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CAPSTONE RESEARCH PAPER: GEN Z REVOLTS IN KENYA: A LEADERSHIP CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The Gen Z in Kenya came into full swing following some bills introduced in the Kenyan parliament especially the Finance Bill. Using narrative analysis, the study examines Gen Zs, political leaders, human right activists, and citizens to enlighten on the causes and implications of the revolts. The article sums up with recommendations for inclusive conflict transformation policies, transparent political governance, and inclusive youth engagement. The study aims to align Gen Z's positive aspirations, ensuring sustainable political and socio-economic progress. The research contributes to understanding of Gen Z youth-driven political change in Kenya and offers insights for conflict transformation globally.

Background of the Study

The emergence of Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) as a socially and politically conscious demographic has redefined activism in the 21st century. Known for their digital fluency, global awareness, and commitment to social justice, Gen Z has increasingly engaged in protests to express dissatisfaction with political systemic inequities. In Nairobi, these protests have often targeted issues such as economic inequality, unemployment, and governance failures. However, their methods, which sometimes include property destruction and clashes with authorities, have sparked debates about the efficacy and ethics of their activism.

However, Gen Z's approach to social justice is different from previous generations. They prioritize inclusivity, equality, and global solidarity, often calling for systemic change rather than simply addressing symptoms of poverty and injustice. This shift places pressure on the

Salvation Army to reframe its mission. Traditional religious practices may be perceived as insufficient if they are seen as detached from the urgent need for comprehensive social reform, which is a core concern for many in Gen Z.

The emphasis on intellectual autonomy and the questioning of traditional power structures within Gen Z may lead to a diminishing respect for hierarchical church structures, where clergy are viewed as mediators between God and the people. This protest challenges the Salvation Army's model of leadership, which has often relied on the spiritual authority of officers. If Gen Z sees leadership as grounded in social action and intellectual dialogue, they may demand a new kind of ecclesial (relating) structure that is more participatory and democratic.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the key factors influencing Gen Z's perceptions of authority and their engagement with religious institutions.
2. To identify the root causes behind Gen Z-led protests and explore alternative forms of constructive activism within the church.
3. To propose a theology of mediation that bridges generational divides and fosters intergenerational dialogue within the church.
4. To develop practical strategies for harnessing Gen Z's potential for mission work while addressing their values and expectations.

Research Questions

1. What are the key factors influencing Gen Z's perceptions of authority and their engagement with religious institutions?
2. What are the roots causes behind Gen Z-led protests, and what alternative forms of constructive activism can be explored within the church?
3. How can a theology of mediation bridge generational divides and foster intergenerational dialogue within the church?
4. What practical strategies can be developed to harness Gen Z's potential for mission work while addressing their values and expectations?

Significance of the Study

This study will be significant in these ways:

1. Bridging Generational Divides: Understanding the unique characteristics of Gen Z enables the church to create more inclusive and effective strategies for engagement.

2. Strengthening Church Missions: By harnessing the energy and intellect of Gen Z, the church can enhance its role in social justice and community development.

3. Adapting Theological Approaches: Exploring a theology of mediation tailored to Gen Z's worldview can ensure the continued relevance of religious teachings.

4. Encouraging Constructive Activism: Insights into alternative forms of advocacy that align with Christian values and minimize the risks associated with protests.

5. Enhancing Digital Ministry: Given Gen Z's reliance on technology, understanding their digital behaviors can help the church develop more impactful online outreach programs.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

History of Gen Zs Movements

Gen Zs in the political postmodern sense rebel towards authority/hierarchy.

'Generation Z perceived the church as often judgmental, exclusionary, and dismissive, particularly toward individuals who did not conform to traditional Christian norm (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

With the afore mentioned in mind, we will study the Gen Z in Kenya and other historical movements as well:

Gen Zs in Kenya

In the Kenyan context, it was the youths mobilizing against the political class. Under the hash tags of **#RejectFinanceBill and #EndAbductions,** the report shared was:

'The National Police Service has denied its officers' involvement in the latest resurgence of abductions of innocent people that has caused a national public outcry. So, who could be carrying out these brutal acts? The public outrage following the escalation of the abductions of youth, whose only sin is criticizing the government, is understandable' (Nation E paper, December 26 2024).

Imungu Kalevera explains the deeper details that agitated the Gen Zs in her blog, In the lead up to these protests, Kenyans had been on the receiving end of tax increases that teared deep into the pockets of the most vulnerable. These tax increases were largely driven by the need to repay loans from international financial institutions (notably the International Monetary

Fund IMF) that previous administrations had taken on. For instance, public debt stock increased from Ksh 6.28 trillion in March 2020 to Ksh 7.34 trillion (575 million USD) in March 2021 (KIPPRA, 2021). In the first 3 months of the Covid-19 pandemic, Kenya borrowed 4.5billion shillings (Imungu, 2024).

This above are samples of the Kenyan Gen Z and public aggressions by youth that were against the finance bill and the massive abductions and killing by police. This is discussed below in political mobilization part.

#RejectFinanceBill2024 /#OccupyParliament

The Gen Zs branded the protests and campaigns as 'Rage and Courage' against the judicial abductions and killings, and also against corruption in the government.

