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Social Media and Youth Mobilisation: The Role of Digital Platforms in Kenya's 2024 Anti-Government Protests

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Abstract

This study examines the pivotal role of social media in mobilising young people, specifically Gen-Z, during the anti-government protests against Kenya's Finance Bill 2024. Triggered by pressing socio-economic issues, the protests saw the youth demand accountability and radical reforms. The study employed a desk review of 28 media reports and 10 key informant interviews drawn through purposive sampling to examine how young adults organised themselves while evading government detection. Social Action Theory was used to explore the power of social media in political power dynamics. Findings reveal that social media facilitated coordination, mobilisation and raised awareness on societal problems. Gen-Z used digital platforms to mobilise and create practical tools such as Finance Bill GPT for public inquiries and a USSD code for legal support. The eventual withdrawal of the Finance Bill highlights the effectiveness of digitally driven collective action. Despite the movements' emphasis on nonviolence, over 60 fatalities and hundreds of injuries were reported, underscoring that nonviolent action can still meet violent state responses. The Gen-Z movement demonstrates the power of grassroots mobilisation and its ability to amplify the voices of young citizens. Kenyan youth are often underrated in civic processes, and they effectively use social media in organising for social action for change in society. This study recommends involvement of young adults in socio-economic issues, enhancement of digital platforms to address critical national issues and sensitisation of diverse issues.

Key words: Anti-government protests, finance bill, nonviolent action, social media, youth mobilisation.



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INTRODUCTION

Social media has increasingly shaped political mobilisation globally, reshaping how citizens, more so the younger generation, organise, communicate and critique state authority. In most emerging democracies, digital platforms have become a critical area for political expression, public accountability and collective action. In this context, Kenya serves as a compelling case. In 2024, anti-government protests erupted in Kenya, led mainly by young adults, and social media played a major role in mobilising people by sharing information about the issues and providing a platform for demonstrations. Social media platforms facilitated effective organisation and dissemination of information, showcasing the critical impact of digital embeddedness on contemporary political movements (Twinomurizi, 2024). It helped in mobilising public engagement and shaping political discourse around economic issues. Youth unemployment has reached over 35 per cent (Onduko, 2025). Consequently, many protesters were young individuals, some with undergraduate degrees, who struggled to secure employment. Their frustration and hopelessness were driven by rising public debt, political favouritism, and inadequate service delivery, leading to widespread discontent.

According to social action theory, People's behaviour and life opportunities are not determined by their social background. Instead, Social Action theorists focus on the importance of individuals and their interactions in forming personal identity and, consequently, influencing broader society. To fully comprehend human behaviour, we need to explore the underlying motives that drive individuals to act. One of the methods by which this social action can be accomplished is through social media. Against this backdrop, social media became an important platform for political engagement. Young protesters used X, TikTok and other digital spaces to air out their grievances, coordinate demonstrations and hold public officials accountable. Their digital fluency enabled them to sustain the movement as long as they had access to the internet, demonstrating how online tools can amplify youth urgency in the context of socio-economic and political exclusion.

Social media is an electronic form of communication through which users create online groups to share ideas, messages, information, and other content (Merriam-Webster, 2014). It highlights the social aspect of a person who shares their content, news, photos, and videos with others. It involves digital technologies that allow

individuals to participate in conversations, make contributions online, and generate content that promotes social interaction. Social media includes all web-based applications that enable the creation or exchange of user-generated content and facilitate interaction between users. Social media comprises internet-based applications built on the principles and technologies of Web 2.0, allowing users to create and share their generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Additionally, Kent (2010) described social media as any interactive communication channel that supports two-way interaction and feedback, with the potential for real-time interaction, reduced anonymity, a sense of proximity, quick response times, and the ability to 'time shift' engaging with the social network whenever it suits each member. In summary, social media are internet-based channels that enable users to interact opportunistically and self-present selectively, either in real-time or asynchronously, with either broad or narrow audiences who gain value from user-generated content and perceive interaction with others (Carr & Hayes, 2014). Social media remains constantly available, regardless of whether a user is actively online or not.

