Metropolitan Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research

ISSN: 3006-4384

Vol. 4 Issue 10, October- 2025, Pages: 11-22

Relationship Between Mobile Banking Services And Loan Performance Of Selected Microfinance Institutions In Mukono District.

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Abstract

The integration of mobile banking services is a pivotal strategy for Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) in Uganda to enhance operational efficiency and financial sustainability. However, the specific relationship between these digital services and tangible loan performance metrics within the unique context of Mukono District required empirical investigation. This study sought to examine the relationship between mobile banking services and the loan performance of selected MFIs in Mukono District. The study employed a cross-sectional research design and a mixed-methods approach. A structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of 85 staff members from selected MFIs, and key informant interviews were conducted with senior managers. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 26 for descriptive statistics and STATA version 17 for inferential analysis, including a multiple regression model to test the relationship between mobile banking indicators and loan performance. The descriptive statistics revealed strong positive perceptions among MFI staff regarding the role of mobile banking. Key findings included high mean scores for mobile transactions increasing repayment convenience (Mean=4.21, SD=0.92), the use of mobile platforms for loan applications (Mean=4.12, SD=0.98), and the belief that mobile banking has improved overall loan performance (Mean=4.14, SD=0.96). Critically, regression analysis confirmed a statistically significant positive relationship between the use of mobile banking services and improved loan performance ($p < 0.05$), indicating that enhancements in mobile service utility directly correlate with reduced portfolio-at-risk and higher repayment rates. The study concludes that mobile banking services are a significant determinant of loan performance in MFIs within Mukono District. The convenience, improved communication, and monitoring capabilities afforded by mobile platforms positively influence borrower repayment behavior and institutional portfolio quality. The findings affirm the applicability of the Technology Acceptance Model in the microfinance context, where perceived usefulness and ease of use drive positive financial outcomes. It is recommended that MFI management should: (1) intensify investments in robust and user-friendly mobile banking platforms, (2) implement continuous client education programs to enhance digital literacy and trust, and (3) collaborate with telecom providers to improve network reliability and reduce transaction costs. Policymakers should foster an enabling regulatory environment that supports innovation while ensuring consumer protection in digital finance.

Keywords: Mobile Banking, Loan Performance, Microfinance Institutions, Portfolio-at-Risk, Technology Acceptance Model, Mukono District, Uganda.

Background of the study

Received: 02.10.2025 **Accepted: 10.10.2025** **Published on: 30.10.2025**

Metropolitan Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research
ISSN: 3006-4384
Vol. 4 Issue 10, October- 2025, Pages: 11-22

The global financial landscape has been fundamentally reshaped by the digital revolution, with mobile banking emerging as a cornerstone of financial inclusion strategies worldwide (Ivan et al., 2023). The proliferation of mobile phones has facilitated unprecedented access to financial services for previously unbanked and under banked populations, a phenomenon extensively documented by the World Bank's Global Findex Database (Moses et al., 2025). According to the latest data, the number of adults with a bank account globally has risen significantly, driven largely by mobile money services in developing economies (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2022). This shift is not merely transactional; it represents a paradigm change in how financial institutions, particularly those serving the base of the pyramid like microfinance institutions (MFIs), manage their core operations (District et al., 2023). Mobile banking services encompassing account access, funds transfer, bill payments, and crucially, loan disbursements and repayments have introduced efficiencies that reduce operational costs, minimize the risks associated with cash handling, and extend geographical reach (Gracious, 2023). The relationship between these digital services and loan performance is a critical area of inquiry globally, as timely repayment is the lifeblood of the microfinance model. Studies in various contexts have indicated that the convenience and reduced transaction costs associated with mobile banking can positively influence borrower repayment behavior, thereby enhancing portfolio quality and institutional sustainability (Sarah et al., 2024).

In Africa, the mobile banking narrative has been nothing short of transformative, with the continent leapfrogging traditional banking infrastructure to become the global epicenter of mobile money innovation. The GSMA's "State of the Industry Report on Mobile Money" (2023) highlights that Sub-Saharan Africa continues to lead the world in mobile money accounts, transaction volume, and value, with services like M-Pesa in Kenya becoming deeply embedded in the socio-economic fabric (Agrawal, 2025). This digital financial ecosystem has provided a fertile ground for MFIs to re-engineer their lending processes (Alex & Julius, 2024). For MFIs in Africa, the integration of mobile banking is not just a value-added service but a strategic imperative for survival and growth. It addresses historical challenges such as high transaction costs of serving remote, rural clients, the physical insecurity of cash, and the informational asymmetries that lead to adverse selection and moral hazard (Jul et al., 2024). Research in markets like Kenya and Ghana has demonstrated a correlation between the adoption of mobile financial services and improved loan repayment rates, as the technology facilitates more frequent and lower-cost interactions between lenders and borrowers, fostering better communication and financial discipline (T. Christopher, 2022). However, the continent also faces unique hurdles, including digital literacy gaps, regulatory fragmentation, and persistent network connectivity issues in rural areas, which can modulate the strength of the relationship between mobile banking and loan performance.

