Gen Z in Shaping Today's Society, Democracy and Politics in East Africa: A Case Study of Kenya

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Abstract

Generation Z has emerged as a potent disruptor redefining global politics; challenging the traditional political structures and elite dominance through digital activism and leaderless movement, igniting fierce controversies and intergenerational dissonance. This paper sought to investigate the contribution of Gen Z in shaping today's society, democracy and politics in East Africa. More specifically, it examined the contribution of Gen Z culture in shaping the norms and values of Kenyans. Further, it assessed how Gen Z leverages social media activism to foster social justice and political accountability in Kenya. The inquiry utilized a concurrent triangulation research design and sampled a total of 384 respondents drawn from universities in Kenya. A semi-structured questionnaire was utilized to gather data from the Gen Z to understand their role in shaping today's society, democracy and politics; while a focused group discussion was used targeting Gen Z's student leaders and international students in these universities. The research paper used a triangulation technique to analyse both quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the field. The results revealed that social media is the widely used form of communication among the Gen Z and is a focal point for expressing their personal opinions on social, economic and political issues. The findings further noted that Gen Z are more involved in social media activism advocating for social justice issues such as unemployment, cost of living, social justice, criminal justice, transparency and political accountability. The Gen Z culture has significantly influenced our society's ideals on social justice, democracy and political governance.

Keywords: *Gen Z, Digital Activists, Leaderless Movements, Political accountability, Transparency & Social Change*

1.0 Introduction

Every generation has left a mark with its unparalleled attributes and contribution to the society; some generations have been renowned for their exceptional work ethics, loyalty and their attitude towards financial stability and one-on-one communication: while others like generational X are distinguished for their overall self-sufficiency, scepticism towards authority, recognition of work-life balance and cognizance of technology (Rudolph et al., 2020; Krishna & Agrawal, 2025). Correspondingly, the millennials are characterized by their technology proficiency, diversity, innovativeness, inclusivity, optimism, teamwork, work-life integration, openness to feedback and high social media engagement (Dwidienawati et al., 2025).

This has also been evident in generation Z, which has been prominent in virtually all societies due to their disruptiveness and wilfulness in challenging the status quo; unlike the preceding generations that were apprehensive of societal ramifications. Generation Z, popularly known as Gen Z, is a digital generation who grew up with relatively high access to smartphones and high-bandwidth internet, making them the most internet-dependent generation in history (Wandhe, 2024; Cerasi & Balcioglu, 2024). The Gen Z are exceedingly tech-savvy, instantaneous, innovative, conscious and adaptive; attributes that have made them to be disruptive, nonconformist, bold, critical, progressive, dynamic and revolutionary (Zahra, Handoyo, & Fajrianthi, 2025).

The Gen Z, unlike other digital immigrant generations they have incessantly leveraged information technology to connect with family and friends, share social experiences, network, play games, and express their views on a broad range of societal issues. Furthermore, they use it in the acquisition of information, interaction with online communities, seeking counsel or advice, business promotion, archiving significant personal and global events, alleviation of social isolation, as well as keeping up-to-date with global trends on fashion, life, politics and culture. These attributes have immensely shaped their worldviews, knowledge base, and behaviours, making them have a divergent perspective on life distinct from other earlier generations. Their relatively high technological fluency, global consciousness and ambitious inclination have broadened their perspectives on life, distinguishing them from preceding generations that had a narrower access to information and networking opportunities (Rani & Suneja, 2025; Chan & Lee, 2023). Their revolutionary nature and desire to contribute to social change have resulted in a paradigm shift in societal norms, sanctions and values (D'Acunto, Filieri, & Okumus, 2025). This has ignited intense discussion among governments, non-governmental organisations, corporations, scholars, the international community and the public on the influence of Gen Z's disruptions of social order in most communities across the globe.

Generation Z

Generation Z is a uniquely exceptional generation that is markedly redefining today's societal norms and values; being the true cyber natives, they have increasingly used cyberspaces such as social media to traverse the world far and wide than any other generation. They have constantly leveraged information technology to connect with each other, creating a society that is interconnected in real-time, allowing them to gather, disseminate and act on information instantaneously (Chang & Chang, 2023).

By definition, Generation Z (Gen Z) are those individuals conceived between 1997 and 2012, where its youngest members are teenagers and the eldest in their late twenties (Ma'rquez, Teba, Gonzalez, & Rydman, 2022). According to the United Nations Population Fund (2025), Gen Z constitutes about a quarter of the world population (1.9 billion), ahead of the millennials, who are approximately 1.8 billion individuals. In Africa, Gen Z are about a third of the population at 429 million (31%), exceeding the millennials at 282 million (21%).