Social media has been utilised across various sectors, including business, entertainment, social interactions, health, education, politics, security, advocacy, and activism. Its impact on many aspects of life has been profound. In the political realm, platforms like X, YouTube, and Facebook have become prevalent, significantly increasing the avenues for accessing and sharing political information. As a result, internet users now have multiple, low-cost options to engage with political information and activities, requiring minimal investment of time, money, and effort (Breuer, 2012).

Several common socio-economic problems trigger protests around the world. Ortiz et al. (2022) argue that major causes of protests include failures in political representation and systems, such as a lack of democracy, corruption, and inadequate justice, as well as economic injustices and anti-austerity measures, including unemployment, over-taxation, and rising prices for fuel, energy, and food. These were the same issues that led to protests by young adults in Kenya in 2024, where they demanded transparency, accountability, and radical reforms, culminating in the Finance Bill 2024, amid growing frustrations over state capture, unemployment, corruption, and the cost-of-living crisis (Onduko, 2025). However, Breuer (2012) argues that protests from a resource mobilisation perspective pose challenges for

young adults who often lack control over weapons, personnel, or other political resources. The young individuals mobilised themselves and took to the streets. They overcame these obstacles by effectively utilising social media and ensuring that they had phones which were connected to the internet. Seemingly, the government was caught unawares. At first, the government, through the Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK), disconnected the internet in Kenya. This move was meant to cut communication between protestors against the Finance Bill 2024. However, the young people were ahead of the government; as a result, the internet disconnection was later reversed. This study aimed to establish how the young people mobilised the anti-government protests; to establish how the protestors behaved before the anti-government protests to avoid detection by the government, and to establish how the youth engaged progressively with peers and government issues during the anti-government protests.

This study on social media and youth mobilisation gives an impetus to scholars on how social media can facilitate addressing the socio-economic change of people whose voices are suppressed by strong state actors. As a result, it highlights the importance of social media in addressing issues of governance, thus voicing populists' concerns in an environment where the voice of the people was suppressed and therefore marginalised by the political elites. Finally, the study exposes the existing tensions between the political elites and the populists and attempts to demonstrate how the young adults stood their ground in order to safeguard the interests of the citizens.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past two decades, social media has emerged as a powerful tool in addressing socio-political issues within our societies. Earlier research shows that digital platforms lowered participation barriers and facilitated rapid information flow for collective mass action (Valenzuela et al., 2012). Contemporary scholarship, however, reveals a huge shift towards a more decentralised, youth-driven and digitally guided form of protest mobilisation. As a result, social media not only serves recreational purposes but also supports psychological well-being and a sense of political efficacy among young users. It has helped to overcome the problem of collective action by reporting the magnitude and impact of protest events in real time, creating a sense of urgency and legitimacy around mobilisation efforts. #EndSARS movement in Nigeria and Kenya's 2024 Gen-Z protest are good examples of how social media

now functions as an alternative. It has been instrumental in mobilising civic infrastructure where state narratives can be challenged and mass actions coordinated (Ohndyl, 2025). African scholarship emphasises the political importance of social media in contexts marked by police brutality and economic grievances. Digital platforms provide for political counter-spaces that disrupt traditional gatekeeping elites, allowing citizens, especially the youth, to put out their grievances without relying on mainstream media (Mutsvairo, 2016). In Kenya, social media has been successfully used in whistle-blowing on government failures, mobilising protests and facilitating online campaigns like #RejectFinanceBill2024. These regional cases demonstrate that these platforms offer alternative sources of information outside the mainstream media, often enabling rapid dissemination of political discourse and fostering engagement across socio-economic divides (Ohndyl, 2025).

