Research paper

Youth-Led Policy Advocacy in Africa:
A Qualitative Analysis of Generation Z's Mobilization Efforts against Fiscal Legislation in Kenya and its Implications for Democratic Governance in the Continent

Omweri, F. S. [1]

[1] *Kampala International University, Dept. Public Administration and Development Studies, Western Campus-Uganda*

KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Youth-Led Advocacy Gen- Z Democratic Governance Mobilization Efforts	This qualitative study explores the mobilization efforts of Generation Z in Kenya against fiscal legislation and their implications for democratic governance in Africa. Using Social Movement Theory as a framework, the research employs observation, interviews, and documentation review to collect data from 15 informants, including Gen Z activists, policymakers, civil society representatives, and academic experts. The findings show that Gen Z has effectively utilized various mobilization strategies to drive social change, including social media, protests, and lobbying. Despite feeling disconnected from traditional politics, Gen Z is eager to engage with democracy on their own terms, pushing for greater representation and voice in democratic processes. Their activism has significantly influenced policy decisions, forced policymakers to take action, and led to significant reforms. The study concludes that Gen Z's mobilization efforts are transforming the political landscape, driving innovation, and shaping the future of democracy and social justice movements in Africa.

1. Introduction

Youth advocacy, as defined by Adebayo (2017), encompasses the efforts of children and young people (CYP) to influence norms, social practices, regulations, resource allocation, political decisions, and policies that affect them. This empowerment process, which aims to equip CYP with the skills and knowledge to effectively advocate for their rights, involves various activities such as campaigning, outreaches, policy dialogue, and public mobilization, initiated directly by CYP or facilitated by advocacy groups (Fayoyin, 2013; Obar, Zube, & Lampe, 2012). However, effective youth advocacy faces significant challenges, including societal perceptions, hierarchical structures, and institutional constraints. In the African context, the patriarchal nature of society, digital divide, and unequal access to digital media further complicate CYP advocacy (Bailey & Steeves, 2015;

Roy, Kuo-Hsun, & Cheng, 2023).

Building on this, youth-led policy advocacy is an emerging phenomenon in Africa, where young people are increasingly mobilizing to influence policy decisions that affect their lives (Adebayo, 2017). Generation Z, in particular, is at the forefront of this movement, leveraging technology and social media to amplify their voices. For instance, in Kenya, Generation Z has been actively engaged in mobilization efforts against fiscal legislation, using social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook to raise awareness and mobilize support. This has significant implications for democratic governance in the continent, highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of youth advocacy and its potential to shape policy decisions in Africa.

The Kenyan context provides a unique opportunity to explore the dynamics of youth-led policy advocacy in Africa. The country has a vibrant youth population, with over 75% of its citizens below the age of 35. This demographic dividend presents a significant opportunity for youth to shape policy decisions and contribute to democratic governance. However, the Kenyan political landscape is also characterized by patronage, clientelism, and limited spaces for youth participation, which poses significant challenges to youth-led policy advocacy.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to explore the mobilization efforts of Generation Z in Kenya against fiscal legislation and its implications for democratic governance in Africa. The study aims to understand the strategies, tactics, and challenges faced by youth-led advocacy groups in influencing policy decisions. This study hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of youth-led policy advocacy in Africa and its potential to shape democratic governance in the continent.

2. Research Objectives
To explore the mobilization efforts of Generation Z in Kenya against fiscal legislation and their implications for democratic governance in Africa, in order to understand the role of youth in policy advocacy and democratic processes on the continent.

3. Research Questions
  i.   What are the mobilization strategies and tactics employed by Generation Z in Kenya in their advocacy against fiscal legislation?
  ii.   How do the mobilization efforts of Generation Z in Kenya influence policy decisions and democratic governance in the country?
  iii. What are the perceptions and experiences of Generation Z in Kenya regarding their involvement in democratic processes?

4. Significance of the Study
The findings of this study will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of youth-led movements in shaping democratic governance in Africa, and inform strategies for enhancing youth participation in policymaking processes, ultimately contributing to more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable democratic development in the region.

5. Literature Review
5.1 Policy Advocation
Policy advocacy lacks standardized concepts and definitions (Gen & Wright, 2018), which can lead to contextual misunderstandings. Nevertheless, advocacy is often viewed as a means of defense and is closely tied to political activity (Hidayatul et al., 2023). This relationship highlights the significance of policy advocacy in shaping political outcomes and promoting social change.

Advocacy, as a political activity, seeks to bring about gradual changes in public policy (Fakih & Topatimasang, 2005). Notably, actors engaged in policy advocacy typically operate outside the government structure, aiming to influence policy decisions without holding power or controlling the political machinery (Suharto, 2009). This distinction highlights the unique role of advocacy in shaping public policy from outside the government.

Public policy advocacy, as an effort to improve or change public policies, is characterized by several key features. Firstly, policy advocacy is citizen-driven, involving individual or collective actions, often represented by nonprofit organizations (Child & Grønbjerg, 2007). These citizens may hold relatively less power or struggle to articulate their interests, such as marginalized groups like the poor or children (Jansson, 2010). Secondly, advocacy approaches involve a deliberate process aimed at influencing decision-makers or shaping the social agenda (Schmid et al., 2008) to build political will and drive change.

To further clarify public policy advocacy, it's important to note that the ultimate goal of policy advocacy is to achieve policy change (Stahowiak, 2007) or to make the policy-making process more accessible and inclusive for the public. Specifically, policy advocacy aims to influence fiscal legislation by adopting, modifying, or rejecting specific policy options (Moore, 2011). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, public policy advocacy is defined as a deliberate and planned activity undertaken by the youth to influence changes in fiscal legislation and policy.

5.2 Generation Z

This Generation Z, born and raised under unique conditions unlike other generations (e.g., ubiquitous Internet access), raises questions about their characteristics - what are they like? Born after 1995 (Cilliers, 2017), Generation Z has a debated age range, similar to Traditionalists (Silent Generation or Greatest Generation), Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y, with no consensus on exact age ranges. Notably, Generation Z's age range is particularly challenging to define, and their characteristics remain not well understood, making them a fascinating and enigmatic cohort (Dolot, 2018). The age range for Generation Z is inconsistently defined, with various sources proposing different birth years, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 1: Generation Age Range – Literature Review

Age Range	Author (s)
born 1990 or later	Świerkosz-Hołysz (2016); Żarczyńska-Dobiesz & Chomątowska (2014); Wiktorowicz and Warwas (2016); Wojtaszczyk (2013)
between 1990 and 1999	Half (2015)
between 1991 and 2000	Tulgan (2009)
between 1993 and 2012	White (2017)
between 1993 and 2005	Turner (2013)
after 1995	Opolska-Bielańska (2016); Ensari (2017); Dudek (2017)

Source: Adopted from Dolot (2018)

Generation Z has accumulated a plethora of names, surpassing any previous generation. Some of these terms include iGeneration, Gen Tech, Online Generation, Post Millennials, Facebook Generation, Switchers, and "always clicking". Additionally, it's also referred to as the C Generation, symbolizing their connection to the internet, computerized lifestyle, communication, content-centricity, community orientation, and love for change (Świerkosz-Hołysz, 2016; Hysa, 2016; Dudek, 2017). Furthermore, it's also known as the R-Generation, representing the Responsibility generation (Csobanka, 2016). This array of names highlights the diverse perspectives on this generation's characteristics and traits.