Conspicuously, the Gen Z and millennial account for more than half of the population in Africa, a situation likely to result in a paradigm shift in cultural norms and values system, as these two generations have been highly exposed to information technology than any other generation in history. In Kenya, the trend is the same as the population of Gen Z is more than a third of the population at 18 million (33.4%), ahead of the millennials at 12 million (22.1%). Just as it is the case in Africa, the Gen Z and millennials are more than half of the Kenyan population, and embody a massive youthful audience likely to bring unparalleled and manifold transformation in today's society (Katz et al., 2024).

The boldness of Gen Z in challenging the status quo has sparked a broad range of sentiments and reactions across all societies, with all striving to understand this generation that is erratic and instantaneous. The Gen Zs are indeed a wildcard that do not play by the rules of their predecessors, as their perspectives have been extremely influenced by worldwide events and occurrences due to their outstanding online presence. Their exposure to diverse social engagement platforms has made them enlightened and inquisitive about not only social and economic, but also political issues. Their distinct approach towards work and life has perturbed many, as evident in the corporate world, where most recruiting executives acknowledged that Gen Z are the most challenging generation to employ and retain. Mostly due to their diminished work ethics, commitment, elevated levels of entitlement and trust issues with traditional systems (Paggi & Clowes, 2021). This is a worrying trend because these Gen Zs constitute a significant number of the global workforce, and there is an urgent need to understand their uniqueness and perspectives to inform government and corporate policies for bolstered engagement and productivity.

Globally, there has been a surge in Gen Z-led civil movements and unrest, with the most notable one being in the United States following the murder of George Floyd by a policeman in Minneapolis in 2020, triggering Black Lives Matter movement against racial discrimination and police brutality. This was through March for Our Lives and Black Lives Matter online and offline campaigns that led to the passing of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act in 2022 to create safer communities through gun safety legislation and mental health initiatives (Rice & Moffet, 2021).

Equally, a similar trend has been witnessed in South Asia where there has been a spike in Gen Z led unrests with the most conspicuous one being that witnessed in Bangladesh where what commenced as a peaceful protest by students against the government civil quotas escalated to a to national-wide protests that forced the Prime Minister to flee the country and mounted pressure on the resignation of the president. The underlying issues that triggered this unrest were endemic corruption, weak institutional frameworks, and diminished citizen involvement in matters of national importance, as well as a lack of transparency in public financial management. This was achieved through social media mobilization, live streaming of protests, and the use of encrypted digital applications (Taneerat & Dongnadeng, 2024; Lamichhane & Dhakal, 2024; Zheng, 2024). Another profound Gen Z-led unrest is the one that occurred in Nepal, which led to the toppling of a rogue government accused of corruption and police brutality. The Nepalese Gen Z leveraged their digital proficiency to create digital political satires and memes to ridicule the political class, accused of being corrupt, of economic mismanagement and impunity. This was also evident in Thailand, where Gen Z's movements utilised encrypted Telegram channels, satirical memes and online political commentary to organise and mobilize fellow Gen Zs to stand against anarchy. More specifically, they demanded the resignation of the Prime Minister, drafting of a new constitution, and demanding increased government accountability and reform of Thailand's monarchy (Aryal, 2025; Kumar, 2025).

1.1 Statement of Problem

Across all societies, there have been intense debates on Generation Z, whose distinct frame of mind has challenged the status quo held by previous generations, resulting in intergenerational tension. The earlier generations, such as Baby Boomers and Generation X, have been experiencing difficulties coping with Generation Z at all levels of society, a situation largely attributed to societal changes and technological gaps that have severely impacted their respective mindsets. Up until recently, governments and corporations have not been serious about Generation Z, as they assumed that this generation is not yet of age for any meaningful societal impact; a phenomenon that has left them ill-equipped to handle the challenges posed by them. Nonetheless, with each passing day, Generation Z members are trickling into the workplace and global politics with their peculiar and tech-savvy attributes that set them apart from earlier generations, who find them awkward, nihilistic and unpredictable (McCargo, 2021; Mbai, 2025; Assahra, Ambalika, & Adipratama, 2025).

The heightened usage of social media and other information technology solutions has created a new generation of tech-savvy individuals who are more knowledgeable, bold, sensitive, innovative and inquisitive (Nag, Baid & Kundu, 2024). Due to these peculiarities, questions have always been: Who are the Gen Z? What are their roles in today's society? How do we engage them on matters of national importance? How do we deal with them? How do we manage and motivate them? How do we support and sustain their interest in meaningful political and socio-economic activities? How do we tap into the Gen Z preferred mode of communication and feedback to foster harmony? This implies that there is a growing need to understand the persona of the Gen Z and their role in today's society, democracy and leadership.