There are different ways in which people between the ages of 18 and 29 make use of social media, and how it affects society. The effects of social media on youth engagement are mediated by specific uses like information and entertainment (Valenzuela et al., 2012). This has been common where the youth are engaged in social media platforms that give information like X (formerly, Twitter) and TikTok or are for entertainment purposes like game-related platforms or even betting and social interaction. Platforms like Facebook have been used by youth to engage in activities that are essential for collective action, such as learning information, exchanging and forming opinions about social issues, and constructing a common identity (Valenzuela et al., 2012). Post-2020 studies show that African youths use social media in ways that go beyond entertainment into activism (Mutsvairo, 2016).

Social media platforms such as TikTok have become important environments of learning where the youth make sense of public issues, critique governance, and share counter-hegemonic narratives (Nothias, 2020). The youth have also used social media for news consumption, expressing opinions, and socialising with peers, thus becoming relevant in their social development. As an information hub, social media has helped the youth to remain in contact as well as facilitate information exchange regarding the activities of interest happening on the ground. Kenyan Gen-Z heavily used TikTok and X during the 2024 Finance Bill protests to document police brutality, share protest routes, crowd fund medical

aid and swiftly mobilise one another. Scholars point out that Gen-Z digital engagement mirrors a broader transformation in political socialisation as they no longer wait for formal political institutions but rather develop civic agency through participatory online forums (Mutongoza & Hendricks, 2025).

Furthermore, social media serves an essential function in facilitating the development of a national collective identity that supports protest action. It rises above geographical and socio-economic barriers, thus fostering a shared space of emotional grievance and solidarity (Velasquez & Larose, 2014). This mobilising function allows disparate individuals and groups to align under common causes, thus amplifying their collective voice. These dynamics were evident during the Arab Spring, when platforms such as Facebook and X became key tools for mobilising citizens, coordinating actions, and challenging authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt (Breuer, 2012). These reinforced networks are held together by shared emotions and moral outrage. During movements like the #ZimbabweanLivesMatter and #CongoleseLivesMatter, social media offered an avenue for individual frustrations to be channelled into collective identities informed by generational consciousness and resistance against state violence. In Kenya's 2024 Gen Z protesters shared narratives of being leaderless and formulated a shared sense of national solidarity that overcame ethnic and socio-economic disparities (Ohndyl, 2025). This fixed identity is critical in understanding youth mobilisation as it legitimises participation and sustains momentum in the absence of formal structures.

The affordances of social media have expanded the repertoire of political participation beyond traditional channels such as voting and rallies. These are currently replaced by online petition actions, livestreamed protests, and crowd-sourced investigations or watchdog activities. Through these avenues, social media acts as a catalyst for broader democratic participation, offering marginalised voices a platform and challenging the monopoly of traditional gatekeepers of political discourse (Dieye, 2021). Social media allows a 'digital elite' to form personal networks and circumvent national media blackouts by brokering access to information, shaping narratives, and distributing content through decentralised channels (Breuer, 2012). These platforms offer alternative sources of information outside the mainstream media, often enabling rapid dissemination of political discourse and fostering engagement across socio-economic divides. Therefore, beyond facilitating

communication, it has become a strategic tool in mobilising citizens, particularly youth, and addressing persistent socio-political and economic grievances.

In conclusion, existing literature inadequately highlights the role of social media as a sensitisation and mobilisation tool among young adults in socio-political activism. Further, the existing literature overlooks the innovations that protestors use on social media to achieve their social change agendas. Social media continues to reshape civic and political landscapes by lowering participation thresholds, enhancing access to information, and fostering new forms of collective identity and action. It plays a dual role both as a medium for individual political expression and as an infrastructure for mass mobilization making it a powerful agent of social and political change in contemporary society.