Other Gen Z Movements

#ReleaseTunduLissu #Free Tanzania #Fair Elections

There are serious digital agitations after the Tanzania post-election mass killings, and on the freedom to Hon. Tundu Lissu and free Tanzania effects. Samples from Activist Cyprus Nyakundi on Dec. 8th 2025 are:

The People of the Republic of Tanzania irreducible minimum 1. Nullification of flawed none-exist October 29, 2025 and establishment of all Inclusive Transitional Government 2. Unconditional release of all political prisoners, stoppage of all forms of state repression and restoration of media freedom 3. The Transitional Government forms and interim independent electoral body that facilitates the conduct of fresh democratic, credible, free and fair elections with full participation of all Tanzanians 4. An inclusive independent people driven Constitutional Reforms to initiated anchored on enabling legal framework 5. An international supervised independent truth, justice and accountability tribunal mechanism be established for the mass atrocities, massacres and gross human rights violations committed by state and it's agents before and after October 29, 2025 electoral debacle.

#Dec9 #D9Tanganyika Day

The Tanzania Gen Z using #D9 meaning December 9th as the day to liberate Tanzania. Another vocal digital media journalist has been Mange Kimambi. Here are some of her samples that also have high Gen Zs follow ups:

Maria Sarungi also engaged heavily other Gen Zs on her platform as copied:

Happy independence day Tanganyika Ni leo **#D9** Mungu atutangulie na kutulinda tukamilishe yote tuliyodhamiria tupate Tanzania Mpya #D9Tunatoka #D9YaAmaniBilaUnyonge #D9TanganyikaDay #SamiaMustGo

#MeToo

This was a movement against sexual harassment. It was pioneered in 2006 by Tarana Burke who was a survivor of sexual violence. She pushed for the perpetrators to be held accountable in such instances. Her foundational book Unbound: My Story of Liberation and the Birth of the Me Too Movement portrays deeper themes of resilience over trauma, healing, inclusivity, and carving a future movement for rape policies.

It was again catalyzed in 2017 by Alyssa Milano who spoke up for the globe to raise voices against such mistreatments. It has now become a full-fledged global movement as well with a website dedicated to its functionality. This aims to curb rape cultures.

Social media and the younger generations had a deeper say in political engagements especially in the aforementioned Egypt regimes. Again from IJRPR, it was observed that, Movements such as #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter have demonstrated the power of social media in raising awareness, mobilizing activists, and catalyzing social change. Social media's ability to connect like-minded individuals across geographical boundaries has transformed how protests, rallies, and advocacy campaigns are organized and sustained.

In the Kenyan context, the political engagements in social media movements by the Gen Z redefined our political landscape. A key scholar Hossana Twinomurinzi comments on the Gen Z from the Kenyan context and asserted,'Kenya's Gen Z, characterized by their digital fluency and social consciousness, has since early 2024 emerged as a formidable force in political activism, leveraging digital technologies such as social media and Generative AI (GenAI) platforms to organise protests, mobilise support, and amplify their voices against perceived injustices from the government. Their protests against the Finance Bill 2024, marked by significant participation, highlight the critical role of digital platforms in modern socio-political movements' (Twinomurinzi, ACIST).

The method was to use social media to make their voices heard. Some of the earlier social media hast tag movements are sampled below:

Maputo Protests

The Mozambique youth did yearlong protests in 2024. They did a national shutdown against election outcomes. The Al-Jazeera reports that 'The protests began after Frelimo was confirmed the winner by the Constitutional Council. Protesters and opposition groups say the October 9 vote was rigged.'

Twitter (X) Uganda

Young Ugandans were being brutalized in 2021. Bobi Wine was at the fore front against such earlier agitations as the Guardian reported on 14th May 2021: "Like many, I bear the scars of the baton, have felt the sting of teargas and endured unlawful detention. But I know that this is not personal. It isn't about me. Many others, whose only offence is to exercise constitutionally entrenched rights and freedoms, have been clobbered, abducted, tortured and put on show trial. The atrocities are numerous: the unresolved carnage of the Kayunga shootings in 2009 that saw 40 left dead, the massacres in Rwenzururu where police and military killed more than 150, or the November 2020 killings in which more than 50 protesters lost their lives. Not to mention the shooting of my driver, Yasin Kawuma, by police forces on 13 August 2018 at a political rally. He was only 27, and left behind a widow and children."

Ssentongo & Ntulume have also discussed how the Twitter (now X) platform enabled youths in Uganda to rise against the election crisis of 2021. The youths used the digital handles to challenge state oppression. The youths were able to push their agenda for political reforms.

The recent Gen Z voices are against the detention of Hon. Besigye by the government in recent times of 2025.

#EndSARS Nigeria

Uwalaka handles this movement precisely in its agitation towards police brutality in Nigeria. But on the positive side, digital groups went beyond this and put pressure on other agendas like creating solidarity movements and even crowd funding initiatives.

#Black Lives Matter

Initially, this movement was triggered in 2013 by the death of Trayvon Martin who was killed by an armed citizen. The Washington Post reports a decade after the movement thus,

'Martin's death inspired a new generation of protests against police and vigilante violence toward Black people, one that would go on to highlight systemic racism in nearly every aspect of American life. As the advocacy reached beyond law enforcement practices to address structural inequalities, it also informed efforts to combat climate change, gun violence and sexual assault.' (Washington Post, Feb 25 2022).

After the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, there was social hot engagement on the hash tag #BlackLivesMatter movement. The deaths were directly linked to police brutality. Bonilla & Rosa highlight the key imports of this digital movement. Beckman also notes the racial injustices against the blacks as catalysts of the movement (Beckman, 2020).