According to Shazad et al. (2025), Generation Z are faced by a set of challenges such as misinformation and disinformation that at times distort their understanding of political, social and economic issues. This has, in turn, led to the spreading of harmful rhetoric on social media that is increasingly becoming a challenge to Gen Z in their quest for purpose in life. Being digital activists of various social causes, such as social justice and environmental conservation, they are faced with the problem of sustainability of their social media activism (Seyfi, Hall, Thanh, & Zaman, 2023; Vince, 2024). That has also been plagued with privacy and data security concerns that have made them vulnerable to not only cyber-attacks but also victims of targeted kidnappings by authorities (Mahapatara, Bhullar, & Gupta, 2022).

Moreover, there has been a glaring disconnect between Gen Z and other earlier generations that needs to be well investigated in an effort to create intergenerational harmony and prosperity. As such, there is an urgent need to assess Gen Z's role in shaping today's society, democracy and politics in East Africa; bringing on board fresh perspectives that will inform not only government laws but also corporate governance policies and practices. This research is fundamental in understanding the Gen Z perspectives, barriers hindering their continuous engagement, the impact of social media culture, as well as strengthening intergenerational dialogue, key in the creation of inclusive political, economic and social systems.

1.2 Objectives

    i.   To investigate the contribution of Gen Z culture in shaping the norms and values of Kenyans.

    ii.   To assess how Gen Z leverages social media activism to foster social justice, civic engagement and political accountability in Kenya.

2.0 Literature Review

Generation Z is a socially distinct generation, technologically adept, dauntless and erudite. This generation has ignited fiery debates across all societies due to their offbeat and revolutionary nature that has challenged the status quo, sending jittery impulses to older generations that are still figuring out ways to cope with them (Ganguli, Padhy, & Saxena, 2022). This is a clear indication that there is an existing intergenerational tension, perhaps due to misconceptions that this study sought to alleviate. At the focal point of all these is the culture, which has experienced a paradigm shift from the modest olden traditions to ultra-modern lifestyles.

Gen Z Culture

Eminently, the Generation Z's culture is socially distinct as compared to that of earlier generations; as it is exceedingly influenced by the digital era characterized by extensive use of information technology that transformed the way people communicate. The rapid digitization and advancement of social media and artificial intelligence technologies have bolstered the way people communicate with friends, family, customers, government and other entities, a situation that has resulted in a paradigm shift from traditional face-to-face communication to virtual and real-time communication that is fast, convenient and economical. The unimpeded access to high bandwidth internet, characterized by high-speed data transfer, download and upload, has reduced buffering during streaming of videos, as well as made it possible to execute a series of data intensive tasks simultaneously; a situation that has improved digital experience (Kamble, Desai, & Mehendale, 2021; Robin, Alvin, & Hasugian, 2022).

Generation Z is the one that has benefited the most as they were born with technology deeply embedded in their daily lives at school, home, work and in society. Their technological proficiencies have had a profound impact on society, spurring innovation and interconnectedness that have subsequently made them spontaneous and always updated on global trends in politics, social life, economy and health than most of the older generation. This new generation, according to Tandon, Singh, & Tripathi (2022), is always on their smartphones, utilizing social media as their main tool of communication, self-expression, and connecting with the rest of the world. This has enabled them to interact with their peers across the globe, revolutionizing traditional practices across different sectors, from education, marketing, health, and the workplace. The Generation Z, being technologically dependent they have constantly used digital tools and applications for online learning, online marketing, digital content generation, online dating, and other online interactions.

In a number of studies like that of Andersen et al. (2021), Generation Z has exhibited a high preference for mobile and digital ecosystems that offer them on-the-go experiences that align with the demands of today's high-octane spontaneous lifestyles. They have pushed the world towards a digital-centric consciousness that the world should adopt to keep up with the ever-changing world. Though the Millennial and Generation Z have some similar characteristics, such as their preference for digital engagements, the intensity and frequency of usage are different. The Generation Z, having been introduced to smartphones since childhood they exhibit a high preference for digital technology to trade, gaming and interacting with their peer as opposed to earlier generations that relied mostly on face-to-face communication until that was challenged with the emergence of COVID-19 in 2020, where most encountered difficulties adjusting to the new norm.

Social Justice Advocacy

All across the globe, Generation Z has been deeply engaged in an array of activities from social activism, gender equality, tax injustices and racial justice to climate change issues. They have leveraged their digital proficiencies to lobby, mobilize their peers and raise awareness on both

political, socio-economic and environmental aspects. The Gen Z affinity to social activism is distinct compared to earlier generations, which were a bit reluctant. This is attributed to a number of reasons, such as their upper hand on digital proficiencies that have evidently increased their overall exposure to international issues such as climate change, global pandemics, global racial dynamics, and injustices. The real-time access to information on these global issues, according to Powell et al. (2021), has evoked discussions and the desire to resolve them in an effort to create a just world. The Generation Z, having grown in the information age, is highly characterized by countless worldwide challenges such as global pandemics, economic anxieties, mental health struggles, information overload, misinformation, climate uncertainties, and social and political divisions.