Theoretical Framework

Social action theory was used to inform this study. The theory was developed by Weber (1881–1961, as cited in Utech, 1963). The theory explains how human behaviour relates to social contexts and the effects on others (Eshghi, 2021). The theory notes that people constantly create the social reality by making choices that favour their social situation. Max Weber argued that individual actions are performed based on the motivation behind them (Febrina & Hanani, 2024). The theory has four types of social actions, which are rationally purposeful action, value reactional action, affective action, and traditional action. Rationally purposeful action is goal-oriented and is connected to rational decision-making, which may involve the calculation of cost-benefit analysis while taking an action toward a specific goal. Value-rational action is driven by dedication to one's personal beliefs or values. It focuses on pursuing ideals such as justice, freedom, peace, or protection, and is motivated by a sense of responsibility or obligation toward one's family or community (Febrina & Hanani, 2024). Affective actions are based on an impulsive or spontaneous *emotional* response to a situation by an individual; thus, it is neither rational nor calculated. Finally, a traditional action is based on established customs or traditions.

Based on the anti-government protests against the Finance Bill 2024 in Kenya, social action theory provides a valuable framework for interpreting the motivations, strategies, and organisational structures of the Gen Z-led protests. The theory centres on the notion that individuals

act based on the subjective meanings they attribute to their actions within a social context (Febrina & Hanani, 2024). By analysing the Gen Z movement through this lens, we can better understand the protestors' moral motivations, strategic use of technology, interpretive processes, and unique organisational form.

The young adults' anti-government protests were fundamentally driven by value-rational action, one of Weber's four ideal types of social action. This form of action is guided by a belief in the inherent value of a cause, regardless of its success or efficiency (Eshghi, 2021). For many Kenyan youths, opposition to the Finance Bill was geared towards the proposed taxes on essential goods and services such as bread, sanitary products, and digital transactions. The protests were not merely reactions to economic hardship but were framed as a stand against perceived systemic injustice, corruption, and state insensitivity to the needs of ordinary citizens. These actions reflected a commitment to social justice and ethical governance, with many participants explicitly rejecting political affiliations or material gain. In addition to value-rational motivations, the movement demonstrated a high degree of instrumental rationality, particularly in its tactical use of digital tools. Gen Z protestors leveraged a variety of platforms including WhatsApp, X, TikTok, Briar, and Zello to coordinate demonstrations, disseminate information, crowd-source funds for medical care and legal fees, and document state violence in real time. Social media played a central role in the movement, not only as a tool for logistical coordination but also as a space for community-building and consciousness-raising. Hashtags such as *#RejectFinanceBill2024* and *#OccupyParliament* served to unify discourse, amplify visibility, and mobilise support across diverse regions. These digital platforms allowed the youth to bypass traditional media gatekeepers, challenge government narratives, and exercise agency in shaping the public discourse.

Furthermore, the protests were characterised by a strong element of interpretive orientation. According to Weber, social action is shaped by the actor's interpretation of others' behaviour (Febrina & Hanani, 2024). In this case, Kenyan Gen Z protestors continuously monitored, responded to, and engaged with the views and emotions of their peers across digital platforms. The movement's collective identity and solidarity were forged in part through these ongoing interpretive exchanges—memes, videos, voice notes, livestreams, and posts creating a shared digital discourse that reinforced mutual

understanding and commitment. This interpretive process also enabled protestors to anticipate state responses and adapt accordingly, often in real time.

In summary, the youth-led anti-government protests against Kenya's Finance Bill 2024 present a compelling case study for the application of Max Weber's Social Action Theory. The theory provides a robust analytical framework for understanding how subjective meanings, values, and interpretations inform collective social behaviour. Specifically, the protests highlight the role of value-rational action, whereby young people mobilised not for personal gain but in pursuit of perceived moral and civic justice. Furthermore, the movement's reliance on instrumental strategies, particularly the innovative use of social media platforms for organising, communication, and advocacy, demonstrates the evolving nature of political engagement in the digital age. The protests also embodied a strong interpretive orientation, as participants continuously shaped and reshaped their understanding of the political moment through shared digital discourse. Finally, the emergence of a leaderless, decentralised structure, driven by shared values rather than formal hierarchies, illustrates a new model of youth-led activism. Taken together, these elements affirm the relevance of Social Action Theory in analysing contemporary protest movements and underscore the transformative potential of youth agency in democratic governance.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design, gathering qualitative data to offer a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the issue being examined. The data was collected using desk review methods and key informant interviews focusing on frontline protestors. This method entails reviewing the available secondary data on anti-government demonstrations by young people on the Finance Bill 2024. Sources were purposively selected based on relevance and credibility of the information reported between May and December 2024. The study reviewed literature from 28 media reports with the key themes: "Reject Finance Bill 2024", "Occupy Parliament", and "RutoMustGo." In total, five websites, 20 newspapers and three magazines were reviewed.