To better understand Generation Z and their digitization, it's essential to recognize that they grew up during a time of profound change, born in the 1990s and raised in the 2000s (Singh & Dangmei, 2016). They exist in a world where the web, internet, smartphones, laptops, networks, and digital media are ubiquitous. This generation is poised to spend their youth and adult years in an era of economic and social renewal (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017). Notably, Gen Z can seamlessly navigate both the physical and virtual worlds, switching between them with ease, as they view them as complementary (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz & Chomątowska, 2014). This adaptability enables them to quickly source and verify information, share it with others, and engage in continuous communication through various devices and social media platforms.

Moreover, active social media users among Gen Z have numerous contacts and primarily maintain their relationships online, with personal meetings still holding importance but online connections being equally vital (Csobanka, 2016). They utilize various mobile devices to comment on reality, share opinions, and manifest attitudes on Twitter, blogs, and internet forums. Additionally, they share photos on Instagram, Pinterest, and

Snapchat, and films on YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat. Facebook serves as a platform for all these activities. Significantly, Gen Z not only consumes internet content but also creates and controls it (Hardey, 2011).

5.3 Overview of Youth-Led Policy Advocacy in Africa

Youth-led policy advocacy in Africa is a burgeoning phenomenon that is transforming the continent's political landscape. As the largest demographic cohort, young Africans are increasingly recognizing their agency and mobilizing to shape policy decisions that affect their lives (Hartmann, & Biira, 2021). Leveraging technology, social media, and grassroots organizing, youth-led movements are championing causes such as education reform, economic opportunity, and political inclusion (Jamatia, 2023). From the streets of Lagos to the corridors of Addis Ababa, young people are demanding a seat at the table and redefining the contours of governance and decision-making in Africa.

The global youth population, comprising individuals aged 15-29, has experienced significant growth over the past three decades. Between 1990 and 2019, this demographic surged by 25%, increasing from 1.4 billion to 1.8 billion. As of 2019, the global youth population stands at 1.8 billion, with regional distributions as follows: Asia hosts the largest share, with 1.08 billion (60%); Africa follows with 354 million (20%); Latin America and the Caribbean, 161 million (9%); Europe, 124 million (7%); North America, 75 million (4%); and Oceania, 9 million (less than 1%)[1] . This demographic breakdown highlights the diverse distribution of young people worldwide, with Asia and Africa collectively accounting for over 75% of the global youth population.

In particular, Africa hosts a substantial proportion of the global youth population, with 354 million young people, accounting for 20% of the global total. Moreover, Africa's youth population is disproportionately large, with over 70% of the continent's population under the age of 30 (Belmonte et al., 2020). Africa is also the only region where the youth population has grown faster than other age groups over the last three decades, surging by 112% between 1990 and 2019, outpacing the overall population growth of 108% (UNDESA, 2019). This demographic shift has resulted in Africa having the youngest population of all continents, with 27% of its population aged between 15 and 29 years and 41% aged under 15. The median age in Africa has gradually increased, from 18.3 in 2000 to 19.7 in 2020 (UNDESA, 2019), but remains significantly lower than other regions.

According to UNDESA (2019), Nigeria (53.4 million), Ethiopia (33.4 million), Egypt (25.1 million), Democratic Republic of the Congo (22.8 million), and South Africa (15.1 million) have the highest numbers of youth population. Moreover, the countries with the highest percentage of youth population are Somalia (28%), Uganda (29%), Kenya (29%), Zambia (29%), and Ethiopia (30%)[2] . In the case of Kenya, specifically, the median age is 20 years as of 2019 (KNBS 2020). The country's demographic structure is characterized by a predominantly young population, with 75% of the population below 35 years old and 36% between 15-34 years old (KNBS 2019). This demographic trend presents an opportunity for Africa to harness its youth's energy, creativity, and innovation for economic growth, social progress, and democratic governance. However, despite their numerical strength, young Africans have historically been marginalized from political decision-making processes, with limited opportunities for meaningful engagement and participation.

In recent years, however, there has been a surge in youth-led activism and advocacy efforts across the continent, with young people mobilizing around various issues, including economic justice, education, healthcare, and climate change. For instance in South Africa, the #FeesMustFall(FMF) movement, which began in 2015, was a pivotal moment in South Africa's history, as young people united to protest exorbitant university tuition fees and advocate for free quality education. The movement gained widespread support, leading to massive demonstrations, university shutdowns, and a nationwide call for economic transformation. Even

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[1] https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/

[2] https://www.indexmundi.com/kenya/demographics_profile.html

though the government decided to raise fees by 0% for the 2016 school year, after six years, not much has changed in the education sector. Students continue to protest, raising historical and new demands, including financial inclusivity, affordable accommodation, and curriculum reform. Despite some concessions, the government and universities have failed to address the underlying issues, leading to ongoing protests and disruptions. The movement has highlighted the need for a more inclusive and accessible education system, free from the legacy of colonialism and apartheid. However, the lack of progress has left many students feeling frustrated and excluded, with some still unable to register due to financial constraints and others struggling with unemployment and unrealistic expectations from employers. The #FeesMustFall movement reignited the national dialogue on education, but its goals remain unfulfilled, and the struggle for free, quality education continues (Ntombana, Gwala, & Sibanda, 2023).

Additionally in Nigeria, the #EndSARS movement, which began in 2017, was a watershed moment in Nigeria's history, as young people mobilized en masse to demand the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a police unit notorious for its human rights abuses and brutality. The movement gained widespread support, leading to massive nationwide protests, online campaigns, and a global outcry against police brutality. Despite the government's announcement to disband SARS, protesters remained skeptical, as similar promises had been made in the past without implementation. The movement expanded to demand sound governance, transparency, and accountability from the government, with victims sharing their stories and video evidence of SARS' abuses, including profiling, extortion, extrajudicial murder, torture, and sexual harassment. The protests continued, with the government responding with violent repression, leading to international solidarity demonstrations and growing criticism of President Muhammadu Buhari's government. The struggle for comprehensive police reform and accountability remains ongoing, with advocates pushing for meaningful change and justice for victims of police brutality (Ekwunife, Ononiwu, Akpan, & Sunday, 2021).

Further, in Sudan, the Sudanese Revolution, also known as the December Revolution, began in December 2018 with mass protests led by young people against President Omar al-Bashir's authoritarian rule, demanding democratic reforms and economic change. Despite violent crackdowns, the protests persisted, eventually forcing al-Bashir's ousting in April 2019. The revolution was driven by widespread discontent with the government's human rights abuses, corruption, and economic mismanagement, and was led by the Sudanese Professionals Association, a coalition of independent trade unions. While the military still holds power, the revolution has empowered a vibrant civil society, marking a significant step towards democratization and a new era for Sudan, and ensuring that any attempt to reinstate authoritarian rule will be met with resistance (Kostelyanets, 2022).

In Ghana, the #FixTheCountry movement, which emerged in 2021, was a grassroots campaign driven by young people from diverse backgrounds, united in their demand for urgent action from the government to address Ghana's deteriorating economic situation, rampant corruption, and deplorable living conditions. Through peaceful demonstrations, online activism, and social media campaigns, protesters called for sweeping reforms, greater accountability, and transparency from the government. Led by prominent activists, including Mawuse Oliver Barker-Varmawor, a PhD student from Cambridge University, the movement mobilized thousands of Ghanaians, forcing the government to take notice and pledge reforms. By leveraging technology and social media, the movement strengthened Ghana's democratic system, contributing to the consolidation of democracy in the Fourth Republican era. This vibrant opposition movement has boosted efforts towards democratic consolidation, building on the legacy of dissident movements over the past three decades (Ahmed, 2022).