#MyDressMyChoice
In the year, some women were undressed for wearing 'indecent' clothing. This led to a massive country wide protest by ladies, and girls against the men who were deemed as oppressive.

#FixTheCountry
In the year 2020, the major proponent of this movement was Nderitu. The movement which utilized social media platforms was an outcry against youth marginalization from the governance squares, corruption, and economic inequalities in the country.

#NepoBaby & #Nepokids
This was a Gen Z movement that was anti political dynasty in Nepal. The young Nepalis were totally against nepotism, massive wealth accumulation by the political elites. They used Tiktok and Discord platforms to agitate against such abuses in government. The movement triggered ripple anti-corruption demonstrations pushing for systemic changes (Time Magazine).

Impacts of Gen Zs Protests
The Gen Zs tagged as tribeless and faceless posed serious impacts to the Kenyan economy and political landscape as well. Scholars have assessed and seen their powerful impacts. They opine, A generation of hyper-connected, economically disenfranchised, and politically alienated people is rising to the streets and the web as far as Morocco to Madagascar and

Indonesia, bringing tectonic changes to the established political terrain (Aggarwal, Bhojwani, & Ganglani, 2025; Bartlett and Akinwotu, 2025).

The political class gave in and removed the finance bill 2024. They also sought audience with Gen Zs to solve the impasse and '*maandamano*' or street protests. But on the negative side, many youths died (Rex Masai, Erickson Mutisya, Kennedy Onyango, Caroline Shiramba,cf Ben Mbithhi, cf. Daily Nation, June 25 2024) in the protests while others were abducted. The paper records,President William Ruto, acceding to pressure from Kenyans after several protests, has declined to sign Finance Bill 2024 to law… On Wednesday, Dr Ruto bowed to pressure from young protesters and the concerns of Kenyans and asked the National Assembly to withdraw the bill (DN, 26 June 2024).

Some other key tenets highlighted are:

They have digital power. Gen Z, more than any previous generation, has access to unprecedented amounts of information and resources. The concept of power has shifted, with a greater focus on empowerment, autonomy, and social media influence. For Gen Z, power is not necessarily derived from institutional authority or theological constructs alone; it often manifests in personal agency, collective activism, and the ability to challenge norms. In the context of the theology of mediation, Gen Z may reject the idea of a hierarchical, traditional view of power where Christ mediates salvation on their behalf. This generation may view salvation as something they can achieve through collective action, individual enlightenment, or even alternative spiritual practices.

They have political inertia. Inertia in the context of Gen Z is multi-dimensional, reflecting not only physical or emotional endurance but also intellectual, social, and political strength. Many members of Gen Z are deeply invested in global issues such as climate change, social justice, and human rights. This generation often views "strength" as the ability to address systemic inequalities and work toward social transformation. The idea of divine strength mediated through Jesus might seem less relevant to those who seek empowerment through direct action. This could lead to a shift in the way salvation is understood, emphasizing human effort and justice as opposed to a theologically mediated salvation.

They are techno savvy. Gen Z is often considered the most intellectually engaged generation, with access to vast information through digital platforms. Intelligence, for this group, is increasingly associated with critical thinking, questioning of authority, and the ability to

navigate complex global issues. This intellectual approach may conflict with the traditional theological view of mediation, which assumes a degree of theological obedience and acceptance of divine mystery. Gen Z may be inclined to challenge established doctrines, viewing salvation not as something that needs mediation but as a process that can be understood, studied, and accessed in new ways.

The emergence of the Generation Z demographic that is both socially and politically active has had profound implications for both activism and religious engagements. Their digital fluency, and commitment to social justice sets them apart from previous generations. It influences how they perceive authority and interact with religious institutions. In Nairobi, Gen Z's protests against systemic inequities reflect a broader global trend of challenging traditional power structures, including those found within faith-based organizations.

The Gen Z's perspective particularly on matters concerning the theology of mediation, present both challenges and opportunities for religious institutions. Their emphasis on self-empowerment, direct action, and inclusivity emphasizes on reevaluating traditional theological constructs. The Kenyan leaders in church and government must consider adapting to remain relevant and effective when engaging this generation.

Gen Z and Political Mobilization

From the IJRPR journal, the Arab Spring is discussed as a perfect example of how social media has impact on the political class. The journal observes:

Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter played crucial roles in organizing protests, disseminating information, and galvanizing international support. In Egypt, the "We Are All Khaled Said" Facebook page became a focal point for mobilization against the Mubarak regime. Social media facilitated real-time communication, helping protesters coordinate their activities and avoid security forces (IJRPR, 2012).

"Social media platforms like Twitter and Twitter drove the crucial early turnout of protestors in Tahrir Square that triggered the avalanche of dissent. More than a quarter of the protesters surveyed had first head about the protests on Facebook, and Twitter users significantly more likely to were among the initial group that showed up… Overall, the study found that social media had played a crucial role (Tufekci, 2017).

The above shows the digital power in mobilization of agitations against political oppression. In essence, the Arab revolts brought down those regimes.

To add, Rubel Mia with Naim Hassan in their study in the Global South proved that Gen Zs have challenged original traditional political structures and are creating an entirely new civic culture. They argue, Gen-Z is leading a new era of networked activism that combines both international digital culture and local social-economic discontents. This way, they are establishing new, performative rites of political belonging, functioning more or less out of the official political institutions and pointing to a potentially irreversible change in the ways of thinking and acting civic engagement in the 21st century (Mia, IJSSHR, 2025).