In-depth reading of sampled data from media, websites, newspapers and magazines was conducted. The study sampled emerging themes on "Reject Finance Bill 2024", "Occupy Parliament" and "RutoMustGo" for manual,

qualitative coding. This analytical approach helped in understanding public discourse regarding the anti-Finance Bill protests of 2024, revealing what was discussed.

Ten key informants were purposively selected to inform the study; they include four frontline protestors, two persons from media houses, two activists and two police officers. Qualitative data from the key informants were examined using a content analysis approach. All the key informants selected played different roles during the Kenya Finance Bill 2024 protests.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Social Media Was Used for Civic Education and Mobilisation

Social media has facilitated online communication, providing access to information and audiences that were previously unavailable. According to Muia (2024), the anti-government protests were coordinated and mobilised via social media. Through these platforms, people become aware of events in their surroundings. Young adults used platforms like TikTok and X to educate others about the reasons why the anti-government protests were necessary (Mbugua, 2025). The youth engaged in face-to-face discussions about issues that affect their lives. They also participated in activities such as raising awareness about critical societal problems and mobilising resources, including fundraising, to support solutions. This showed that social media had moved from a source of entertainment to a critical tool for sensitisation.

The young adults began their mobilisation by sharing the phone numbers of their Members of Parliament (MPs) to increase pressure among the citizenry to reject the Finance Bill 2024. X users pointed out that the youth mobilised young adults to share MPs' numbers, sensitising the public and putting pressure on MPs to oppose the Bill (Walubengo, 2024). One of the key informants said;

The protestors were sharing the phone numbers of MPs to let them know that the young people were following their contributions in Parliament towards the Finance Bill 2024. It was a way of intimidating MPs against voting for the Finance Bill 2024.

This caused unrest in Parliament as MPs realised their privacy was compromised. The protestors shared the phone numbers of MPs who voted for the Bill (Simiyu & Ogetta, 2024). In Social Action Theory, this was a precursor for political dialogue to bring the MPs to address the matter of importance in society, which was against the interests of the young people.

On June 18, 2024, people were made aware of the reasons why they were protesting against the government. The main reason was to pressure the Parliament to reject the Finance Bill that was at the final stages of being passed for accession. Some protestors used their social media accounts to share banners asking other protestors to occupy Parliament and urging citizens to rise against over-taxation (Muia, 2024). According to a key informant;

The dress code was black, and they were supposed to carry placards, handkerchiefs, and bottles of water, and be outside Parliament at noon. On that placard, it was indicated that the Inspector General of Police was responsible for ensuring public security, in line with Article 37 of the Constitution, which upholds the right to assemble, demonstrate, and picket.

This was symbolic communication by the young people of their resistance against the passing of the Finance Bill 2024 by MPs, and therefore, they wanted them to see the world from their perspective, as addressed in Social Action Theory.

On 19/06/2024, people mobilised to occupy the Parliament on June 20 2024. It was called "Occupy Parliament Reloaded." They listed the issues behind their revolution against the government. These issues included over-taxation by the government. They were informed about the dress code, which was supposed to be colourful and defiant. They were instructed to carry a placard opposing the Finance Bill 2024, a handkerchief, a Kenyan flag, and a bottle of water. The event was planned to take place on every street in Nairobi at noon. They were told to occupy the CBD and march to the Parliament (Kariuki & Munene, 2024). The protestors began mobilising others to join the demonstrations. Some protestors started sending messages on X, "we are just starting, Lazima sisi wote Tutoke (meaning: all of us, we must come out).