Furthermore, as Kiwuwa (2019) avers Uganda has recently witnessed the emergence of youth movements protesting against the government, driven by growing discontent and frustration. The People Power Movement (PPM), led by Bobi Wine, is a notable example, rooted in the broader politics of discontent sweeping across Africa and the world. Just like African countries discussed above, these movements are evident in countries like Zimbabwe, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, and Tunisia, where popular movements have been gaining momentum. Youth Movements have been at the forefront of these protests, playing a crucial role in shaping the political landscape. Examples include Y'en a Marre (Fed Up) in Senegal, which has been advocating for democratic reforms and good governance; Balai Citoyen (The Civic Broom) in Burkina Faso, which has been pushing for political change and anti-corruption efforts; and La Lucha (The Struggle) in the Democratic

Republic of Congo, which has been fighting for social justice and human rights. These youth-led movements have leveraged social media, music, and art to mobilize support, challenge authoritarian regimes, and demand a better future for their countries.

5.4 History of Youth-Led Advocacy in Kenya

Since gaining independence from British colonial rule on December 12, 1963, Kenya has witnessed significant contributions from youth-led advocacy efforts, shaping the country's social, political, and economic trajectory. The journey has been marked by notable milestones, including:

5.4.1 1960s-1970s: Anti-Colonialism and Nationalism

Youth played a vital role in Kenya's struggle for independence, joining forces with nationalist movements (Kimari, Melchiorre, & Rasmussen, 2020) like the Kenya African Union (KAU) and the Mau Mau rebellion. Many young Kenyans courageously participated in the fight against British colonial rule, sacrificing their education, livelihoods, and even their lives to secure freedom and self-determination for their country. Their bravery and determination helped pave the way for Kenya's eventual independence on December 12, 1963 (Kanyinga, & Njoka, 2002).

Notable figures like Dedan Kimathi and Tom Mboya inspired their peers through their leadership and unwavering commitment to the cause. Dedan Kimathi, born on October 31, 1920[3] , led the armed military struggle against British colonial rule in the 1950s until his capture in 1956 (Goodman, 2022). At 36, he gave his life for the cause on February 18, 1957, leaving behind a legacy that continues to inspire generations of Kenyans. Tom Mboya, a charismatic young politician, mobilized his peers through his eloquence and passion for democracy. At just 28 years old, he led the negotiations for independence at the Lancaster House Conferences in 1958. He founded the Kenya African Union (KAU) Youth Wing, which became a powerful force in the fight for independence[4] .

Both Kimathi and Mboya's leadership and vision inspired a generation of young Kenyans to demand their rights and challenge colonial rule. Their advocacy for non-violent resistance and their vision for a united, democratic Kenya helped pave the way for the country's eventual independence. Through their courage, leadership, and sacrifice, Kimathi and Mboya left an indelible mark on Kenyan history, inspiring future generations to continue the fight for justice and equality. Their legacy continues to inspire young Kenyans to engage in politics and fight for social justice, making them lasting icons of Kenya's struggle for freedom and democracy.

5.4.2 1980s-1990s: Pro-Democracy Movement

The 1980s and 1990s marked a pivotal moment in Kenya's history, as a new generation of youth emerged to challenge the authoritarian rule of the Moi regime. Inspired by the ideals of democracy and human rights, these young activists, students, and professionals formed the pro-democracy movement, which sought to bring an end to single-party rule and usher in a new era of political freedom and social justice. Through protests, demonstrations, and advocacy, this movement played a crucial role in Kenya's transition to multiparty democracy, paving the way for the country's future growth and development.

Wangari Maathai, born on April 1, 1940, began her activism at 37, mobilizing young people against the Moi regime's authoritarian rule and advocating for democratic reforms[5] . Her movement focused on environmental conservation and women's empowerment, inspiring a new generation of young Kenyans to engage in politics and social activism (House-Midamba, 1996). Koigi wa Wamwere, a student activist and politician, was a key

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[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dedan_Kimathi

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Mboya

[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wangar_Maathai.

figure in the Student Organization of Nairobi University (SONU), a hub for pro-democracy activism in the 1980s and 1990s. He and other student leaders organized protests, demonstrations, and boycotts, pushing for democratic reforms and human rights. Wa Wamwere's outspoken criticism of the Moi regime led to his imprisonment on several occasions (Gimode, 2007). Mwandawiro Mghanga, a young politician and activist, co-founded the National Democratic Convention (NDC), a political party that challenged the Moi regime's dominance. He played a key role in organizing protests and demonstrations, including the infamous Saba Saba protests in 1990, a turning point in the struggle for democracy in Kenya. These young activists risked their lives and livelihoods to fight for a more just and democratic Kenya (Gimode, 2007).

During the 1990s, several youths played a significant role in Kenya's multipartyism movement[6] . Koigi wa Wamwere, a student activist and politician, was a leading figure in the Student Organization of Nairobi University (SONU), while Okiya Omtatah, a young activist, was a key organizer of the Saba Saba protests in 1990. Anyang' Nyong'o, a scholar and politician, was involved in the pro-democracy movement as a young man, and Muthika Mwenda, a student leader and activist, was also involved in the multipartyism movement. Additionally, Kenneth Matiba, Charles Rubia, and Raila Odinga launched the movement for multi-party democracy in 1990, while Jaramogi Oginga Odinga formed the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) in May 1991, which was later officially announced in July 1991.

5.4.3 2000s: Constitutional Reform

In the 2000s, Kenya's constitutional reforms were significantly shaped by the active participation of youths (Bwire, 2023). They played a vital role in the process, starting with the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC), where they helped collect views and opinions from citizens that informed the drafting of the new constitution (Moywaywa, & Nyagaka, 2023). Youth-led organizations, such as the Youth Agenda and the Kenya Youth Network, were also engaged in civil society efforts, campaigning for a new constitution and participating in negotiations. Additionally, youths used various platforms, including social media, to raise awareness about the importance of constitutional reform and the need for a new constitution. They were represented at the National Constitutional Conference (NCC), which debated and adopted the new constitution, and volunteered as enumerators and poll workers during the 2010 constitutional referendum, ensuring a smooth voting process. Youths also engaged in peaceful protests and demonstrations, pushing for constitutional reform and the adoption of a new constitution. Through their involvement, (Mwangola, 2007), youths demonstrated their commitment to shaping Kenya's future and ensuring a more democratic and inclusive society.

As a result of their concerted efforts, Kenya adopted a new constitution in 2010 that recognizes the importance of youth participation and empowerment. The Constitution enshrines various rights and provisions related to youth, including representation, empowerment, protection, and participation in governance. These provisions demonstrate the government's commitment to prioritizing youth development and empowerment, acknowledging the critical role youth play in shaping the country's future. In conclusion, the contributions of Kenyan youths to the constitutional reform process were instrumental in shaping a more inclusive and democratic society.

5.4.4 2010s: Social and Political Activism

Bunge la Mwananchi, (The People's Parliament), a youth-led advocacy group, played a pivotal role in pushing for social justice and political accountability in Kenya. Through grassroots mobilization, public demonstrations, and civic engagement, they championed the rights of marginalized communities and held leaders accountable for their actions. Their tireless efforts helped to amplify the voices of the voiceless and drive meaningful change in the country's social and political landscape.