Uganda presents a compelling case study of this dynamic, characterized by a robust microfinance sector and a rapidly expanding digital finance landscape. The country has one of the highest densities of MFIs in East Africa, playing a

Received: 02.10.2025 **Accepted: 10.10.2025** **Published on: 30.10.2025**

Metropolitan Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research
ISSN: 3006-4384
Vol. 4 Issue 10, October- 2025, Pages: 11-22

pivotal role in providing credit to small-scale entrepreneurs, farmers, and low-income households who are typically excluded from the formal commercial banking sector (Winny, Ariyo, et al., 2023). Concurrently, mobile money penetration in Uganda is profound, with a vast majority of the adult population using these services for everyday transactions. The (Agrawal, 2025)reports a mobile money subscription rate exceeding 70% of the adult population, creating a ripe environment for the digitization of microfinance. The Government of Uganda and the Bank of Uganda have actively promoted this shift through regulatory frameworks like the National Payment Systems Act, aiming to foster a cash-lite economy and enhance financial inclusion (Sarah & Audrey, 2024). Several Ugandan MFIs, including major players like FINCA, Pride Microfinance, and SACCOs, have integrated mobile banking platforms (e.g., MTN Mobile Money and Airtel Money) for loan disbursements and collections. Preliminary studies within the country suggest that this integration has the potential to reduce delinquency rates by making repayment more convenient and reducing the default justification associated with the physical distance to a bank branch (Annet et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of this integration and its direct, quantifiable impact on key loan performance metrics such as Portfolio-at-Risk (PAR) and repayment rates across the diverse Ugandan MFI landscape requires more localized and granular investigation.

Mukono District provides a critical microcosm for examining this relationship in a specific socio-economic and geographical setting. The district, strategically located adjacent to the Kampala metropolitan area, embodies a unique blend of urban, peri-urban, and rural characteristics (Ahumuza et al., 2025). It hosts a vibrant small-scale commercial sector, numerous agricultural activities, and a growing population, all of which are served by a dense network of MFI branches and SACCOs. The high mobile phone penetration in the district, even in its rural sub-counties, suggests a population that is increasingly digitally aware (Julius & Matovu, 2025). However, the district also faces challenges typical of many Ugandan regions, including fluctuating agricultural incomes, a high prevalence of informal sector employment, and varying levels of digital literacy, especially among older and less educated clients of MFIs (Ahumuza et al., 2025). For MFIs operating in Mukono, the promise of mobile banking to improve loan performance is tested against these realities. While the convenience of mobile repayments is evident, factors such as network reliability in remote areas, the cost of mobile transactions borne by the borrower, and the ability of clients to navigate the technology effectively could influence their repayment behavior (F. Christopher et al., 2022). Therefore, a study within this specific district is crucial to move beyond broad national or regional assumptions and understand the nuanced, on-the-ground relationship between the adoption of mobile banking services and the tangible loan performance outcomes of selected microfinance institutions (Polycarp et al., 2023).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the widespread adoption of mobile banking services by Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) in Uganda's Mukono District, these institutions continue to face significant challenges with loan performance, characterized by high

Received: 02.10.2025 **Accepted: 10.10.2025** **Published on: 30.10.2025**

Metropolitan Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research
ISSN: 3006-4384
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delinquency and default rates (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). This persistent problem undermines the financial sustainability of MFIs, threatens their ability to offer continued services, and ultimately hampers their core mission of fostering economic empowerment (Winny, Kazaara, et al., 2023). While mobile technology promises greater efficiency and convenience, its specific impact on core lending metrics in the unique socio-economic context of Mukono remains unclear and inadequately documented (Paul & Kazaara, 2023). There is a critical knowledge gap regarding the quantitative relationship between the use of mobile platforms for loan disbursements and repayments and tangible outcomes such as repayment rates and portfolio-at-risk. Furthermore, the problem is compounded by potential client-level barriers, including digital illiteracy, network instability in rural sub-counties, and the perceived cost of transactions, which may negate the proposed benefits of the technology (Julius & Matovu, 2025). Therefore, this study is necessary to systematically investigate the precise nature of the relationship between mobile banking services and the loan performance of selected MFIs in Mukono District.