These global dynamics have significantly influenced their worldviews, making them distinct from any other earlier generations that had limited global awareness and interconnectedness. The digital proficiency of Generation Z has enabled them to utilize a vast assortment of social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, Imo, Snapchat, Telegram, WhatsApp, TikTok and X; to organize protests as well as enhance cooperation over social issues facing society. Through virtual anonymity, they have been in a position to organize protests without the traditional political class involved, just leaderless decentralized social activism. The social media-powered activism has astounded many due to its effectiveness in mobilizing protesters at minimal cost and their ability to change in response to shifting political and socioeconomic factors (Zare & Asgari, 2024).

This was quite evident in Kenya in 2024 when the Generation Z mobilized protests on social media to reject the oppressive finance bill that would have resulted in a social injustice should it have been passed into law. The Generation Z decentralized digital social movements bewildered many, as no one had ever thought that a faceless movement could have mobilised such multitudes of protesters that made the government suspend the implementation of the controversial finance bill. They dared the traditional power structures, causing panic among the traditional leaders from earlier generations (Ingutia, 2025).

In several studies, such as that of Ingutia (2025), it has been established that most Generation Z have an unmatched appetite for social inclusivity, justice and equality; a situation that has pushed them to activism quests. They have constantly demonstrated that they have elevated levels of enthusiasm for societal matters that impact their overall social being. Their digital peculiarity has enabled them to bypass traditional societal codes, questioning social things that previously had not been challenged by other generations, resulting in a paradigm shift in culture. Generation Z has strategically used digital spaces to advocate for social changes, as well as advocating for accountability among the aristocrats.

According to Shazad et al. (2025), Generation Z are distinct from the earlier generations, due to their exceptional global awareness, experience, and digital proficiencies that have made them a generation that is more digitally engaged, bold and activist-centric. It is a generation that is so keen on global issues and is at the forefront of lobbying for a just world. The rapid advancement in technology has given them a louder voice to fight prevailing social injustices in the world that are likely to hinder their socio-economic prosperity, especially on issues of unemployment and income disparities. Through it, they have been able to foster cooperation with their peers across the globe, bolstering the impact of their social causes that subsequently bring meaningful social changes.

The Generation Z, unlike their predecessors, use social disobedience as a tool to express their strong moral perspectives about things affecting their social, economic, environmental, political and psychological well-being. Their peculiarity lies in the boldness to question the status quo and stand for what is just (Venus et al., 2025).

Political Advocacy

The Generation Z, unlike the earlier generations, are demonstrating heightened enthusiasm in politics and is challenging traditional political establishments that were characterized by political loyalty. To the bewilderment of many, this digital native generation has constantly challenged the status quo. Their desire for social impact, authenticity, flexibility and inclusivity has made them distinct as compared to those from past generations. A situation that has shaped their worldview in elaborate and diverse ways, contradicting deep-seated societal expectations and norms (Robin, Alvin, & Hasugian, 2022).

Generation Z exhibits a high degree of scepticism with traditional institutions and has a heightened desire to build their own social systems anchored on intersectionality and flexibility. According to a study by Solihat (2024), this generation is self-expressive and leverages social media to express their peculiarity and engage with the online community on various aspects of life. They are more versatile and abhor societal labels and restrictions on various aspects of life, especially on matters related to personal liberties. In Babii, Poleac, and Obada's (2025) study, Generation Z prefer having individualized life experiences and indulge in those activities that mirror their distinctiveness and values.

Their digital proficiencies, instantaneous access to global information and social media usage have exposed them to a greater depth of political awareness than most generations in the past. According to Khan Dewi et al. (2025), their decisions and perceptions are influenced by a wide array of factors such as social media's peer influence, internet activism, global news, political role models, online communities, popular global political protests and trends. All these have transformed the way we think or react to political activities and issues in their respective countries, resulting in an unabated Generation Z movement that has sparked debates and controversies across all levels of society.

The Generation Z level of digital fluency, coupled with high literacy levels, has made them particularly drawn to political matters that influence their country and the globe. They have persistently utilised social media platforms such as X, Instagram, TikTok and Facebook to disseminate information on urgent political and socioeconomic issues affecting society. The vast social media infrastructure has enabled them to reach a wide global audience, receiving widespread recognition and support, bringing meaningful political and socio-economic change (Gurel & Eyuboglu, 2023).