The #MyDressMyChoice campaign, spearheaded through the leadership of young women, boldly challenged gender-based violence and discrimination in Kenya (Anumo, & Onyango, 2020). Through social

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[6] https://www.nationalyouthcouncil.go.ke/multiparty-democracy-of-kenya-between-1991-and-2010/.

media, public protests, and advocacy, they asserted their right to autonomy and self-expression, rejecting victim-blaming and slut-shaming. With the sharing of their personal stories and experiences, they humanized the issue and sparked a national conversation about consent, bodily autonomy, and the need to dismantle patriarchal norms that perpetuate gender-based violence. The campaign's impact was profound, inspiring a new generation of feminist activists and pushing policymakers to reexamine laws and attitudes that perpetuate gender inequality (Mwikya, Gitau, & Waweru, 2020).

5.4.5 Present Day: Climate Justice, Economic Empowerment, Just and Equitable Society.

Youth activism in Kenya has been instrumental in championing climate justice, economic empowerment, and a just and equitable society (Kalem, 2020). Through various campaigns and initiatives, young people have demanded action from leaders to address the climate crisis, promote sustainable development, and ensure equal access to resources and opportunities (Han, & Ahn, 2020). They have organized protests, petitions, and awareness campaigns to highlight the impact of climate change on their communities and futures. Additionally, they have advocated for economic empowerment programs, such as entrepreneurship support and job creation initiatives, to address high levels of unemployment and poverty. Furthermore, they have pushed for a more just and equitable society, challenging social and political norms that perpetuate inequality and discrimination, and demanding inclusive decision-making processes that prioritize the needs and perspectives of young people.

Youth-led organizations like the Kenya Youth Climate Network (KYCN) and the Africa Youth Initiative on Climate Change (AYICC) have been at the forefront of advocating for climate action and sustainable development in Kenya. Through grassroots mobilization, policy engagement, and public awareness campaigns, these organizations have been instrumental in pushing for the implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. KYCN, for instance, has been actively involved in promoting renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, and has worked with local communities to develop climate-resilient agriculture practices. AYICC, on the other hand, has been a strong advocate for climate justice, pushing for the recognition of the disproportionate impact of climate change on African youth and demanding that policymakers prioritize their needs and concerns.

Initiatives like the Young Entrepreneurs Program (YEP) and the Kenya Youth Enterprise Development Fund (KYEDF) have been instrumental in supporting youth economic empowerment in Kenya (Mabururu & Wekesa, 2020). YEP, for instance, provides training, mentorship, and funding to young entrepreneurs, enabling them to turn their business ideas into reality. KYEDF, on the other hand, offers affordable loans and business development services to young people, helping them to grow and sustain their enterprises. These initiatives have not only created jobs and stimulated economic growth but also equipped young people with the skills and confidence to succeed in the business world. Furthermore, they have played a critical role in addressing youth unemployment, poverty, and inequality, thereby contributing to a more stable and prosperous society (Mabururu & Wekesa, 2020).

Another notable example of youth-led advocacy in Kenya is the recent mobilization against controversial fiscal legislation in the financial year 2024/2025. Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, took the lead in advocating for policy changes that benefit their peers and the wider society. The legislation, which aimed to increase taxes on various goods and services, sparked widespread protests and opposition from various segments of society, including the youth, who felt disproportionately affected by the tax hikes. In response, young Kenyans leveraged social media, online platforms, and offline mobilization efforts to raise awareness, mobilize support, and advocate for policy changes.

5.5 Generation Z's Political Engagement, Activism and Mobilization Efforts

Although Dolot (2018) predicted that Generation Z would be a significant force in the market, this generation is proving to play a critical role in various aspects of society, including Politics, Culture, Education, Economy, Technology, Healthcare, Environment, Social justice, Media and entertainment, Arts and design, Literature and language, Religion and spirituality, Family and community structures, International relations and global affairs, Business and industry, Science and research, and Sports and leisure. As they come of age, they are bringing their unique perspectives, skills, and values to shape the future of industries, economies, and communities worldwide. With their technological literacy, entrepreneurial spirit, and commitment to social responsibility,

Gen Z is driving innovation, transforming traditional norms, and leading the charge towards a more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive future. Ultimately, Generation Z's multifaceted influence is poised to reshape the world.

Generation Z is growing up in a world of immense social, political, and environmental change. As a result, this young generation is becoming increasingly engaged in politics and activism, leveraging their unique perspective and technological savvy to drive change. From climate activism to racial justice, Gen Z is utilizing social media platforms, online organizing tools, and traditional forms of protest to make their voices heard and demand action from leaders. As the most diverse generation in history, Gen Z's political engagement and activism have the potential to shape the future of democracy and address the pressing issues of our time (Kaplan, 2020).

The advent of digital media has presented an unparalleled opportunity for young people to engage in digital activism and civic advocacy, transforming the landscape of social development. Digital media have become an indispensable tool for youth advocacy, with various social media platforms being harnessed to champion their causes, amplify their voices, and mobilize support (Ali, 2011; McPherson, 2007; Erlick, 2018). Through leveraging these platforms, young people are able to facilitate meaningful conversations, build communities, and drive social change like never before.

Rheingold (2008) and Anyiwo, Richards-Schuster, & Jerald (2021) argue that the strategic use of mainstream and digital media has been instrumental in amplifying the voices of young people in advocacy efforts across Africa. Development agencies have supported radio and TV programs in various countries, empowering young people to express their views on critical issues affecting them. Successful initiatives include the child-to-child radio program in Angola, school media in Ethiopia, and Straight Talk in Uganda, which have effectively promoted young people's voices on social issues. Targeted newsletters like Open Talk in Namibia, Choose Life in Rwanda, and Koor in Somalia have also been supported by development organizations for national advocacy. Furthermore, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, and Instagram have been leveraged to promote their issues. For instance, the "CrowdOutAids" initiative in South Africa has mobilized young people to utilize social media and digital platforms for community mobilization and political advocacy (Adebayo, 2017).

Gen Z has been actively involved in both Community Advocacy and National Advocacy (Adebayo, 2017). At the community level, young people have undertaken various advocacy actions to address specific social practices, decisions, and governance instruments (Berg, Coman, & Schensul, 2009). Local platforms have been established in several jurisdictions, providing a space for intergenerational dialogues between young people, local authorities, and community gatekeepers (Mirra, & Liberation, 2020). Examples of such platforms include Youth Councils in Nigeria, Municipal Youth Councils in South Africa, Youth Advisory Boards in Tanzania, and Community Youth Forums in Ghana. These platforms enable young people to engage with local authorities on issues affecting their communities, participate in decision-making processes, and advise on youth-related issues. Creative expressions like theatre performances, songs, and poetry have been used to raise awareness about social issues like misuse of political powers, discrimination, tribalism, corruption, social injustices, electoral injustices, and sexual violence against girls (Delgado, 2018). Additionally, Adebayo (2017) contends digital technology has been leveraged to influence local decisions, such as a project in Cameroon that utilized digital mapping to highlight young people's challenges, resulting in increased resource allocation by local authorities. At the national level, young people have undertaken advocacy activities targeting changes in social practices, policies, political decisions, and legal reform. A crucial aspect of youth advocacy is aggregating and integrating their opinions into public discourse, ensuring their voices are heard and valued.

Gen Z is known for their tech-savviness and online presence, which has transformed the way they engage in political activism[7] . They utilize social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok to raise awareness about social and political issues, mobilize support, and organize movements. Hashtag campaigns,

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[7] https://denriafricastores.com/blogs/news/the-political-evolution-of-gen-z-in-kenya-activism-innovation-and-the-essential-denri-africa-bags

online petitions, and digital protests have become their weapons of choice, allowing them to reach a vast audience and create a significant impact[8].

