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X Use and Policy Contestation: Examining Public Demands for Government Accountability During Kenya's 2024 Finance Bill Protests in Nairobi

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ABSTRACT: This article looks at how a few accounts used X to protest the 2024 Kenya Finance Bill in Nairobi and articulate demands for government accountability. It is based on a qualitative single embedded case study that included eight semi-structured interviews and 140 purposefully chosen public posts from seven diverse accounts. The analysis brings together Public Sphere Theory, Framing Theory and a platform-affordance perspective. Three conclusions serve as the framework for the discussion. First, proposed taxes were linked to household welfare, political accountability, and the validity of governmental decision-making through economic-burden and policy-grievance frames. Second, contestation extended beyond the Bill's provisions to demands for representative accountability, protection of rights and scrutiny of state action. Third, hashtags, reposts, replies, multimedia and real-time information were incorporated into practices of public explanation, circulation, disagreement and practical coordination. The findings also reveal differences across communicative positions: activist/public-figure accounts advanced advocacy and mobilisation, the human-rights organisation foregrounded rights and accountability, and media accounts circulated reporting and institutional statements. Interviewees described X as a source of explanation, information-sharing and coordination, while also noting challenges associated with information circulation. The study does not establish that X independently caused protest participation or that the selected accounts represent all Kenyan users. It demonstrates how policy contestation and accountability claims were articulated and negotiated within a specific, networked protest context.

KEYWORDS: X; Finance Bill 2024; Kenya; policy contestation; government accountability; digital protest

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital platforms are now crucial venues for citizens to interact with political information, understand public decisions, voice complaints, and discuss claims of governmental accountability. According to Castells (2012), Papacharissi (2015), and Vaccari and Valeriani (2021), their importance is found not only in the speed at which messages spread but also in the way users frame political concerns, contest explanations, and make specific arguments evident across interconnected networks. Online communication does not, however, always result in inclusive discourse or offline political engagement. The circumstances in which political claims are made and encountered are shaped by disparities in access, visibility, information quality, and users' communicative goals (Fraser, 1990; Tufekci, 2017; van Dijk, 2020).

Kenya's 2024 Finance Bill protests provide a context for examining these dynamics. During June 2024, opposition to the proposed tax measures became connected to wider concerns about the cost of living, political representation, rights and government accountability (Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, 2024; National Assembly of Kenya, 2024a). The political sequence intensified on 25 June, when the National Assembly passed the Finance Bill, 2024, at its Third Reading by 195 votes to 106, amid widespread public opposition. On the same day, protesters entered Parliament during demonstrations in Nairobi. On 26 June, President William Ruto announced that he would not assent to the Bill and called for its withdrawal. On 25 July, the National Assembly agreed to delete all the Bill's clauses and rejected it in its entirety (National Assembly of Kenya, 2024b; President of the Republic of Kenya, 2024). Posts BM39 (27 June) and HF24 (28 June), for example, addressed political responsibility and representative accountability after the President's announcement but before Parliament's later decision, illustrating why protest-related communication should be considered in the context of a changing political situation. X was one of the communication environments in which policy criticism, protest messages, news reports, images, institutional statements and practical information circulated. This communication did not come from a single, homogeneous group. Individual activist/public-figure accounts, a human-rights organization, independent and analytical media, and mainstream television news accounts occupied different positions in the protest information environment. Their posts therefore need to be interpreted in relation to their differing communicative purposes, rather than treated as interchangeable expressions of individual activism.

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This article examines how seven selected X accounts communicated contestation over the Finance Bill, 2024, and articulated demands for government accountability during the protest period in Nairobi. It focuses on three connected dimensions: how economic grievances and competing policy interpretations were framed; how criticism of the Bill became connected to demands concerning political responsibility, rights and state action; and how platform-mediated practices supported the circulation, discussion and contestation of these claims. Semi-structured interviews with eight activists provide a complementary perspective on how participants understood and used X, including their accounts of information-sharing, coordination and the relationship between online communication and their own political responses.