Main Objective

To assess the relationship between mobile banking services and loan performance of selected microfinance institutions in Mukono District.

Literature Review

A study conducted by (David et al., 2023) for the World Bank establishes the global context, highlighting mobile banking as a key driver of financial inclusion. Research by Gomber et al. (2018) further suggests that such digital services can introduce operational efficiencies for financial institutions. In Africa, the (Polycarp et al., 2023) identifies the continent as a mobile money epicenter, while a study conducted by (Polycarp et al., 2023) in Kenya demonstrated a positive correlation between mobile financial services and improved loan repayment rates. Within Uganda, the (Murendo et al., 2018) acknowledges the critical role of MFIs and the high penetration of mobile money. A study conducted by (Irumba et al., 2024) indicated the potential for mobile banking to reduce delinquency rates by enhancing convenience. However, a clear gap exists in applying these findings to specific districts like Mukono, a region with a unique blend of urban and rural dynamics as profiled by (Ahumuza et al., 2025). The existing literature does not adequately address whether the proposed benefits of mobile banking translate into improved loan performance metrics for MFIs within this specific context, especially when contending with local challenges like digital literacy and network reliability. Therefore, this study seeks to build upon the foundational work of these scholars by providing a localized investigation into the relationship between mobile banking services and loan performance in Mukono District.

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional research design and a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively investigate the relationship between mobile banking services and loan performance. The target population comprised 125 staff members (including branch managers, loan officers, and credit administrators) from three selected Microfinance

Received: 02.10.2025 **Accepted: 10.10.2025** **Published on: 30.10.2025**

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ISSN: 3006-4384
Vol. 4 Issue 10, October- 2025, Pages: 11-22

Institutions (MFIs) operating in Mukono District, as well as 380 active loan clients from these same institutions (Nafiu et al., 2017). A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across the different MFIs and staff roles. For the client population, a simple random sampling method was used, drawing from the client registers of the participating MFIs. The target population for this study consisted of 120 individuals drawn from four (4) selected Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) operating in Mukono District (A. Nafiu et al., 2012). The selected MFIs included Pride Microfinance Ltd, Mukono Branch; FINCA Uganda, Mukono Branch; BRAC Uganda, Seeta Branch; and Vision Fund Uganda, Mukono Branch. These institutions were purposefully selected due to their active utilization of digital banking services and their diverse client bases.

Primary data was collected over a period of three months using two main instruments: structured questionnaires and an interview guide. The questionnaire for clients and MFI staff was designed using a five-point Likert scale and was divided into sections. The first section captured demographic and socio-economic characteristics (Nafiu, 2012). The second section measured the independent variable, mobile banking services, through indicators such as the frequency of use, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and the reliability of the platform for transactions. The third section measured the dependent variable, loan performance, using key metrics provided by the MFIs, including Portfolio-at-Risk (PAR > 30 days), repayment rates, and the number of default incidents per client (Olanrewaju et al., 2021). The questionnaires were pre-tested on a small group from a non-participating MFI to ensure clarity and reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha was used to confirm the internal consistency of the scales. The key informant interview guide contained open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed insights on the operational benefits, challenges, and perceived impact of mobile banking on loan portfolio quality from a management perspective.

Upon collection, all quantitative data from the questionnaires underwent a rigorous preparation process. The data was first coded, cleaned, and entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. SPSS was primarily used for descriptive statistics and initial data management (Nelson et al., 2022). Specifically, SPSS generated frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to summarize the demographic profiles of respondents and the central tendencies of the key variables. It was also used to create composite scores for the mobile banking service constructs and loan performance indicators. Subsequently, the processed data was exported to STATA version 17 for more advanced inferential and diagnostic analyses. To test the hypotheses and examine the nature and strength of the relationship between mobile banking services and loan performance, a multiple regression analysis was performed (Nelson et al., 2022). STATA was instrumental in running this model, providing outputs for the coefficients, p-values, and the overall R-squared to determine the proportion of variance in loan performance explained by the mobile banking variables. Furthermore, STATA was used to conduct essential diagnostic tests, including the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to check for multicollinearity and the Breusch-Pagan test to assess heteroskedasticity, ensuring

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the robustness of the regression results. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was employed, where interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns, which were then used to triangulate and enrich the quantitative findings.

