and children as vulnerable individuals which was a landmark for their development through savings' culture where small and medium enterprises were started to boost their living standards.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are salient for this study since they carry a message to the readers and the quality of this research project. They include the following:

- There is need to improving the health status of women in families as well as children since they are regarded vulnerable in order to let them live happily. This contributes to the development of the place they live in.
- There should be improved nutrition and food supply to all families to let children and other members grow healthy and live a happy life. This should be the initiative of the village credit institutions that

empower women and children first before other members of the family.

- Increased household income should be the ultimate goal fostered by credit accessibility in the area which must be done with ease through the start of small and medium enterprises especially for women.
- It is recommended that the vulnerable groups of people have the replacement of the damaged property in case of any loss aiming at keeping standards of living at household level.
- The social fund should be a unifying factor that enhances development through increased social networking to allow information flow since information is power.

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