Gen Z's political engagement is also characterized by diversity and inclusivity (Rahman, 2023). They prioritize intersectionality, recognizing that social justice issues are intertwined and that no single issue can be addressed in isolation. They champion causes like climate change, racial justice, gender equality, and LGBTQ+ rights, often using their online platforms to amplify marginalized voices and perspectives. This approach has led to the emergence of new leaders and activists, who are challenging traditional power structures and pushing for systemic change.

Gen Z's activism is not limited to online spaces (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz & Chomątowska, 2014), they are also engaged in grassroots organizing and community-based initiatives. (Adebayo, 2017). They participate in protests, rallies, and town halls, using their collective energy to push for policy changes and hold elected officials accountable. They are also involved in voter registration drives, recognizing the importance of electoral politics in shaping their futures. Gen Z is redefining the boundaries of political engagement and creating a new era of social movement activism through the fusion of online and offline activism (Rice & Moffett, 2021).

The impact of Gen Z's political engagement and activism is already being felt across the world Gil de Zúñiga, Ardèvol-Abreu, & Casero-Ripollés, 2021).They have helped shift the national conversation on issues like corruption, unemployment, taxation, governance, climate change, pushing politicians and policymakers to take action. Their activism has also led to the election of progressive candidates and the passage of landmark legislation. As Gen Z continues to grow in size and influence, their political engagement and activism will likely shape the future of democracy and social justice movements worldwide.

While this phenomenon is not exclusive to Kenya, Generation Z is transforming the political landscape globally with their distinctive fusion of technological expertise, social consciousness, and innovative entrepreneurship. As they navigate complex sociopolitical terrain, they redefine activism through creativity, innovation, and resourcefulness. A notable example is their ingenious use of everyday items as tools for peaceful protests and political engagement, transforming ordinary objects into powerful symbols of resistance and change.

Additionally, the emergence of Gen Z in Kenyan politics is reshaping the political landscape, giving rise to a more dynamic, diverse, and citizen-driven democratic system that promises greater inclusivity and participation in policy process. With innovative spirit and unwavering commitment to social justice, they challenge traditional political norms and practices, ushering in a new era of civic engagement. Harnessing technology, they intend to champion the development pioneering methods for political participation, including online voting platforms and governance monitoring apps. Inspired by global movements, their local activism becomes increasingly interconnected, fostering a globally aware generation of change-makers redefining political engagement. Through innovative solutions and global influence, Gen Z reshapes Kenyan politics, creating a more dynamic, responsive, and equitable democracy.

Moreover, Gen Z in Kenya revolutionizes political engagement through innovative technology use, unwavering commitment to social justice, and creative expression. Leveraging digital platforms, they amplify their voices, mobilize support, and hold leaders accountable. Resourcefulness and dedication inspire a new wave of civic engagement, fostering transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. As they navigate complexities, Gen Z promises a brighter future for Kenya, built on justice, equality, and democratic participation.

5.6 Implications of Gen Z's Mobilization Efforts on Democratic Governance in the Africa

The mobilization efforts of Generation Z in Kenya have significant implications for democratic governance in Africa. Firstly, their activism highlights the importance of youth engagement in democratic processes, demonstrating that young people can be a powerful force for change. Gen Z is setting a powerful example for young people across the continent, taking an active role in shaping their democracy. This echoes the sentiments

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[8] https://wpengine.com/resources/gen-z-2020-full-report/

of Pospieszna and Galus (2020), who emphasize the importance of encouraging youth to take an active role in shaping their democracies.

Gen Z's mobilization efforts also underscore the need for democratic institutions to adapt to the changing needs and values of young people. In Kenya, Gen Z has shown a preference for alternative forms of political engagement, such as social media campaigns and grassroots organizing. Gen Z's shift away from traditional political participation highlights the need for democratic institutions to evolve and become more inclusive of diverse voices and perspectives, as noted by Pickering et al. (2022).

The impact of Gen Z's mobilization efforts on policy decisions in Kenya also has implications for democratic governance in Africa. While the exact impact of their activism is still unfolding, it has already shown potential for influencing policy decisions and driving change. This serves as a model for other African countries, highlighting the potential for youth-led movements to drive democratic reforms and improve governance outcomes (Mac-Ikemenjima, 2022; Àkànle, Abolade, Olaniyan, & Ola-Lawson, 2022).

Furthermore, Gen Z's mobilization efforts have highlighted the importance of technology in democratic governance. Their use of social media and online platforms to mobilize and advocate for causes has demonstrated the potential for technology to amplify marginalized voices and increase political engagement. This has implications for democratic governance in Africa, highlighting the need for governments to leverage technology to increase transparency, accountability, and citizen participation (Sofyani, Riyadh, & Fahlevi, 2020; Tejedo-Romero, Araujo, Tejada, & Ramírez, 2022).

5.7 Fiscal Legislation and Democratic Governance in Kenya

The budget process in Kenya is a crucial aspect of government planning and decision-making, (Karimi, & Makokha, 2021), spanning from August of the current financial year to December of the next. A financial year, also known as a fiscal or budget year, is the period used for accounting, budgeting, and financial reporting, and in Kenya, it runs from July 1st to June 30th of the following year. The financial year is divided into four quarters, each consisting of three months: the First Quarter (July 1st to September 30th), the Second Quarter (October 1st to December 31st), the Third Quarter (January 1st to March 31st), and the Fourth Quarter (April 1st to June 30th).

Keng'ara & Makina, (2020) avers that the budgeting process in Kenya is guided by the Constitution and the Public Finance Management Act of 2012. This process occurs at both the national and county levels. Mbuthia (2021) contend that the budget process in Kenya consists of four major stages: formulation, approval, implementation, and audit and evaluation. The formulation stage, handled by the Executive at both national and county levels, involves integrated development planning, determining financial policies, and preparing budget estimates, with public participation. The approval stage, handled by Parliament and County Assemblies, involves adopting budget policy statements and fiscal strategy papers, amending and approving budget estimates, and enacting appropriation bills. The implementation stage, executed by the Executive, involves carrying out budget proposals, with parliamentary oversight and quarterly review reports. Finally, the audit and evaluation stage, handled by the Auditor-General and Controller of Budget, involves auditing financial accounts, reviewing budget expenditure, and tabling reports for debate and action by Parliament and County Assemblies.

Throughout the entire budget process, public participation is a mandatory requirement, ensuring transparency and citizen engagement in the allocation of resources. The budget process deliberately provides for public participation at various stages, fostering accountability and inclusivity in the management of public funds. The participatory approach, emphasized by Muthomi and Thurmaier (2021) and Mærøe et al. (2021), is integral to the budget process; ensuring citizen voices are heard and valued in the formulation, approval, implementation, and audit and evaluation stages. Public involvement in budgetary review, allocation, and implementation, as noted by Kandie (2020), promotes quality in budget preparation. Stakeholders' involvement, as highlighted by Kipyego and Wanjare (2017), enhances accountability and transparency. Moreover, public participation, as demonstrated by Awire and Nyakwara (2019) and Magani and Gichure (2018), positively and significantly influences budget implementation, leading to a more inclusive and effective budgeting process.

Effective public participation in budgeting processes enables governments to be more accountable (Harrison & Sayogo, 2014) and responsive to their citizens, fostering a positive perception of governmental performance and the value derived from public resources. Transparency is a fundamental principle of sound budgeting, and its pursuit builds trust and credibility with the community. Governments demonstrate their commitment to transparency by developing open budget processes, strengthening their relationship with citizens and enhancing the overall quality of public financial management. For instance, transparent budget processes have led to increased citizen trust in governments and improved allocation of public resources.