Digital Platform Activism

In history, there is an evolving landscape of Gen Zs on social media platforms. Social media is ever dynamic in terms of technological advancements and also in communication terms. From a single graffiti message in Kahtmandu on one wall engraved, "You picked the wrong fight" and signed by just "Gen Z" (Khandekar & Kandel, 2025), a flare of digital media messages led to political unrest. The scene, the outcome of a "whirlwind 48 hours" (Shivji, 2025), is mirrored in Dhaka, where teenage boy scouts seized control of traffic anarchy after the police disappeared and the prime minister left the country, this scene is reflected (Hadid & Hussain, 2024). This shows how much potential digitial activism carries.

The following are key functions of social media in political uprisings and protests discussed by Pippa Noris: ' [informational (spreading knowledge, awareness, and news), networking (coordinating collective actions and organizing movements), cultural (strengthening democratic aspirations and critical evaluations of regime performance) and behavioral (reinforcing the propensity for citizens to engage in protest acts challenging the regime)' (Noris, *JSTOR*, 4).

Discussing each function, she explains further:
Informational, where social media function as a source of news about contemporary events occurring within and outside of each society; *Networking*, where social media are used to reduce the transaction costs of coordinating collective action; *Cultural*, where social media have the capacity to reinforce democratic aspirations and also public disaffection with regime performance; and lastly, *Behavioral*, by strengthening the propensity to engage in protest activism (Ibid).

The correlational comparison and relationship between Gen Zs and social media shows diverse and dense facets on information outlets, communication, social interactions, connectivity, creativity, intuitiveness, and content creations (Twenge, 2020, Pichler et al 2021). Sharma (et al) notes the high degree of innovativeness among the Gen Zs on the social media.

Historically, political activists have used public square platforms to challenge oppressive government structures. Some key examples are Martin Luther who did political activism against blacks' oppression. He led a civil rights movement. The other is Mahtma Gandhi who carried a non-violent aggression against. I shall now discuss political mobilization of the Gen Zs. From the above discussions, it is evident that social media has deep lasting impacts on the shape of politics in any country or any political regime and more so the Kenyan context.

Gen Zs Digital Usages

Originally it came as normal internet and browsing (Li Liu 2017). This particular era fore saw high volumes of knowledge disseminated but also the emergence of harmful sites for immoral avenues like porn and the rest.

As one uses more and more the digital apps, the system picks up his/her themes, these are called algorithms. Now it has personalized algorithms (Bhandari 2021). An example is TikTok which uses 'an algorithm to prompt videos based on users' preferences' (Bhandari &; Bimo, 2020; TikTok, 2020;Smith, 2021).

It is now more immersed (Swart 2021). The apps have mental influences on the users too. There is prevalence of induced anxiety on the apps. There has been both misinformation on media and bullying as well (Twenge and Campbell 2019). The average Gen Z stays minimum of 7 hours per day on social media according to Global Digital Insights 2023. Jasmine 2023 underscores they spent more time on lengthy content apps like YouTube and lesser on tiktok and instagram.

Leadership Transformations to Gen Zs

The church leadership structures need to collectively handle Gen Z generation in a holistic manner. The following avenues of Jesus' mediation, bargaining and reconciliation can be worthy:

Conflict Reversals

David W Augsburger in his book *Conflict Mediation across Cultures: Pathways and Patterns* believes that conflict can be constructive. He formulates this based on the premise of a 'productive conflict cycle that utilizes the conflict to strengthen the concord of the community' (Augsburger, 237). He also outlines a continuum of mediator roles including observer, chair, enunciator, prompter, leader and arbiter are tabled. He is adept to point out that 'effective mediation is built on a floor of basic commitments (context), built by a process of balanced concerns and understanding (process), and built through personal involvement in making agreements' (ibid).

The leaders in Kenya can also use the conflict mapping tool for Gen Zs issues. It maps out inter relationships of the actors and where the conflict issue is located. Actors that do not agree are also mapped out.

Source: Adapted from Fisher, et al. (2000: 23)
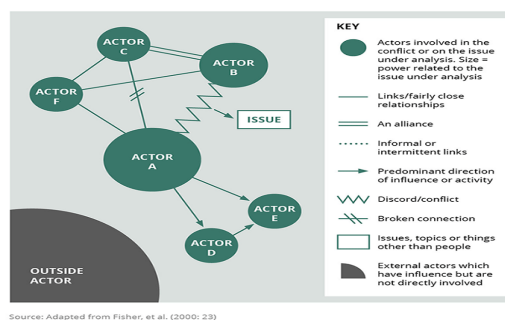
Another high end method is conflict transformation. Paul Lederach proposes a third lens of handling conflicts from the short term conflict resolution to conflict transformation paradigm. He uses the nested foci paradigm by Marie Dugan which engages conflict issues by checking multiple layered levels of focus, from short term to long term dimensions of the conflicts.(Cf Marie Dugan, 1996).
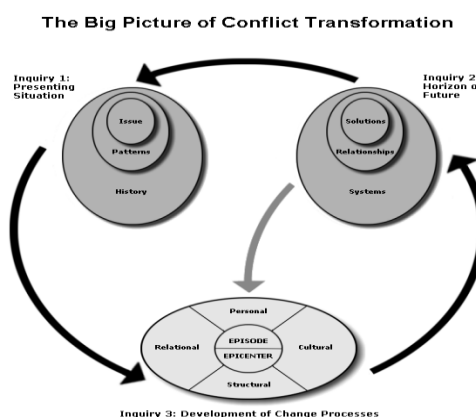
Mediation