Although there have been several studies conducted on the role of Generation Z in shaping politics and governance, there still exist significant empirical gaps that would be filled by the present study. The studies only narrowly mention the distinctiveness of Generation Z without delving into how that distinctiveness shapes today's society, democracy and politics (Columbia University Press, 2024). Their frame of reference was based on the global outlook of Generation Z and rarely narrowed it down into a specific context in low to medium-income countries, which are recently characterized by Generation Z revolutions. A situation that has left many wondering about the role of this digital-centric generation in shaping politics and governance. There was an urgent need to evaluate the contribution of Generation Z in our society to foster effective intergenerational communication and collaboration, which is key in building harmony. The study explored how technology and communication preferences among Generation Z influence today's politics. The study acknowledged the significance of reviewing intergenerational gaps in politics to bolster mutual respect, understanding, collaboration and intergenerational transition.

3.0 Research Methodology

This paper on the influence of Generation Z in shaping today's society and politics in East Africa embraced the methodology discussed herein:

Research Design

To sufficiently answer the research questions, this inquiry utilized a concurrent triangulation research design that allowed the researcher to assemble both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously. This design allowed for corroboration and cross-validation of research findings, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon under investigation. Additionally, this design enabled the researcher to overcome the weaknesses associated with the use of a single technique.

Target Population

The paper targeted 559,620 university students drawn from 79 universities in Kenya. This number included both private and public university students (Commission for University Education, 2024). This population was considered as it represented the demographic with the largest number of Generation Z, who are the focal point of this research. This population was selected because most of the Generation Z are aged between 13 and 28 years, with a significant number of them in the universities and have been in one way or another involved in social media activism; therefore, suitable for this study, which sought to investigate how the Generation Z are shaping today's society and politics.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The final sample comprised 384 research participants obtained using the Cochran formula of sample determination at a 5% margin of error. This formula is suitable in circumstances where the researcher deals with an infinite population, as was the case in this study. The researcher employed a stratified research design to divide the population into five categories based on the type of university where the research participants were drawn, as indicated in the ensuing table. To determine the individual sample in each category, the researcher divided the population in each category by the total population and multiplied it by the predetermined sample of 384. Whereupon a convenience sampling design was utilized.

Table 1: Sample

Category	Population	Sample
Public Universities	411,349	282
Private Universities	135,709	93
Universities Operating with letters of Interim Authority	5,608	4
Public University Constituent College	4,673	3
Private Constituent College	2,281	2
Total	**559,620**	**384**

Source: Researcher, 2025

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

This inquiry utilized semi-structured questionnaires that were administered to targeted research participants from the various universities in Kenya. The questionnaires sought to gather data on the specific objectives of this study from Generation Z to understand their role in shaping today's society, democracy and politics. The primary data collection exercise was done within a period of two months, from July to August 2025, with the help of trained research assistants in the various universities under probe.

Furthermore, the researcher used focused group discussions, each involving 12 participants drawn from student leadership unions and international students within the generation age threshold. The focus group discussion was ideal in capturing the varied perspectives of participants from different groups and geographical regions. The selected FGD participants offered collective cross-cultural perspectives on Gen Z's contribution to today's society, democracy and politics both within and beyond the university. A total of three FGDs were undertaken, where each took approximately one hour exploring the targeted discussions. On the other hand, the secondary data was obtained from published scholarly work and statistical reports from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics and other government agencies.

Data Analysis

The researcher used a triangulation technique to analyse data from multiple sources through multiple approaches that allowed the researcher to compare and contrast results, identifying patterns and discrepancies, developing a robust understanding of the influence of Generation Z on today's society, democracy and politics.

More specifically, the data gathered through questionnaires was checked for completeness, consistency and later coded and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 28.0. The data was presented on charts, frequency tables and graphs. The data from the focus group discussions were recorded, transcribed, anonymised and coded before being analysed thematically in line with the research objectives. Moreover, the data from secondary sources was analysed based on the specific objectives, highlighting theories and concepts central to this inquiry.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

This section outlines the findings derived after a detailed analysis of the collected data designed to answer the research questions central to this research. Out of 384 distributed questionnaires, 326 complete responses were obtained, resulting in a response rate of 85%. Equally, all three 3 focused group discussions were completed. Involving a total of 36 respondents as identified in the research design. This high response rate yielded data with high statistical power, allowing for a comprehensive triangulation.

The research participants expressed their diverse viewpoints; a section of them (31%) felt that Generation Z's culture has extremely influenced their lives, transforming their worldviews and value system. This was reinforced by a significant number of respondents (50%) who moderately felt that Gen Z's culture of tech-savviness, global consciousness and immediacy has influenced their overall social being. Only a few of them (12%) dismissed culture as inconsequential, with the rest of the Gen Z being indifferent. This implies that the digital culture has, without a doubt, impacted the upbringing of Gen Z, transforming the way they perceive reality. This has, in turn, added to their peculiarity that sets them apart from the earlier generations, especially their collaborative mindset, instantaneousness, activism orientation, mental health advocacy and their fluid identity.