Traditional public participation encompassed activities like voting, campaigning, attending public hearings, and staying informed through government reports and local news (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). However, citizens have become more engaged, advocating for specific policies through public meetings, lobbying, and media outreach (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014). Governments have responded by introducing innovative participation methods, including surveys, focus groups, neighborhood councils, social media, and Citizen Relationship Management systems. These efforts aim to capture public participation and have led to increased citizen engagement and improved decision-making. While effective public participation can be invaluable, poorly designed or superficial efforts can waste resources, foster cynicism, and undermine trust if the public feels their input is ignored.

Ignoring public participation in the policy-making process can have significant implications, including the erosion of trust and credibility in government, fostering cynicism and disillusionment among citizens, and ultimately leading to ineffective and unsustainable policies. When the public feels their input is ignored, they become disenchanted with the political process, leading to decreased engagement, reduced civic participation, and a loss of faith in government's ability to represent their interests. This can result in policies that fail to address the needs and priorities of citizens, perpetuating inequality, and undermining the legitimacy of democratic institutions. Moreover, ignoring public participation can lead to wasteful allocation of resources, as policies may not be aligned with the needs and priorities of the community, ultimately hindering the effective delivery of public services and hampering the achievement of desired development outcomes.

These trends are exemplified in Kenya, where the government's disregard for public participation has led to widespread disillusionment, particularly among the youth. The controversial Finance Bill, which imposed new taxes and levies without adequately considering citizen input, sparked protests and demonstrations as young Kenyans felt their concerns were ignored. Similarly, the introduction of the housing levy, despite widespread opposition and concerns raised during public participation forums, demonstrates the government's disconnect from citizen needs and priorities. During the forums, citizens expressed concerns about the levy's affordability and potential burden on low-income households, but the government ignored these views and proceeded with implementation, further eroding trust and fueling frustration among citizens.

6. Theoretical Framework
6.1 Social Movement Theory (SMT)
Youth-led policy advocacy in Africa, as seen in Generation Z's mobilization efforts against fiscal legislation in Kenya, can be understood through the lens of social movement theory. While some scholars classify social movements as collective behavior (Locher, 2002), others distinguish them as collective action (Macionis, 1999). In this context, Generation Z's mobilization efforts can be seen as a new social movement, characterized by a focus on local and national issues, a desire for sustainable solutions, stability, and organized structure (Singh, 2010). This movement diverges from traditional old social movements, which prioritize mass mobilization, direct action, and immediate results. Instead, Generation Z's advocacy efforts in Kenya demonstrate a nuanced understanding of democratic governance and a commitment to shaping policy through sustained collective action.

6.2 Methodology Overview
This qualitative research aimed to explore and understand the meaning and interpretations attributed to the mobilization efforts of Generation Z in Kenya against fiscal legislation. Following Creswell's (2009) qualitative research framework, this study will employ three data collection techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation review. The data sources include interview transcripts, observation notes, official texts policies,

journal articles, websites, newspapers, social media posts, YouTube videos, and other relevant documents. The study will collect data from 15 informants, comprising both primary and secondary objects of the research. The informants included generation Z activists (5), policy makers (3), civil society organization representatives (4) and Academic experts (3).Data analysis followed an inductive approach, from specific to general themes, involving data familiarization, coding, theme identification, theme analysis, data triangulation, and member checking to uncover common patterns and interpret the meaning of the data. This qualitative approach will provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, enabling the researcher to uncover the underlying motivations, perceptions, and experiences of the participants.

7. Research Findings

7.1 Mobilization Strategies and Tactics Employed by Generation Z in Their Advocacy

Generation Z in Kenya has leveraged a range of social media platforms, including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, Reddit, Pinterest, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Discord, Telegram, and Twitch, to propel their advocacy efforts and mobilize online communities for social change. Through hashtags, viral challenges, and shareable content, they have effectively mobilized their peers and built a global movement, leveraging the scalability and accessibility of social media to reach a wider audience and create a digital wave of activism that transcends geographical boundaries. Generation Z's use of social media's potential for rapid information dissemination and networked mobilization successfully brought attention to various social justice causes, from oppressive taxes to mismanagement of public resources.

Gen Z Activist- 01 when interviewed asserted:

> *Social media has been a game-changer for our movement; it's allowed us to reach a wider audience and mobilize people in real-time.*

Additionally, another Gen Z Activist- 04 stated:

> *I use social media to amplify my voice and bring attention to issues that matter to me, like poor governance in my country.*

A respondent COS-02 from Civil Society Organization opined:

> *Social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram have given us the power to bypass traditional media and tell our own stories, our own way.*

A respondent COS-03 from Civil Society Organization opined:

> *Online activism is not a replacement for offline action, but it's a crucial tool for organizing, mobilizing, and building a community around a shared cause*

This finding corresponds to a survey conducted by Cowling (2024) in January 2023, which revealed that around 80-90% of respondents used WhatsApp and Facebook. Over 70% reported using Instagram, while nearly 68% adopted TikTok. Moreover, Facebook has an estimated 7 million users in Kenya, while Twitter has 1.7 million users, Instagram has 3 million users, and LinkedIn has 2.3 million users. Within the observed timeframe of 2014-2023, Kenya's social media user base grew to 10.5 million, ranking third in the region. This marks a threefold increase in social media users compared to 2014[9, 10].

Further, the study findings indicated that civil society organizations effectively utilize online petitions as a vital tool to mobilize public support and amplify their voices on pressing national issues. Creating and sharing petitions on government online platforms, these organizations demonstrate the collective views and concerns of citizens, holding policymakers accountable for their actions. Online petitions have enabled civil societies to successfully bring attention to various national issues, such as human rights violations, environmental degradation, and social injustices, garnering widespread support and sparking meaningful conversations. Leveraging the power of digital activism, civil societies have made online petitions a crucial channel for citizens to participate in democratic processes, influencing policy decisions and driving tangible change. In the interview respondents supported this observation. For instance:

COS-3 pointed out:

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[9].https://www.statista.com/statistics/1401426/social-media-users-by-platform-in-kenya/.

[10] https://www.bing.com/search?q=Commonly%20used%20social%20media%20platforms%20in%20Kenya&safeSearch=strict&form=METAWW.

In Kenya we have successfully demonstrated the extent of public support for our causes as a Civil Society Organization (CSO) by inspiring thousands of young people to take up problems like unemployment social justice and governance.

Another COS-01 confirmed:

We've found that online petitions are a powerful way to amplify the voices of marginalized demographics and communities. Sharing their stories and experiences has been able to bring attention to issues that might otherwise be ignored and mobilize people to take action.

Further COS-4 added:

Online petitions have become an essential tool for us to hold policymakers accountable. Mobilizing public support and generating thousands of signatures, we've been able to influence policy decisions and drive real change on issues like education and healthcare across Africa.

This finding is congruent with Surman and Reilly (2003), who observed that civil society organizations have the opportunity to leverage the internet and network technologies to promote global peace and social justice. While access to these technologies is no longer a significant barrier, civil society organizations must learn to utilize them strategically and politically to maximize their impact. Currently, most organizations only employ basic technologies like email and websites, failing to harness the full potential of these tools to achieve their goals.

The study found that Gen Z has harnessed the power of hashtags to champion various social and political causes, leveraging their digital fluency to mobilize collective action and create trending conversations. Notably, the #KenyaNiYetu (#KenyaIsOurs) campaign, which advocated for political accountability and good governance, gained widespread traction, as did #MyDressMyChoice, which challenged gender-based violence and victim shaming. Additionally, #FeesMustFall and #EndPoliceBrutalityKE demonstrated Gen Z's ability to mobilize online activism, inspiring offline protests and prompting policymakers to address issues like education reform and police accountability. Kenyan Gen Z activists have effectively utilized social media to amplify their voices, mobilize support, and drive social change, leveraging hashtags to propel their online activism and spark meaningful conversations. Those interviews had similar observations.