On TikTok, the protestors were dissecting the Finance Bill 2024 in local languages to ensure broad understanding (Khaemba et al., 2025). These languages included Kikuyu, Somali, Dholuo, Meru, Taita, Kisii, Embu, Maasai, Samburu, and Bukusu, among others, totalling about forty languages. The goal was to reach people in rural areas who might not understand English. The finance bill was also explained in sign language (Ombija, 2024). In support of the key informant said;

We are learned and we read these Bills, but the weak link is the people we know who only understand vernacular. We want them to understand this in their mother tongue because it is important that they know these things.

This showed that the young adults understood the proposed Bill and its content, and therefore, they wanted to sensitise people who did not understand it in the English language.

Young people mobilised through X. They started by raising awareness of the Finance Bill 2024. Before the protests, the MPs voted for the Finance Bill 2024, and the youth started the slogan “Ruto must go”. The young people progressed by repeating Ruto must go. Musau (2024) reported that a protester had created the Finance Bill 2024 GPT, a GPT with up-to-date information on the Finance Bill 2024, and updated it on the report by the Parliament Departmental Committee on Finance and National Planning. This GPT was supposed to answer queries from readers and give recommendations based on the Departmental Committee on Finance and National Planning. In X Spaces, the youth used to have meetings which were conducted on an everyday basis (Simiyu & Ogetta, 2024). A key informant reported that;

We wanted this information to get to most people in an instant and simple way, where you just ask your doubts and you get answers, and that's what we thought of an AI assistant.

In summary, mobilisation by young adults showcased a shift in activism from physical confrontation to hybrid coordinated collective action.

Social Media Was Used for Street Protests

A new generation of young Kenyan protesters took to the streets to pressure the government into backing down on

unpopular tax proposals (Muia, 2024). They streamed in the streets in numbers. Their power resides exclusively in numbers.

This was a revolt that was not prepared by the political elites or activists. They were young people who were beyond ethnicity, social class, or political party. The demonstration on the streets carried out by the GenZ took place without the coordination of organised social movements, which has been the case of revolt against autocratic governments, as argued by Breuer (2012). They had their phones on, streaming as they confronted the police officers (Muia, 2024). On June 18, 2024, the young adults arranged for the meeting points like the Archives and NTV. They were asked to put on their VPN to avoid slowness on the internet and also get on-time updates. Unlike the previous political anti-government protests, it was not characterised by looting, destruction of property, and stone-throwing.

Different digital tools were at risk of being overwhelmed due to high usage. The youth protesters developed a USSD code *665*971# which would help in overcoming the challenge (Ntarangwi, 2024). On the streets, they faced different challenges, hence had different requests. The USSD code was supposed to provide legal support for arrested protesters, report brutality by police, request medical support, make a query on Finance GPT, and organise peaceful meetups near me (which were supposed to invite other protesters to come to one's rescue in case of being surrounded by the anti-riot police).

To coordinate movement and communicate during the 2024 Finance Bill protests, young protesters used the Zello app to stay in touch with one another. Zello reported that the app had been downloaded 40,000 times from the Google Play Store in Kenya during the protest week (Wangari, 2024). A key informant said;

We realised our WhatsApp groups had been infiltrated by many government agents. We opted for radio communication because they were live and instant, such that you could not take instructions from people you did not know, and also it helped counter wrong information and fear mongering. Zello came in handy because we did not want a Kenyan-controlled application.

During the street protests, the young adults walked as children from the same family. There were no political affiliations or ethnic alignments among the protestors as they wanted their voice to be heard and acted upon. They moved together seamlessly and took care of one another. This was an upgrade of protest through innovation carried out by protestors in order to fulfil their agenda in a hostile social environment.