The inquiry subsequently revealed that advancement in technology has played a very fundamental role in changing and altering the Gen Z connection to traditional cultural values, as noted by a significant number of respondents (58%) who felt that technology has resulted in a complete shift of culture. A moderately high number of Generation Z (35%) also acknowledged that technology has drastically altered traditional norms and values. This phenomenon has resulted in an intergenerational misunderstanding and friction witnessed across all societies. However, the remaining insignificant number of respondents dismissed technology as an unimportant factor that has influenced the Generation Z culture. The finding implies that over the years, technology has had an immense influence on the newer generations,

creating a distinct identity that sets them apart from the earlier generations. It has redefined digital communications and networks, creating a generation with a heightened global exposure and an instantaneous and socially distinct identity.

The Generation Z involvement in social justice causes is influenced by a number of factors, with the most significant one being the need to change the world (40%), as they have a desire to create a better future for themselves and that of future generations. Another reason for their increased social activism is attributed to their relatively high education exposure, 48% as compared to earlier generations; a situation that has made them more enlightened and informed on most social issues at a relatively lower age. The other subsequent reasons why Generation Z engages in social justice activities are: for personal or family experiences of injustices (10%); social media communities or online influence (12%), followed by role model and peer influence.

Table 2: Reasons for Engaging in Social Justice

Particulars	Percent (%)	Frequency
Need to change to the world	40	130
Personal or family experiences of injustices	6	20
Role Media	8	26
Social media communities or online influence	12	39
Educational exposure	30	98
Others	4	13
Total	100	326
Mean	63	
Standard Deviation	48	

The Generation Z are more interested in several social justice areas that include: gender equality (64%), as they view equality as a fundamental human right to all people regardless of their race, nationality, religion or social status. The Generation Z prioritizes personal freedom and liberties and endeavours to create a world where everybody is treated fairly without discrimination. Additionally, in order of significance, the other social justice areas include mental health and wellbeing (52%), economic inequality (42%), racial equality (30%), rights of people with disability (21%), and migrant rights (13%).

Building on the identified reasons for pursuing social justice, the next question investigated where they learnt about social justice issues, where it was established that most of them learnt about social justice from media outlets (61%), followed by activist groups or organizations (21%); surprisingly, only 12% learnt about social justice in school. This highly suggests that the Generation Z opinion is highly shaped by the media that constitute a large portion of the Gen Z lifestyle. It also means that they are vulnerable to misinformation or information overload, hence a skewed understanding of some social issues. This is followed by activist groups that are quite essential in raising awareness on social or political issues affecting the community.

Interestingly, the findings revealed that most of the Generation Zs are occasionally involved in offline social activism (39%), as most of them participate in digital activism. Equally, the results indicated that 35% of them have never participated in any offline activism, with only 26% of them having been involved in real-world activism. This is a complete shift from the traditional form of activism that was entirely face-to-face; the newer generation is now

leveraging their digital prowess and robustness of digital platforms to carry out activism on various social, economic, political and environmental causes. This digital activism has enabled them to create a new wave of digital revolution, like never been witnessed in history, bringing a wave of changes and reforms at all levels of society. Their daring and rebellious nature make this specific generation strong agents of change in today's fast-paced world.

Their preference for digital activism is attributed to a number of factors that include versatility and general accessibility of these platforms that have massive online followership.

An assessment on how Generation Z carry out their digital activism revealed that the majority of Generation Z participate in different ways. The most notable one being sharing of posts or status updates on political issues (30%); using hashtags related to political movements or protests (26%); signing online petitions on numerous political causes (9%), and attending online webinars on current political issues (9%). Only 26% of them have never engaged in any form of aforementioned digital activism. This result implies that a significant number of Generation Z are quite involved in online political issues more aggressively than the older generations, who prefer offline engagement. This also implies that there is an increased need to leverage these digital platforms to engage with Generation Z on various burning issues affecting the community.

Figure 1: Type of Digital Activism Employed

On the effectiveness of social media activism in bringing real-world political change, most of the Generation Z participants (86%) said that it is indeed effective in bringing political change, with only 14% of them feeling that it is ineffective. This is highly suggestive that social media is a very essential tool for activism due to the ease of disseminating information to a wide audience in real-time, especially on political issues affecting the public. It is effective because of the use of digital influencers to advocate for political issues, leveraging their large followership; as well as its ease to foster civic participation, amplification of public opinions and pressuring of legislatures to develop just laws or amend oppressive legislation.

An examination of what drives Generation Z to participate in political digital content or activism; the results indicated that most of them are influenced by a number of reasons. Some have been compelled by frustration with the current events (39%); with others compelled by personal values (26%), educational exposure or literacy levels (22%), peer influence (9%) and lastly by the desire for digital recognition (4%).