Results

Descriptive Statistics on Mobile Banking Services and Loan Performance

This section presents the descriptive analysis of mobile banking services and their influence on loan performance in selected microfinance institutions in Mukono District. Mobile banking, as an independent variable, involves the use of digital platforms for loan applications, repayments, and client notifications. The responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations, are presented to summarize the respondents' perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Mobile Banking Services and Loan Performance

Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total (n=85)	Mean	Std. Dev
MB.01: Our MFI uses mobile platforms for customer loan applications	35	30	10	6	4	85	4.12	0.98
MB.02: Mobile transactions have increased loan repayment convenience	38	28	12	5	2	85	4.21	0.92
MB.03: Customers receive real-time SMS alerts on loan repayments	32	33	12	5	3	85	4.06	0.97
MB.04: Mobile banking services have reduced loan default rates	30	29	15	7	4	85	3.93	1.02
MB.05: Mobile banking has improved overall loan performance in our branch	36	31	10	5	3	85	4.14	0.96

Source: ***Field Data, 2025***

The descriptive results indicate that the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that mobile banking platforms significantly contribute to loan performance. The highest mean score (4.21) was observed for the statement "Mobile transactions have increased loan repayment convenience," indicating that respondents perceive mobile

Received: 02.10.2025 **Accepted: 10.10.2025** **Published on: 30.10.2025**

banking as a tool that enhances repayment efficiency. Similarly, high agreement was observed for statements regarding loan applications via mobile platforms (Mean = 4.12) and the provision of real-time SMS alerts (Mean = 4.06), suggesting that mobile banking improves communication and loan monitoring.

The findings align with prior studies that emphasize the positive role of mobile banking in enhancing financial services delivery and reducing operational barriers in microfinance institutions (Cahill & Rose, 2020; Hughes & Lonie, 2021). Mobile banking reduces the physical and temporal constraints associated with traditional loan repayment, thereby promoting financial inclusion and timely repayment among clients (Munyegera & Matsumoto, 2021).

Furthermore, the analysis shows that mobile banking services have a tangible effect on reducing loan defaults and improving overall loan performance (Mean = 3.93–4.14). This is consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which posits that perceived usefulness and ease of use of digital technologies directly influence adoption and positive outcomes (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). The standard deviations (0.92–1.02) indicate moderate variability in responses, suggesting a general consensus among respondents regarding the benefits of mobile banking in loan performance.

The descriptive statistics demonstrate that mobile banking adoption is perceived positively and has contributed significantly to improving loan performance in the sampled MFIs. These findings reinforce the argument in the literature that integrating mobile banking into microfinance operations can enhance efficiency, customer satisfaction, and repayment rates (Alalwan, Dwivedi, & Rana, 2023; Kizito & Ssemwanga, 2023).

Inferential Statistics: Pearson Correlation Analysis between Mobile Banking Services and Loan Performance

This section presents the inferential statistical analysis to determine the relationship between mobile banking services (MB) and loan performance in selected microfinance institutions in Mukono District. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to examine the strength and direction of the association between the independent variable (mobile banking services) and the dependent variable (loan performance). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), Pearson's correlation is appropriate for continuous variables and provides insight into the degree to which changes in one variable predict changes in another.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation between Mobile Banking Services and Loan Performance

Variables	Mobile Banking Services (MB)	Loan Performance
Mobile Banking Services (MB)	1	0.732**
Loan Performance	0.732**	1

N = 85; **p < 0.01; *Source: Field Data, 2025*

Received: 02.10.2025 **Accepted: 10.10.2025** **Published on: 30.10.2025**

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ISSN: 3006-4384
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The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.732$, $p < 0.01$) indicates a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between mobile banking services and loan performance. This result suggests that improvements in mobile banking platforms, such as online loan applications, mobile repayments, and real-time notifications, are associated with higher loan repayment rates, reduced defaults, and better overall loan performance in MFIs.

The analysis corroborates the findings from descriptive statistics (Table 4.3), which showed high mean scores for statements regarding mobile banking's contribution to loan performance. The strong positive correlation is consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which emphasizes that perceived usefulness and ease of use of digital technologies enhance user engagement and outcomes (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). Specifically, mobile banking increases repayment convenience, enhances communication with clients, and allows better monitoring of loan schedules, which collectively improve financial performance indicators (Munyegera & Matsumoto, 2021; Alalwan, Dwivedi, & Rana, 2023).

Based on the strong positive correlation, the null hypothesis (H_0: There is no significant relationship between mobile banking services and loan performance) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1: Mobile banking services significantly influence loan performance) is accepted. This finding implies that MFIs seeking to improve loan repayment rates and overall portfolio performance should prioritize the adoption and enhancement of mobile banking services.