The analysis draws on Public Sphere Theory, Framing Theory and a platform-affordance perspective. Public Sphere Theory provides a way to examine public discussion, questioning, disagreement and accountability claims, while critiques of the idealized public sphere direct attention to inequalities and competing publics (Fraser, 1990; Habermas, 1989). Framing Theory helps explain how communication presented the Bill as an economic and political problem, attributed responsibility and articulated possible responses (Entman, 1993). A platform-affordance perspective directs attention to how users incorporated hashtags, replies, reposts, quote-posts, links and multimedia into practices of circulation, interpretation and coordination (Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Treem & Leonardi, 2013). These perspectives are used as complementary analytical lenses, not as grounds for assuming that every sampled post was deliberative or that platform features necessarily produced particular political outcomes.

The article makes a bounded empirical contribution by analyzing 140 purposively selected posts from seven heterogeneous accounts alongside eight semi-structured activist interviews. It attends to differences between activist advocacy, organizational rights communication and media reporting. The accounts are not representative of all Kenyan citizens, activists or X users; engagement metrics are not treated as direct measures of participation, and the analysis does not infer that X alone caused protest attendance.

The article reviews relevant literature and its analytical framework, explains the research design, and presents findings on economic grievances and competing policy frames; demands for political and institutional accountability; and the communicative practices through which contestation circulated on X.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Digital Political Communication and Networked Public Discussion

Digital platforms offer venues for the dissemination of political information and the visibility of conflicting claims. While Papacharissi (2015) addresses digitally mediated publics structured on shared interests and affective expression, Castells (2012) investigates networked communication in modern movements. Such communication does not ensure inclusive or consequential discourse, but it can include demands for action, solidarity, and information exchange.

A foundation for understanding political discourse and opinion formation is provided by public sphere theory. While Fraser (1990) warns that actual public communication is formed by unequal possibilities to speak and be heard, Habermas (1989) proposes a public sphere where issues of common interest can be argued. Protest publics may share grievances while disagreeing over strategy, leadership and political representation.

African research reinforces the importance of context. Nyabola (2018) examines digital democracy in Kenya, while Ogola (2015) describes social media as a heterogeneous discursive space where citizen communication intersects with established media and political power. Studies of Kenyan hashtags also identify humor, virality and contestation as features of online political communication (Mukhongo, 2020; Tully & Ekdale, 2014).

Recent studies of Kenya's 2024 Finance Bill protests provide an emerging empirical context. Sawe et al. (2025) examine social media as a political activism tool, while Ndone and Carpenter (2026) analyses a large X-post corpus computationally. The present study differs by interpreting a purposive qualitative sample across account types alongside interviews; it does not estimate the prevalence of views across X.

B. Framing Policy Grievance and Government Accountability

Framing is the process of choosing and emphasizing elements of a problem in a way that influences the definition of the problem, the interpretation of causality, the moral assessment, and the presentation of potential solutions (Entman, 1993). Collective-action frames in social movements can link specific complaints to more general understandings of injustice, accountability, and potential solutions (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow et al., 1986). Frames are not always stable or widely accepted; audiences may disagree with both the diagnosis of an issue and the suggested solutions, and rival players may characterize the same event in different ways.

In the context of the Finance Bill, the distinction between a fiscal proposal and its public interpretation is analytically important. The selected posts connected proposed taxation to concerns about household welfare, the cost of living, employment prospects and government responsibility. Other communication extended beyond economic concerns to corruption allegations, the accountability of elected representatives, constitutional legitimacy, police conduct and protesters' rights. These interpretations

overlap, but they should not be collapsed into a single frame. A post may simultaneously present a policy as economically burdensome and question the legitimacy or accountability of the government proposing it.

Framing analysis also requires careful attribution. A post describing a budget as corrupt, a state response as unlawful or an elected representative as unaccountable provides evidence of how an account characterized an issue. It does not, by itself, establish the factual accuracy of the allegation. This article therefore analyses the framing work performed by selected posts while distinguishing those interpretations from facts independently established through documentary or other reliable sources.

C. Platform Affordances and Communicative Practices

Research on digital activism identifies opportunities for information-sharing, visibility and coordination, alongside vulnerabilities and uneven outcomes (Earl & Kimport, 2011; Tufekci, 2017). Platform features matter through how users employ them in specific social and political circumstances.