Ralph A. Johnson in his book *Negotiation Basics: Concepts, Skills and Exercises* discusses bargaining strategies. First, the author discusses soft bargaining strategy. The bargainers are flexible, adaptable and use effective arguments to win the other side while expecting 'a conciliatory attitude.' The author notes that, 'the relationship will be saved or enhanced if the other side is responds positively, and it will degenerate or end if the response is negative (Johnson, 73). The soft approach has benefits: it provides warm relationships to the sides, it confronts people with strong sense of self- importance and high status, and is more useful in times of impasse due to its consistency in bargaining. Secondly, the hard-bargaining strategy is where negotiators use tough tactics, 'tie the other guys' hands' which has 'take it or leave it' offers. Thirdly, the author discusses the tit-for-tat bargaining strategy. The author notes that 'a reciprocal bargainer makes the other side responsible for its own behavior and consequences' (Ibid, 83). Fourthly is the principled bargaining, a game plan outlaid with principles is its key ingredient. The author employs Ury's principles of separating people from the problem, focusing on interests, generating options for mutuality, and using objective standards. Positively, it does not rely on the personality of the negotiator. It also focuses on problem solving which can assist Gen Zs deeply to solve the unsolved issues in their minds and lives.

Jesus did mediation on the cross. He bargained on our behalf. For Jesus, forgiveness was his central theme (Jn. 3:16; Luke 22:34). Biblical theology proves the fact that God takes the initiative view (Gen. 3:9, Isaiah 1:17-19; Jonah 1:2, Zech. 8:8, Isaiah 6:8, 43:5, Lk. 15:11-32, John 10:16). The Kenyan church needs to take the initiative and go to Gen Zs and handle their mediation issues following the example of trinity.

But Jesus dealt with political power using wisdom. He evaded and avoided aggressions of the political Jews in several instances (cf. John 8:59, 10:24-30). He used divine wisdom to mediate cases. Luke conveys a resonant paradigm of resolving conflict in such a way that the advance of the gospel is not contravened. The paradigmatic pattern was conflict, resolve it and advance in Luke's corpus. In the issues, Gentile inclusion was handled and God's inclusivity was evident (Acts 15: 3,7,12, 14, 17, 19, 23). The pattern is also seen in Acts 6:1-7 where the widows' problem is solved by appointing deacons. Gen Zs need churches that can mediate for them.

Migliore argues consistently on power in his book *The Power of God and the gods of Power*. He argues, 'The living God exercises power differently…it is a strange power that works in the weakness of the cross… it is not an oppressive, authoritarian power' (Migliore, 43). The Gen Zs need to understand how power operates and how to engage it pragmatically. The contrasting modern versus traditional mediation styles are keenly discussed. The preferred negotiation process for modern Gen Zs is rational, virtual, formal and sustained dialogues.

Deconstruction of Gen Zs Media

The negative effects of Gen Zs in the social media has been evident in Kenya and elsewhere. The key necessity is to 'deconstruct' it or to turn it and navigate it towards positive energy for fruitful purposes. The first step will be to study its activism as follows:

The Post Digital Theory theory (hereafter PDT) has been used by scholars to examine how digital and social media platforms have been used to shape political activism. The key proponents of this theory are Cramer and Fawns and they both agree that:

PDT reflects a state where digital and physical experiences are seamlessly intertwined, acknowledging that digital technologies are ubiquitous and have become an intrinsic part of our daily activities and societal functions (Cramer, 2014; Fawns et al, 2023).

The foregoing means and implies that the digital culture has become the life of the young Gen Zs. They will hence check and connect and get all information from the digital world and act upon what they have seen. The digital world then dictates their lifestyles, education and most importantly matters of political governance.

There are five key ingredients of PDT namely criticalness, ubiquity, hybridization, contextual awareness, and decentralization. By ubiquity it means that most digital platforms have become so immersed into everyday life that there is nothing new. There is no divide between analog and digital. Cramer argues in the post-digitality era, our fascination with the digital systems has become historical (Cramer, 13). By the hybrid factor, there has been a deep blending of digital and physical experiences and new forms of engagement have occurred. Criticalness is what the researcher aligns for the relevance of this paper. It points out to Gen Zs aspect of engaging with political elites on issues of power, oppression, control and governance. On contextual awareness it is evident that digital platforms are diverse and different in different locations and generations. Decentralization aspect is still upheld by the researcher. It refers to moving from the center towards outer margins; moving from traditional hierarchy to leaderless and collaborative forms. The digital platforms have enabled

peer to peer engagement and not one source of authority. The bottom line is the deeper social change that has been brought by PDT.

The second avenue will be to create digital spaces for peace building for Gen Zs instead of negative hatred, negative ethnicity and character troll assassinations.

Digital spaces and media spaces can co-exist to handle peace building processes in Kenya targeting Gen Zs. Lisa Schirch discusses extensively on digital spaces that can be utilized for this citing: digital conflict analysis methods, and digital peace interventions like inter-group dialogues, peace-tech, participatory groups, mediation diplomacy, public diplomacy, strategic communication, peace education, social movements, human rights advocacy, early warning on conflicts, and ceasefire monitoring (Schirch, 2022). She argues deeply that,

The digital space is unique from legacy media. Digital information travels faster, further, and more quickly than information on legacy media. Digital spaces can transform how people share information and communicate with one another. These digital affordances offer new possibilities for scaling public engagement, improving collaborative multi-stakeholder decision-making, and supporting elements of sustained public peace processes (ibid,).