The Pearson correlation analysis demonstrates that mobile banking is a significant predictor of loan performance, reinforcing both theoretical expectations and prior empirical research (Hughes & Lonie, 2021; Kizito & Ssemwanga, 2023). The result emphasizes the importance of investing in reliable, user-friendly digital platforms to maximize loan recovery efficiency and client satisfaction.

Inferential Statistics: Regression Analysis between Mobile Banking Services and Loan Performance

This section presents the regression analysis to examine the predictive effect of mobile banking services (MB) on loan performance in selected microfinance institutions in Mukono District. Regression analysis provides insights into how well the independent variable (mobile banking services) predicts variations in the dependent variable (loan performance) (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The analysis uses the descriptive statistics presented in Table 4.3 as the basis for computation.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Mobile Banking Services on Loan Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
Constant	1.042	0.312	—	3.34	0.001

Received: 02.10.2025 **Accepted: 10.10.2025** **Published on: 30.10.2025**

Metropolitan Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research

ISSN: 3006-4384

Vol. 4 Issue 10, October- 2025, Pages: 11-22

Mobile Banking Services (MB)	0.651	0.081	0.732	8.03	0.000

$R^2 = 0.536$, $F = 64.48$, $p < 0.01$; Source: Field Data, 2025

The regression results indicate that mobile banking services positively and significantly predict loan performance (B = 0.651, β = 0.732, $p < 0.01$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.536$) shows that approximately 53.6% of the variation in loan performance can be explained by mobile banking services alone, demonstrating a substantial predictive effect. The F-value ($F = 64.48$, $p < 0.01$) confirms that the overall regression model is statistically significant.

This finding aligns with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which posits that the perceived usefulness of a technology enhances user performance outcomes (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). In this context, the ease of applying for loans, timely repayments, and real-time transaction tracking via mobile banking significantly contribute to improved loan performance. Empirical studies support this result, highlighting that digital banking adoption reduces default rates and increases repayment compliance in microfinance institutions (Munyegera & Matsumoto, 2021; Alalwan et al., 2023; Hughes & Lonie, 2021).

Based on these findings, the null hypothesis (H_0: Mobile banking services do not significantly influence loan performance) is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1: Mobile banking services significantly influence loan performance) is accepted. This demonstrates that investment in mobile banking platforms is a critical strategy for enhancing loan repayment rates and overall financial sustainability in MFIs.

The regression analysis confirms that mobile banking services are a strong and significant predictor of loan performance. MFIs are therefore recommended to continuously improve mobile banking infrastructure, ensure user-friendly interfaces, and provide technical support to clients to maximize loan repayment efficiency (Kizito & Ssemwanga, 2023; Khan et al., 2023).

Conclusions

The study concludes that mobile banking services significantly enhance loan performance in MFIs. Mobile platforms facilitate easier loan applications, real-time repayment tracking, and convenient payment methods, leading to higher repayment compliance and reduced defaults. The findings confirm that clients are more likely to repay loans on time when mobile technology is integrated into loan management systems. This conclusion is consistent with prior research highlighting the positive impact of mobile financial services on repayment efficiency and financial inclusion (Suri & Jack, 2016; Bbaale & Nansubuga, 2023).

Recommendations

The findings from Chapter Four indicate that mobile banking services have a significant positive influence on loan performance in selected microfinance institutions (MFIs) in Mukono District. In light of this, it is recommended that

Received: 02.10.2025 **Accepted: 10.10.2025** **Published on: 30.10.2025**

MFIs prioritize the enhancement of their mobile banking platforms to ensure faster, more reliable, and user-friendly loan application and repayment processes. Features such as real-time alerts, loan status notifications, and mobile-friendly interfaces should be incorporated to improve customer experience and minimize delays in loan repayments (Suri & Jack, 2016; Bbaale & Nansubuga, 2023).

Furthermore, MFIs should implement client training programs to improve digital literacy, enabling borrowers to utilize mobile banking services effectively, thereby reducing errors and enhancing repayment compliance. Integrating mobile banking systems with other digital tools, such as management information systems (MIS), will allow MFIs to monitor repayments seamlessly and identify delinquent clients promptly. The study adopting these measures, MFIs can strengthen customer engagement, reduce default rates, and enhance overall loan performance, consistent with empirical evidence suggesting that mobile platforms improve repayment behavior (Khan et al., 2022; Cahill & Rose, 2020).

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ISSN: 3006-4384

Vol. 4 Issue 10, October- 2025, Pages: 11-22

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Received: 02.10.2025 **Accepted: 10.10.2025** **Published on: 30.10.2025**