Social media Was Used to engage the Political Class

The young protestors were leaderless due to the absence of a central leadership. This indicated that the movement depended largely on collective mobilisation and the natural flow of information through several influential points within the network. Thus, the social media platforms facilitated a horizontal structure of influence, where multiple users contributed to the momentum and reach of the protests. As a result, this dynamism led to resilience and adaptability, as they did not depend on a single point of failure but rather thrived on the collective power of youth who were engaged in protests. Due to fear of being used by the political elites, and hence the politicians would subsequently take the mantle of leadership, they had to protect their niche. One of the protestors cautioned a prominent politician to stay away from anti-government protests by the young people (Mosa, 2024). However, some young adults perceived others as aligned with political interests, which generated internal divisions. Protestors who tweeted in support of the government were blocked to avoid their content from being consumed by people who did not know them, leading to confusion among the protestors.

Some protestors were hosted by the President at the State House, Kenya, with the view of helping the presidency talk to the youth who were protesting. They arrived at the State House, Nairobi, around mid-morning. Later, the President announced that he was going to host a X Space. On the contrary, the young adults said that they will host a parallel space to counter that of the President's space. On the eve of the President hosting a X space, young adults decided to change their X profile pictures to one of the late Jacob Juma's pictures (Media Council of Kenya, 2024). The late Jacob Juma was a crusader against corruption, a persistent problem that undermined public trust in government institutions. He was assassinated on 06/05/2016. The young adults identified themselves with him due to his persistent advocacy while he was alive against corruption in the government. A key informant said;

This was symbolic in response to how we felt the state had abducted and killed some of our comrades, and again, Jacob Juma's tweets had questioned the character of the current President long ago. Juma to us was like a prophet, that's why he was assassinated.

During the meeting with the presidency, only participants perceived as aligned with political elites were allowed to speak. The presidency had control over that meeting with Gen Z. As a result, the majority of the young adults felt that they were not allowed to air their views. Thus, they left the X space where the President was.

Also, the young protestors used hashtags to pressure the MPs to reject the financial proposals. The hashtags used to pressure MPs and rally protestors were "#OccupyParliament" and "#RejectFinanceBill2024" (Muia, 2024). They were a threat to their livelihood; hence, they wanted to put pressure on them to be able to see the broad picture of people who were socially and economically burdened through the Financial Bill 2024. A key informant noted;

We understood that the Bill would only move to ascension by passing Parliament, and that is where the MPs sit. Therefore, we wanted to crush their ego and let them know we knew their families, and if need be, we would know where to get them. We made it clear that voting yes meant there were going to be consequences.

The social action by young adults managed to advance their goal of social activism towards socio-economic concerns despite its populist character.

Outcomes of the Protests

There were both successes and weaknesses experienced during the anti-government protests in 2024. Muia (2024) notes that both the presidency and the Parliament agreed to withdraw the Finance Bill 2024. The withdrawal meant that the government had heard the voice of the young adult. Thus, it was giving a chance to look at it afresh.

The young protestors were able to remain leaderless. The protestors blocked the political elites who had an interest in joining them for political gain. The young protestors

convinced the political elites to stay away from the demonstrations. A key political figure acknowledged and encouraged them to continue fighting for their rights (Muia, 2024). This was a win among the young people as it demonstrated that their voice had an impact in the political arena. Further, they refused people who wanted to take advantage and take the leadership mantle.

The Kenyan finance bill 2024 protests carried out by young people demonstrated that the voice of the people can be heard without using violence. The protest demonstrates the incredible potential of nonviolent resistance tactics involving protests and social media. Young people were able to mobilise thousands to the streets using social media. As a result, the presidency was forced to withdraw the Finance Bill 2024 within a short period in June 2024 (Liverseed, 2025).

During the Finance Bill 2024, the risk of going to the streets and conducting the protests was high. The protesters managed to conceal their identities, thereby forming a formless and amorphous social group. This involved even using technology to achieve their agenda. They invented the use of the Zello App, which helped them to communicate anonymously during the protests against the controversial Bill, making it the most effective in Kenya's history (Wangari, 2024).

The young succeeded in the mobilisation process, which could have been expensive and unreliable if it had been done differently. To caution those who did not have transport to town, protesters who were injured in the hospital or killed during the protests, young protesters crowd-funded before and after the protests. The M-changa link was created to facilitate medical bills, funeral expenses, and a consolation fund for the bereaved (Olambo, 2024). This ensured the safety and well-being of the protestors.