She also addresses how digital mis-information and AI related news can be countered too:

Digital amplification of false and distorted information can quickly sway public opinions about the prospects for peace and cause massive disruptions in democratic processes such as referendums or elections. Digital technologies can amplify polarisation, disinformation, and discrimination patterns fuelling conflict dynamics (ibid).

The third avenue is communal or society engagements for Gen Zs. They need to be included in the communal events participation.

The relational aspects of our society do not accommodate Gen Zs. The general outcome of Gen Zs protesting has been that of rejection and isolation from the public square. This affects them directly because all they have is a different opinion. Kinnaman discusses the same attitude of marginalizing them and argues against it,

'The creator was not content to exclude those who had rejected him, but neither was he prepared to tolerate hatefulness and sin. So what did he do? He became one of us, one of the "other," identifying with us to embrace us in solidarity, empathy, and selfless agape love—all the way to the cross. What would it look like for the Christian community to do the same? How would the church be different if we were to reject exclusion as unacceptable and tolerance as not good enough?' (Kinnaman, 63).

To understand Gen Z mobilization, it is important to get to their core characteristics. The researcher concurs with the idea that Gen Zs are very cynical when it comes to authority structures. Jessica Grose in the NY Times shows why they are cynical,

Our conversation reinforced what I already hear from Gen Z — that it's clear to many of our younger citizens that our institutions, and the older adults who run them, aren't going to save them...The Harvard Youth Poll, shows a majority of Americans under 30 now believe "politics today are no longer able to meet the challenges our country is facing." Harvard also reports "a sharp increase in youth believing that 'political involvement rarely has tangible results.'" (Opinion, NY Times).

From Kinnaman's book, *You Lost Me*, the generation Gen Z handling is also cynical against traditional oppressive structures in the church setting. He observes generational gaps and problems of how older generations handle them. He argues,

'Let's look first at relational experiences. Most young Protestants and Catholics do not recall having a meaningful friendship with an adult through their church, and more than four out of five never had an adult mentor. This is true of enough young Christians that we must ask ourselves whether our churches and parishes are providing the rich environments that a relationally oriented generation needs to develop deep faith. I believe we need a new mind to measure the vibrancy and health of the intergenerational relationships in our faith communities' (Kinnaman, 43).

Social media has benefits like political democratization processes as shown above. More needs to be done by all leaders to harness more benefits.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research is qualitative and descriptive using the narratives and videos of Gen Zs during the protests in Nairobi and other towns.

Qualitative research deals with the participants' feelings, ideas, or experiences. Hervey Fossey denotes that,

The aim of qualitative research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena in their natural environments. It relies on the direct experiences of people as meaning-making agents in their daily lives and focuses on the why rather than what of social phenomena (Fossey, 2002).

3.2 Data Collection

Data was collected using three instruments namely focus groups, interviews and questionnaires. The data received being descriptive was analyzed using NVIVO tool. The questionnaire here is mostly formatted with open ended questions that help the Gen Z participant to discuss their opinions, beliefs, and judgments in a freeway. It has an added advantage. According to Kothari and Gaurav, 'a questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a set of questions and is used to address the specific objectives in the study' (Kothari, 2006). Two, a focus group is, 'a group interview on a particular topic, led by a trained moderator… the goal of the focus group is to provide useful insights on the topic' (Collins and O'Brien, 2003, p. 142). The researcher also used online focus groups depicted as 'using internet tools that are familiar in usage to the participants, like Google Meet, Skype and Zoom'(Gundumogula, IJHSS).

Karen Dunwoodie et al argues that interviews provide an opportunity for participants to share their feelings, prejudices, opinions, desires, and attitudes towards different phenomena they experience in the workplace or other organizational contexts (Dunwoodie, 2022). To add, unlike quantitative work that stresses the testing of causal relationships, qualitative interviews help us to uncover how people attribute meaning to their social experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

3.3 Sampling Method

The researcher engaged a purposive sampling method to do the data collection. The sample size chosen was 150 in total. Purposive sampling is intentional and specifically chooses a targeted and informative smaller size of the overall sample as Kruger observes (Kruger, 2001). Purposive sampling has sets of demographic, geographical, psychological, political, or socio-economic categories stratified and covered.

3.4 Ethical Issues

The researcher sought for official permits from the government authorities around Nairobi town for the research. The researcher also did personal permissions from the Gen Zs that were interviewed or had questionnaires and focus groups.