Equally, the result also revealed that social media activism is indeed a powerful tool to engage with the newer generation that is always online. Its power was evident when the respondents were asked if they had ever changed their opinion on a political or social issue based on digital content they saw online. Interestingly, 59% agreed while 13% disagreed, with the remaining

31% being indifferent. This underscores the significance of social media in shaping political opinions and how they should be harnessed to bolster their effectiveness. It also means that due to the seamless flow of information through social media platforms, there is an increased need for political accountability and transparency. Nonetheless, there is an increased need for digital literacy to curb misinformation and polarization that often characterizes social media spaces.

Sustainability of Gen Z's Digital Activism

On the question of how often Generation Z engage with a political issue once it stops trending, the result indicated that most of Generation Z (48%) abandon a political or social issue once it stops trending; only 35% of them continue pursuing it. This result implies that most of Generation Z often lose interest in digitally inspired content as soon as it stops trending, raising questions about the sustainability of social media activism. Subsequent results revealed that the reasons as to why most of the Generation Z loses interest with political issues after an initial online momentum fade are: lack of clarity on the next steps (52%); overwhelming number of new issues (20%); perceived ineffectiveness of digital activism (16%); loss of interest 8% and personal burnout 4%).
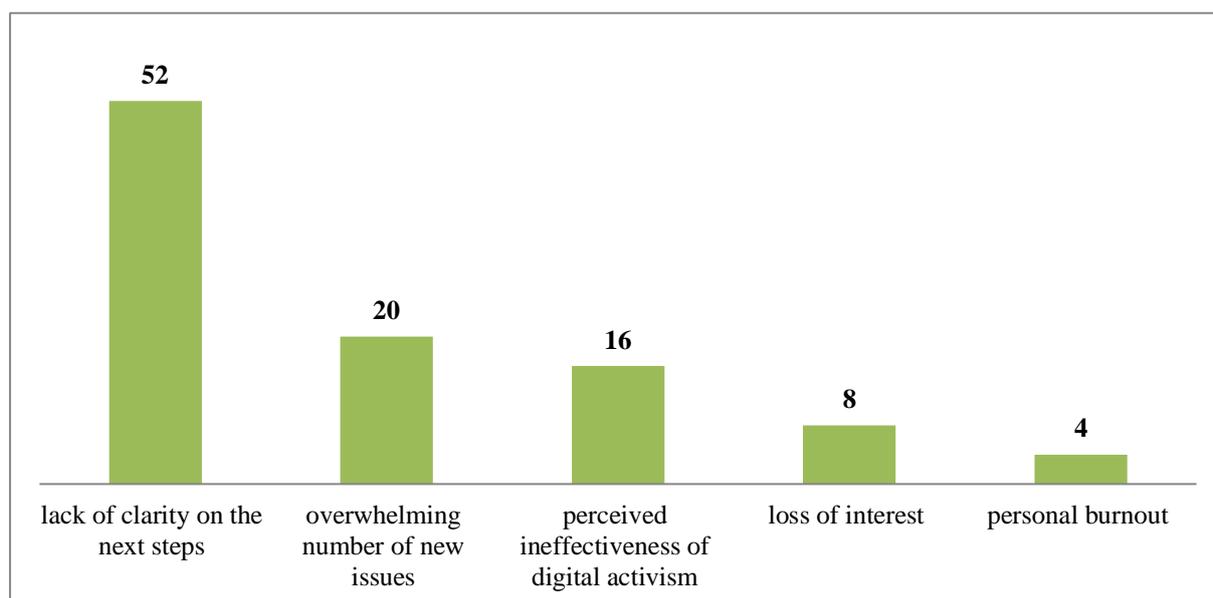

Figure 2: Hinderance for Continous Engagement after an Issue Stops Trending

Most of the respondents suggested that there is a need to strengthen and bolster the capacity of Generation Z movements in political activism beyond social media, more particularly, they noted that this can be done through continuous civic education, community events, and direct engagement with legislatures and policymakers. They also acknowledged the need for continuous media literacy, particularly on misinformation and disinformation that is rampant in the digital platforms they use every day, distorting their understanding of various fundamental issues on political and social issues. They also emphasised the need for increased involvement of the Generation Z in matters of national importance, such as politics that significantly influence their future; as well as the need for intergenerational dialogue between Generation Z and earlier generations, especially on contentious political, social and economic issues. This was evident in the FGD, where some participants reckoned that.

> "The only way to strengthen our digital activism and achieve a favourable outcome is by making sure we register as voters and vote during election to elect leaders that advocate for our deeply ingrained socio-economic concerns that have been neglected by the ruling elites. Therefore, to strengthen our digital activism on governance issues,

social injustices, corruption and political mischief, we need to have the votes, as that is the only effective way of exercising our democratic rights as citizens" Participant 2.