Gen Z Activist-01 contended:

Hashtags have been a useful tool for our movement. We've been able to mobilize thousands of young people to take action on issues like poor governance and dictatorship and it's allowed us to reach a wider audience and build solidarity across different groups. For instance the hashtag #Rejectfinancebill and #rejectnotamend were able to mobilize thousands of youths to protest against Kenya's 2024/2025 finance bill which was imposing punitive taxes.

CSO- 01 supported:

Hashtags have been a key part of our strategy to raise awareness about mental health in Kenya. We've used #MentalHealthMattersKE to create a community of support and resources for young people struggling with mental health issues.

CSO- 04 remarked:

I think hashtags have been really effective in helping us to amplify the voices of young people in Kenya. We used #YouthForVotingReform to push for changes to the electoral law and it really helped to mobilize young people to take action.

The use of hashtag has been used worldwide extensively for instance in America Gen Z has capitalized the use of hashtags as a powerful tool for advocacy, leveraging their digital savvy to mobilize collective action and create trending conversations around social and political issues. Olson (2021) Gen Z activists have successfully brought attention to various causes, from racial justice (#BlackLivesMatter, #Ferguson)[11] to gender equality (#MeToo, #TimesUp)[12] and climate action (#FridaysForFuture, #ClimateStrike)[13] . These hashtag

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[11] https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/honorsprojects/838/

[12] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8920314/

campaigns have not only raised awareness but also mobilized massive online engagement, with millions of users sharing their own stories, experiences, and demands for change.

The result indicated that Gen Z has harnessed the power of protests and rallies as a potent tool for activism and advocacy, mobilizing thousands to take to the streets and demand policy change. From the #NationalDemonstration against police brutality and corruption, to the #ClimateStrike marches demanding environmental action, Gen Z activists have leveraged physical protests to amplify their voices and pressure policymakers. Strategically organized rallies and demonstrations have enabled Gen Z to effectively bring attention to pressing issues like education reform, gender-based violence, and economic inequality, forcing policymakers to acknowledge and address their concerns. Recently, their peaceful protests against the controversial Finance Bill, which threatened to further burden the economy, successfully led to its withdrawal by the government - a testament to the power of their collective action. Through creative tactics like flash mobs, sit-ins, die-ins, and innovative use of posters, Gen Z has redefined the art of protest in Kenya, inspiring a new wave of activism that is inclusive, intersectional, and uncompromising in its pursuit of justice and equality. Their weekly protests have become a hallmark of their dedication to creating a better future for all Kenyans. This finding is congruent with the remarks by policy maker-02 who opined that:

The recent protests and rallies by Gen Z activists have greatly in shaped our policy agenda. Their passion, determination, and strategic organizing forced us to take a hard look at our priorities and make some tough decisions. I can confidently say that their efforts have directly influenced our decision to withdraw the controversial Finance Bill .We're now more committed than ever to listening to the voices of young people and working together to build a more just and equitable society for all Kenyans

The findings further showed that in Kenya, the youth have effectively leveraged lobbying and policy advocacy to push for transformative policy changes, holding policymakers accountable for governance, unemployment, corruption, misuse of public resources, and over taxation. Through targeted campaigns, they have engaged lawmakers, cabinet secretaries, and government agencies, presenting evidence-based arguments and proposals for reform. The youth have demonstrated the potency of lobbying and policy advocacy in shaping policy decisions that impact their lives and the future of Kenya. This observation was in line with policy maker-01,03 who confirmed that:

The young people have been relentless in their pursuit of policy change. They have consistently engaged with us, presenting well-researched proposals and data-driven arguments. Their lobbying efforts have been impressive, and they've successfully built bridges with key decision-makers. I've seen them work tirelessly to push for legislation that addresses the needs of their generation. Their advocacy has been instrumental in shaping our policy priorities, and we're now more committed than ever to working together to create a brighter future for Kenya

The Academic Experts (01, 02, and 03) shared the same point of view. They noted:

The youth in Kenya have demonstrated remarkable prowess in leveraging lobbying and policy advocacy to drive systemic change. They have successfully pushed for reforms in governance, unemployment, corruption, and public resource management. Their adept use of data-driven advocacy, grassroots mobilization, and coalition-building has yielded significant policy wins, such as the passage of the Procurement and Asset Disposal Act that require 30% goes to the youths, and the ongoing efforts to reform the country's tax regime. Through their tireless efforts, Kenyan youth have proven that lobbying and policy advocacy can be a powerful tool for activism and advocacy, shaping policy decisions that impact their lives and the future of the country

Moreover, the result showed that Gen Z in Kenya has revolutionized activism and advocacy by harnessing the power of creative expression. Through innovative art forms, they have boldly addressed pressing issues, sparking nationwide debates and driving positive change. The "Kilimani Mums" used street art to highlight sexual violence survivors' plight, while the "Nairobi Luminaries" employed spoken word poetry to address

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[13] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5565729/

police brutality and economic inequality. The "Kenya Creative Collective" promoted environmental sustainability through music and dance, and "Picha Mtaani" humanized marginalized communities' stories through photography. Bonzye Mokeira's graffiti mural prompted government acknowledgement of child poverty, while Msale Makaula's sculpture increased support for child protection services. Xavier Yxoe's spoken word poetry elicited a response from the Inspector General on police brutality, and Zikki Kenzo's music inspired a national conversation about corruption. Similarly, prominent artists like Khaligraph Jones, Sauti Sol, Mayonde, Nyashinski, King Kaka, and Brenda Fassie have used their platforms to condemn social evils, collectively inspiring a new wave of social and political change in Kenya.

7.2 Perceptions of Generation Z Regarding Their Involvement in Democratic Processes

Many Kenyan Gen Zs feel disillusioned with traditional politics and institutions, leading to a sense of disconnection from democratic processes in the country. They are skeptical of the ability of the government to address pressing issues such as corruption, unemployment, and economic inequality. This disillusionment is fueled by the perceived corruption, tribalism, and ineffectiveness of political systems in Kenya. This finding is evident from the statements picked from WhatsApp groups. The statements were extracted from ongoing conversations on WhatsApp groups, providing a real-time glimpse into the thoughts and opinions of Kenyan Gen Zs. The quotes were captured as the discussions unfolded, offering a genuine and unfiltered perspective on their views regarding politics and leadership in Kenya.

Mary, 22	*'I don't believe in politics anymore. It's all just a game of power and money.'*
Kevin, 20	*'The government only cares about themselves, not the people. They're too busy stealing from us to address real issues.'*
Sarah, 21	*'I'm tired of the same old promises every election season. Nothing ever changes.'*
Brian, 23	*'Politics in Kenya is just a tribal game. They only care about their own tribe, not the country as a whole.'*
Emily, 22	*'I don't see the point of voting. The outcome is always the same: more corruption and inequality.'*
David, 24	*'The system is broken. We need a complete overhaul, not just a fresh coat of paint.'*
Christine, 21	*'I'm not interested in politics because it's not relevant to my life. They don't understand what we're going through.'*
James, 23	*'If I had the chance, I'd leave this country. There's no future for us here.'*

Despite this disillusionment, Kenyan Gen Z is eager to engage with democratic processes on their own terms. They are leveraging social media, online platforms, and grassroots movements to mobilize and advocate for causes they care about, such as environmental conservation and social justice. They are also seeking out alternative forms of political engagement, such as participatory budgeting and citizen juries, to have a greater say in democratic decision-making in Kenya. This is evident through the statements extracted from WhatsApp group that was made up of Gen Z. These statements show how Kenyan Gen Zs are actively engaging with democratic processes on their own terms, using alternative forms of political engagement to make their voices heard and create positive change in their communities.