Chapter 4 RESULTS & ANALYSIS

4.1 Impacts Gen Z Revolts

The case studies interviewed, questionnaires revealed four major impacts from the Gen Z revolts in Kenya. The first three agree totally with the chapter 2 literature reviewed. The Gen Zs in Kenya brought about major impact on the political class by demanding accountability from corruption and graft dealings, and mass wealth accumulations. The second impact was the heightened digital activism using the #rejectfinancebill that eventually led to its removal. The third impact led to demand on jobless youths on different platforms with the government promising to work on job creations. The final impact led actually to lesser abductions by the goons and police officers. Many youths were released following the mass protests though some also died.
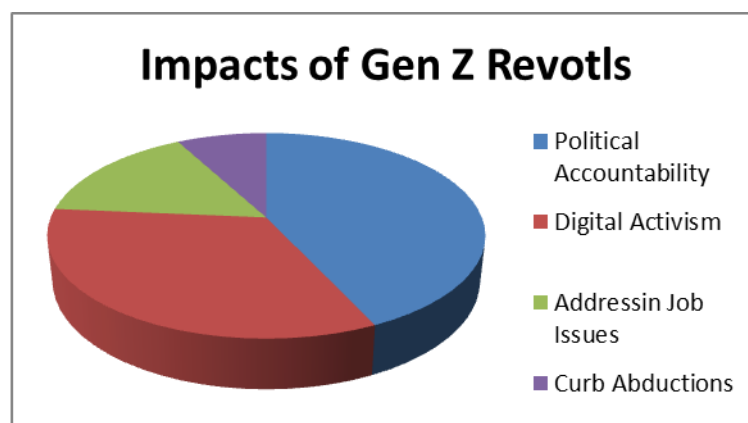
Safe Digital Spaces

Many Gen Z individuals are well-educated and employed across various professional fields, making them valuable assets for mission work. Their skills can be leveraged through digital peacemaking, utilizing their digital fluency to expand online outreach programs and engage with a broader audience. Involving Gen Z in research initiatives that inform church growth strategies and community development projects should be a priority. The next step is empowering Gen Z to lead initiatives that address local challenges, such as poverty alleviation and education reform. The last is training Gen Z members to serve as mediators within the church and broader society.

4.2 Gen Zs and Politics in Kenya

Gen Zs and Politics

The researcher found out that Gen Zs rabbled against authority at most of the times.

Gen Z Responses

• Authority in both government and religious institutions serves as a means of maintaining order, guiding communities, and enforcing laws or moral principles. However, the legitimacy and effectiveness of authority depend on how it is exercised and whether it aligns with the values of justice, accountability, and the well-being of the people.

• Governmental Authority – Derived from legal and constitutional frameworks, democratic processes, or historical power structures. When transparent, accountable, and responsive, it fosters stability and trust. Unchecked power, however, can lead to authoritarianism, corruption, and oppression.

• Religious Authority – Based on spiritual or doctrinal principles, tradition, and often, claims of divine legitimacy. It provides moral guidance and social cohesion but can be misused if it suppresses dissent or enforces dogma rigidly.

• Skepticism and Accountability – While authority can be beneficial, it must always be questioned and held accountable to prevent abuses of power.

4.3 Leadership Models for Gen Zs

Leaders across the Kenya context are being called upon to address the crisis and prospects of Gen Z movement without ignoring it. It can become a time bomb like Haiti cases. Before the Gen Zs protested, there was sense of dictatorship as seen from the models below. But after the Gen Zs protests, more transformational and democratic styles with listening medium was visible. The leaders were willing to listen to Gen Zs.
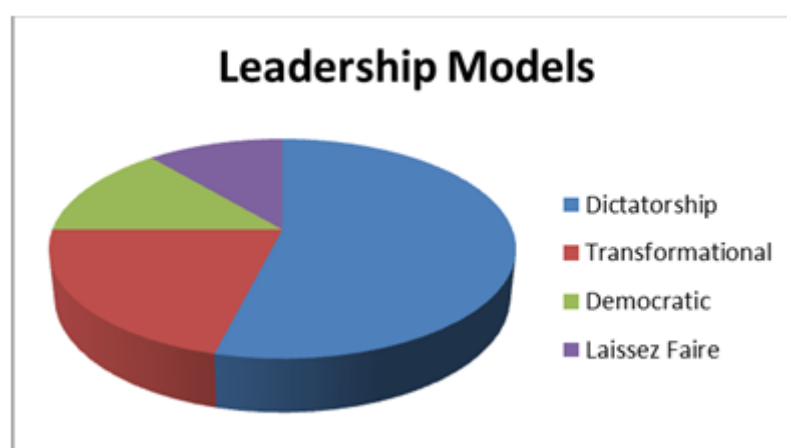
The president urged, 'we are ready to have conversation with young people so that we can build a great nation together.' The Daily Nation reported,

The government has proposed forming a working group to address the concerns raised by the youth, following the spirited fight by the youth that saw President William Ruto give in to

their demand of having the Finance Bill 2024 dropped…In the wake of piling pressure from the youth, President William Ruto has proposed the formation of a 100-member National Multi-Sectoral Forum (NMSF) to engage with all stakeholders in ironing out the concerns (Daily Nation, June 25, 2024).

Strategic & Pragmatic Leadership

Over against the traditional autocratic style, the research proposes a bottom up, strategic and pragmatic styles of leadership. This will be responsive and need-oriented. Nana Noviada et al addresses the transformational approach these styles bring to handle Gen Z amicably. Noviada traces that Gen Z are pragmatic, prioritize financial security and career stability, risk-averse, influenced by witnessing economic instability during their youth, Value work-life balance, but willing to work hard for organizations that align with their values. On leadership expectations he adds they, 'expect transparency, authenticity, and ethical practices from leaders (Noviada, Formosa 2024, 5). Hence the transformational leaders will be adaptive, Characterized by a leader's ability to inspire and motivate employees to exceed their expectations and contribute to the organization's success. Focuses on vision, innovation, and personal growth (Bass, 1994), An effective leadership style is one that best aligns with the specific needs of an organization, its employees, and the context in which it operates. An effective leadership style is very suitable for subordinates who rely on communication to keep everyone on task according to their respective work units (Ekowati, 2022).