This implies that most of Generation Z were more concerned about the effectiveness of their online political activism, which is key in ensuring they achieve the desired outcomes, therefore bringing meaningful change in our society.

Summary of the Findings

The results have demonstrated that the Gen Z culture plays a significant role in shaping today's society by altering the traditional norms and values, which corroborates findings from Solihat (2024) that found that social media culture among the Gen Z had immensely impacted their political beliefs, preferences and values in comparison to traditional media. It was also in line with Judinya's (2024) study, which established that the most influential determinant of political ideology among most of the youths was social media. This implied that social media is at the centre of the Gen Z culture and there should be proactive mechanism to mitigate misinformation and disinformation likely to distort overall understanding of the Gen Z. It also emerged that on social justice advocacy the Gen Z are actively involved as compared to earlier generation; a situation attributed to their relatively high level of global awareness on social, economic, political and environmental dynamics. These mirrored results deduced by Hidayat and Hidayat (2020) that Gen Z are more conscious about the adverse effects of climate change in their society and are at the frontline to advocate for global and regional response on the same, as well as other social justice causes. The results also revealed the contribution of Gen Z in civic engagement and political advocacy, which have been found to significantly influence democracy and political institutions. The Gen Zs' political activism has always been triggered by diminished transparency, reduced civic engagement and lack of political accountability by the ruling elites, predisposing the poor masses to poverty and disillusionment. This was identified in Suhariyanto and Rozak's (2025) study, which noted that the level of political engagement of Gen Z is significantly influenced by social media, and the government should collaborate with them to develop a conducive environment that allows them to engage with Gen Z on all national matters. The results also indicated that there are gaps in civic engagement, as most Gen Z decry that they are never involved in most of the national issues, leaving them agitated and dazed. Alongside this, the research found that there are sustainability challenges facing most Gen Z's digital activism, as they lose momentum after the social or political issue stops trending, calling for robust strategies to bolster the long-term effect of their activism.

5.0 Conclusion

The implications of this article are diverse and far-reaching: particularly, we found that the Generation Z culture is at the centre of their political and social activism as they demand transparency and accountability in regional and national governance. The results have substantially noted that Generation Z are indeed a peculiar generation that has constantly challenged the traditional institutions and political class that have been reluctant to change some past norms that are either redundant or are a contributing factor to today's political, economic, environmental and social problems that threaten the future of Generation Z and other subsequent generations. It has also been deduced that Generation Z leverages social media to foster social justice through digital activism using hashtags, memes, and short video reels to stand against government insensitivity to social issues, police brutality, extrajudicial killings, racism, and corruption. Equally, Generation Z's political activism has fuelled reforms on leadership and governance, forced governments and the political class to embrace transparency, and challenged long-serving political incumbents insensitive to the needs of the public. Through their leaderless movements, Generation Z have bypassed traditional political hurdles previously used by seasoned politicians to consolidate their political dominance at the

detriment of the public. Equally, Generation Z have also challenged the digital media platforms, especially in alleviating political misinformation and hate speech that has been rampant on social media. As well as emphasizing the need for an intergenerational dialogue between Generation Z and earlier generations.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on the analysis and key insights, this study proposes the following policy prescriptions and recommendations. Firstly, this research emphasizes the need to acknowledge and prioritise on the Gen Z's pressing needs and concerns, especially on their unanimous call for transparency and political accountability among the rulers; instead of denying, ignoring and suppressing them with unnecessary force. Secondly, the government and political institutions should utilize digital spaces and infrastructures to engage with Gen Z on matters of national importance. The government should have open communication with these Gen Zs, listen, and implement Gen Z-focused policies geared at alleviating social and economic problems that face them, such as unemployment, police brutality, and poverty, among other social justice concerns. The civil society should leverage Gen Z's digital proficiency to spur civic literacy, innovation, and activism on political, economic, environmental and social justice causes.

The mainstream and social media should intensify their war on political misinformation and disinformation that is widespread in today's society especially among internet users; as it has potential to distort the general understanding of the Gen Z. Additionally, to foster long-term impact of Gen Z digital activism the study emphasizes the need for continuous engagements through Gen Z offline communities; as well as collaboration between the Gen Z digital activists and civil society groups to sustain activism beyond online trends. Gen Z should develop robust and well-structured online campaigns with measurable goals and a follow-up mechanism to keep up the momentum. Lastly, there should be an intergenerational dialogue between the Gen Z and older generations to foster a mutual understanding on contentious issues, minimizing trust issues and generational tensions. Further research can be conducted on the impact of Gen Z activism on electoral processes and democracy in developing countries.

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