Young adults who participated in the protests experienced a greater impact due to their active involvement in the demonstrations. More than 60 people were injured, while at least 500 individuals lost their lives during the events as the police used not only tear gas and rubber bullets against protesters, but also live ammunition in many cases (Ehl, 2024). This led to the loss of children, breadwinners of a family, or led to a situation of orphanhood in some families, or buried the hope of some families. Ehl (2024) noted that some protestors went missing. In concurrence, Breuer (2012) argued that autocrats use persecution, repression and

propaganda to silence demonstrators with the aim of intimidating and hindering them from getting information about their fellow citizens' attitudes toward the regime and their disposition to revolt.

The unique circumstances are traditional socio-political problems in Kenya, namely corruption and dictatorial tendencies of the political class. The difference at this time, according to social action theory, is the availability of social media, which facilitated social action through public mobilisation and political engagement about the same social issues. This could have been difficult before the utilisation of social media. The youth used the digital tools to effectively drive their social agenda regarding rejection of the Finance Bill 2024.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The anti-government protests were coordinated and mobilised via social media. They used X, TikTok, among others, to sensitise the public on the reasons behind the anti-government protests. In X Spaces, young adults held anti-government protest meetings on a daily basis. The young protestors engaged in face-to-face discussions on issues of concern in the Finance Bill 2024. They raised awareness on critical societal problems and mobilised resources. The MPs' phone numbers were shared widely to increase pressure on them to oppose the Finance Bill 2024.

The young adult protestors translated the Finance Bill 2024 into more than forty local languages and sign language to sensitise people on the content of the Finance Bill. The initiative to translate the content of the Bill into local languages was meant to make information accessible to individuals in rural areas who do not understand English. Furthermore, explanations in sign language ensured inclusivity and broadened the reach of the communication efforts. The young adults created Finance Bill 2024 GPT to answer queries from readers and give extensive recommendations based on the Parliament Departmental Committee on Finance and National Planning. In X Spaces, the youth used to have meetings, which were conducted on a daily basis.

The young adult protestors went to the streets to force the government back down on unpopular tax proposals. They had their phones on, streaming as they confronted the police officers and arranged the meeting points. They had a VPN to avoid the slowness of the internet and receive on-time updates. The protestors developed a USSD code *665*971# to provide legal support for arrested

protesters, report police brutality, request medical support, make any query on Finance Bill GPT, and finally to organise peaceful meetups. The Young protestors used the Zello App to keep in touch with one another.

The young protestors were a leaderless, formless, and amorphous social group. They relied heavily on collective action and the organic spread of information through various influential nodes within the network. They thrived on the collective power of youth who were engaged in protests.

Due to anti-government protests, the presidency and the Parliament agreed to withdraw the Finance Bill 2024. This was a win among the young people as it demonstrated that their voice was heard and acted upon by the government. The young protestors stood their ground and refused to be intimidated by the incredible potential of nonviolent resistance tactics in protest, which was facilitated by the use of social media. They showed a high level of innovation by using the Zello App to communicate anonymously during the protests. They

created the M-changa link to facilitate medical bills, funeral expenses, and a consolation fund for the bereaved. However, there were 60 fatalities and 500 injuries during the protests. To conclude, the findings in this study represent social action theory, whereby young adults protested against the Financial Bill 2024 to prevent high taxes that would burden their lives in the future.

Recommendations: The study recommends that young people be actively involved in making key government socio-economic decisions to ensure their voices shape national development. It further urges the national government to enhance digital platforms so they function as strategic development tools capable of addressing critical national issues and promoting sustainable economic growth, particularly for the youth. Additionally, the study emphasises that digital platforms should be embraced by stakeholders, including national and local governments, civil society, and others, as essential instruments for sensitising young people on a wide range of social, economic, political, cultural, religious, and educational issues across different geographical areas.

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