The type of leadership discussed above must also be able to engage Gen Zs on technological platforms. The reason is they are faceless, tribe-less but are all over on those 'digital spaces' where they can host meetings. Noviada quotes Perametsi who argues that, They (Gen Zs) are more adept with information technology, exhibit greater courage and motivation, are more independent, and prefer instant solutions. Understanding these traits is crucial for new leaders who wish to influence the next generation effectively (Peramesti & Kusmana, 2018).

Hence, leaders must be adaptable, fluid and dynamic to handle Gen Zs.

Addressing the Job Market

The Gen Zs are precise as they search for jobs and career journeys as compared to Gen X, and Millennials. The vital research undertaken by Swastuti et al reveals that, The research findings show that: 1) The meaning of work for Gen Z in the findings, on job orientation, is to earn money to fulfill life needs. In career orientation, it emphasizes the importance of

seeking experience, self-development, increasing social status and expanding relationships to prepare for their future careers. While in calling orientation, describe work as a form of worship and giving benefits to others. 2) The meaning of career for gen Z in the findings is a means to achieve professional advancement, apply knowledge, develop skills, and contribute to positive change. 3) Factors that influence careers include internal factors including interests, talents, and knowledge, and external factors including family, friends, social media, work environment, and boyfriend or girlfriend (Swastuti, et al (2025).

To address youth protests effectively, it is crucial to examine the above underlying unemployment causes. Common issues driving Gen Z activism in Nairobi include frustration with limited job opportunities and widening income disparities, perceived exclusion from decision-making spaces and governance structures, discontent with systemic issues such as police brutality, corruption, and inadequate public services and perceived ineffectiveness of previous attempts to engage with authorities.

As Gen Z ages, they will inevitably become the older generation. It is essential to consider how they will handle youth-led protests in the future and whether they will be viewed as part of the problem. To prevent cyclic generational conflicts, Gen Z must be instilled with values such as patience, long-term strategic planning, and a commitment to institutional reform.

Addressing Digital Peace

Following the discussion of chapter 2 on mediation, the Gen Zs need Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADR). While protests have become a common method of expressing dissatisfaction, they often lead to unintended consequences such as property destruction and violent clashes with authorities. To mitigate these risks, churches and community leaders can promote alternative approaches to activism, including, Organized Petitions and Strategic Negotiations Encouraging Gen Z to channel their grievances through formal petitions and structured negotiations with policy makers.

Other high end methods have been introduction of citizen journalism, platforms that give Gen Z freedom to air their views as 'reporters.' Greg Simons traces its rising importance in India and Bangladesh cases,

Merinews in 2006 marked the country's first citizen journalism platform, signaling a growing demand for online news as internet and mobile phone penetration expanded (Doron &

Jeffrey, 2013)…Alongside this technological shift, increasing corporatization and political bias in mainstream media motivated ordinary citizens to take on the role of news reporters. Over the years, several citizen-driven news portals, such as theviewspaper.net, thisismyindia.com, Cj.IBNLive, GroundReport, and CGNet, emerged. Among these, CGNet Swara, a voice-based platform, played a crucial role in covering tribal issues in Chhattisgarh, offering an alternative to mainstream narratives (Mudlier & Donner, 2015).

 The above platform can be used amicably by leaders in Kenya to engage youths, Gen Zs on deeper rationalistic scales and thus promote peace narratives.

Chapter 5 DISCUSSIONS

5.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Alternative Avenues for Gen Zs

While protests have become a common method of expressing dissatisfaction, they often lead to unintended consequences such as property destruction and violent clashes with authorities. To mitigate these risks, churches and community leaders can promote alternative approaches to activism, including:

Employment Platforms: Gen Zs will be satisfied with any Kenyan leader who addresses their acute jobless situation. Such avenues as entrepreneurship are thus highly encouraged to engage them and change their socio0economic lives.

Organized Petitions and Strategic Negotiations: Encouraging Gen Z to channel their grievances through formal petitions and structured negotiations with policy makers.

Digital Activism: Leveraging or control of social media platforms to raise awareness and advocate for change without resorting to physical protests.

Policy Advocacy: Training Gen Z activists to develop well-researched policy proposals and present them to relevant authorities.

Community Engagement Initiatives: Empowering Gen Z to lead community development projects that address local challenges and demonstrate their leadership capabilities.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Engaging with Gen Z activists as church leaders requires intentionality and openness. Key recommendations include:

1. Listen First, Speak Later – Show genuine interest and create safe spaces for expression.

2. Bridge Faith and Activism – Highlight biblical examples of justice and activism.

3. Be Present in Their Spaces – Engage on social media and attend their events.

4. Empower, Don't Control – Offer guidance and mentorship rather than dictating actions.

5. Address Tough Topics with Grace – Tackle difficult subjects with honesty and a willingness to explore together.

6. Modernize Communication & Worship – Incorporate contemporary language, media, and technology in sermons.

7. Lead by Example – Demonstrate commitment to justice through action.

8. Foster Intergenerational Mentorship – Encourage reciprocal learning between elders and young activists.

Chapter 6 CONCLUSION

The Gen Zs have a highly volatile mobility on digital media, high aggressive behaviors as seen from Arab Springs to date and massive impacts of their movements. A futuristic approach to conflict transformation with fluidity in leadership styles while addressing socio-economic needs is highly needed and long term for Kenya. All leaders need to focus on inter-generational approaches to curb mass killings, abductions and promote lasting peace.

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