"I'm not into traditional politics, but I'm passionate about saving our environment. I use social media to raise awareness and mobilize my friends to take action." - Naomi, 22

"I'm part of an online movement pushing for social justice. We use hashtags and petitions to make our voices heard." - Victor, 21

"I don't trust politicians, but I believe in the power of the people. That's why I'm involved in grassroots activism." - Zuri, 23

"Participatory budgeting is a game-changer. It allows us to have a real say in how our taxes are spent." - Kiprono, 24

"Citizen Juries are amazing. We get to deliberate on important issues and make recommendations to policymakers." - Njeri, 22

"I'm not interested in party politics, but I care about my community. I volunteer with a local organization working on education and healthcare." - Collins, 20

Gen Z's perceptions of their involvement in democratic processes in Kenya are also shaped by their values of diversity, equity, and inclusivity. They believe that democracy in Kenya should be accessible and representative of all people, regardless of tribe, gender, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. They are pushing for greater representation and voice in democratic processes, and are using their collective power to hold leaders accountable for addressing systemic injustices in the country. These statements collected from social media reflect Gen Z's values of diversity, equity, and inclusivity, and their desire to see a more representative and participatory democracy in Kenya.

"Democracy in Kenya should be for all of us, not just a select few. We need to make sure everyone's voice is heard, regardless of tribe or gender." - Akinyi, 22

"I'm tired of leaders who only care about their own communities. We need representation that reflects our diversity." - Kimani, 21

"It's not just about voting, it's about having a say in the decisions that affect our lives. We need participatory democracy." - Njambi, 24

"I'm sick of the same old politics of division. We need leaders who will unite us and address the real issues facing our country." - Otieno, 20

"We need to hold our leaders accountable for the systemic injustices in our country. No more business as usual." - Wanjiru, 22

7.3 Influence of Mobilization Efforts of Generation Z on Policy Decisions

Generation Z's mobilization efforts have significantly influenced policy decisions in Kenya, particularly in areas such as environmental conservation, social justice, and education. Through social media campaigns, protests, and grassroots organizing, Gen Z has brought attention to critical issues and pushed policymakers to take action.

"The activism of Gen Z on environmental issues has been a game-changer. Their passion and dedication have forced us to rethink our priorities and take action to protect Kenya's natural resources." – Policy Maker 01

"We couldn't ignore the outcry from Gen Z on social justice issues. Their mobilization efforts led us to pass legislation addressing police brutality and gender-based violence. They're holding us accountable." – Policy Maker 02

"Gen Z's push for education reform has been relentless. Their advocacy for improved access to quality education and reduced costs has led us to implement significant reforms in the sector. They're shaping the future of our country." – Policy Maker 03

One notable example is the movement to save the Nairobi National Park, which faced threats from encroaching development projects. Gen Z led the charge, using hashtags and online petitions to raise awareness and mobilize support. Their efforts led to a national conversation about conservation and the importance of protecting Kenya's natural resources. Ultimately, the government was forced to reconsider its plans, and the park was saved.

Gen Z's mobilization efforts have also influenced policy decisions on social justice issues, such as police brutality and gender-based violence. Their activism has led to increased scrutiny of law enforcement practices and the passage of legislation aimed at addressing these issues. Furthermore, Gen Z's push for greater representation and inclusivity in politics has led to a more diverse range of candidates running for office and a shift towards more participatory and inclusive decision-making processes. This observation was supported by academic experts and policy makers.

Academic Expert 2 contended:

Gen Z's mobilization efforts have been instrumental in bringing attention to social justice issues in Kenya. Their activism has led to a significant shift in the national conversation and has pushed policymakers to take action.

Policy Maker-01 stated:

The activism of Gen Z on police brutality and gender-based violence has been a wake-up call for us. We've had to confront the harsh realities of our law enforcement practices and work to implement reforms.

Policy Maker-02 opined:

Gen Z's push for greater representation and inclusivity in politics has led to a more diverse range of candidates running for office. This shift is critical for ensuring that our political leadership reflects the needs and perspectives of all Kenyans.

Policy Maker-03 confirmed:

The participatory and inclusive decision-making processes advocated for by Gen Z are essential for building a more just and equitable society. We're working to ensure that all Kenyans have a voice in shaping our country's future.

8. Summary of Key Findings

Generation Z in Kenya has effectively utilized various mobilization strategies and tactics to drive social change. They have leveraged social media platforms, online petitions, hashtags, protests, and rallies to mobilize online communities and bring attention to social justice causes. Civil society organizations have also utilized online petitions and social media to amplify their voices and hold policymakers accountable. Hashtags have been a powerful tool for Gen Z activists to champion various social and political causes, while protests and rallies have been used to demand policy change and pressure policymakers. Lobbying and policy advocacy have also been effective in pushing for transformative policy changes, and creative expression has been used to address pressing issues and drive positive change.

Generation Z in Kenya is disillusioned with traditional politics and institutions, feeling disconnected from democratic processes due to perceived corruption, tribalism, and ineffectiveness. Despite this, they are eager to engage with democracy on their own terms, leveraging social media, online platforms, and grassroots movements to mobilize and advocate for causes like environmental conservation and social justice. They value diversity, equity, and inclusivity, pushing for greater representation and voice in democratic processes. Their mobilization efforts have significantly influenced policy decisions in areas like environmental conservation, social justice, and education, forcing policymakers to take action and leading to significant reforms. Gen Z's activism has brought attention to critical issues, shaped the national conversation, and pushed for a more participatory and inclusive democracy in Kenya.

9. Conclusion

The evidence presented in this paper demonstrates the pivotal role youth-led advocacy has played in shaping Kenya's political, social, and economic landscape. From independence to the present day, young people have driven change, challenged the status quo, and pushed for a more just and equitable society. Their tireless efforts have yielded significant gains, and their continued activism ensures Kenya remains on a trajectory towards a brighter future. As a testament to their unwavering dedication, Kenyan youth have cemented their position as a force to be reckoned with in the country's development narrative, inspiring a new generation of leaders and leaving a lasting legacy. Ultimately, their activism serves as a beacon of hope for a more prosperous and inclusive Kenya.

Generation Z's multifaceted influence is transforming the world, and their impact on politics is particularly significant. With their unique blend of technological expertise, social consciousness, and innovative entrepreneurship, they are reshaping the political landscape globally. In Kenya, Gen Z's emergence is giving rise to a more dynamic, diverse, and citizen-driven democratic system, characterized by greater inclusivity and participation. Through their creative expression, technological literacy, and commitment to social justice, Gen Z is driving innovation, transforming traditional norms, and leading the charge towards a more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive future. As they continue to navigate complex sociopolitical terrain, their political engagement and activism will likely shape the future of democracy and social justice movements worldwide.

From the available evidence, it is clear and without a doubt that the future of democratic governance in Africa is significantly impacted by the Gen Z mobilization efforts in Kenya. Their advocacy draws attention to how democratic institutions must change to become more welcoming, flexible, and sensitive to the needs of young people. The significance of youth participation in democratic processes will only increase due to the continent's growing youth population, necessitating the evolution of democratic institutions to better meet their wants and ideals.

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