A platform-affordance perspective directs attention to the relational possibilities that emerge between platform features and users' practices (Bucher & Helmond, 2018). According to Treem and Leonardi (2013), affordances include association, visibility, persistence, and editability. When applied to X, this viewpoint highlights the ways in which users use multimedia, quotes, reposts, replies, hashtags, and links in their communications. repeating a demand, disputing a claim, disseminating reports, offering context, or exchanging data deemed helpful for coordination are some examples of these actions. Therefore, the study focuses on the communicative activity that platform functions do in the sampled material rather than just their existence.

The relationship between digital engagement and offline participation requires qualification. Christensen (2011) challenges the dismissal of online activity as slacktivism, while Greijdanus et al. (2020) review varied relationships between online activism and offline collective action. This article considers such links through sampled posts and interview accounts without treating them as proof that X alone caused attendance.

D. Analytical Framework

Three complementary perspectives guide the analysis. Public Sphere Theory sensitizes the study to public discussion, questioning, disagreement and accountability claims, while Fraser's (1990) critique keeps inequalities and competing publics in view. Framing Theory directs attention to how economic grievances, rights, responsibility and responses are represented (Entman, 1993). A platform-affordance perspective focuses on practices through which messages circulate and are contested (Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Treem & Leonardi, 2013).

These perspectives guide interpretation rather than predetermine the findings. Not every sampled post is treated as deliberative; media reporting is not automatically classified as activist participation; and engagement metrics are not interpreted as direct measures of political impact. The analysis asks three questions: how selected accounts framed economic grievances and competing interpretations of the Finance Bill; how policy criticism became connected to demands for political and institutional accountability; and how communicative practices supported the circulation and contestation of these claims.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Design and Case

The study used a qualitative single embedded case-study design focused on communication on X during Kenya's 2024 Finance Bill protests. The seven accounts and eight interview participants served as embedded sources within the case (Yin, 2018). The design supports contextual interpretation rather than statistical generalization.

The analysis draws on two datasets: 140 public X posts, comprising a purposive sample of 20 posts from each of seven accounts, and eight semi-structured interviews with activists. The Finance Bill was introduced as National Assembly Bill No. 30 of 2024 and published in the Kenya Gazette Supplement on 9 May 2024 (National Assembly of Kenya, 2024a). The protests and associated public debate raised questions about proposed taxation, economic conditions, political representation and state accountability. The article focuses on how these questions were communicated in the selected posts and understood by interview participants.

B. Account Selection and X Dataset

Seven accounts were purposively selected to provide heterogeneous examples of protest-related communication: Boniface Mwangi and Hanifa Farsafi; the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC); Africa Uncensored; The Elephant; NTV Kenya; and Citizen TV Kenya. The sample includes activist/public-figure accounts, a human-rights organization, independent/investigative and analytical media, and mainstream television news accounts. They are not all individual activists, and their differing institutional positions are relevant to interpreting the content and purposes of their posts.

The dataset covered the protest period from 1 to 30 June 2024 and comprised 20 purposively selected posts from each account. Selection prioritized substantive relevance to policy contestation, framing, discussion, platform-mediated communication,

accountability and participation-related practices. The sample was not random or statistically representative of all posts published during the protest period.

Account-level coding records and original-post source records were used to retain selected post identifiers and document the coding applied to each account. Where an analytical summary abridged a post, it was not treated as a verbatim source for direct quotation. The analysis was conducted on the defined sample of 140 posts.

C. Interviews and Integration of Data

The interview dataset comprises eight semi-structured interviews with participants who had different forms of involvement in the protests. Interviews covered X use, discussion of the Bill, protest narratives, platform practices and perceived links between online communication and participation. Pseudonymous identifiers P-01 to P-08 protect participants' identities.

Interview material contextualizes and triangulates patterns in the post dataset; it is not treated as representative of all protesters. The integration of the two datasets is qualitative and interpretive. Posts provide evidence of public communication as captured in the purposive sample, while interviews provide participants' retrospective accounts of their practices and experiences. Convergence between the datasets supports an interpretation when the sources point towards a similar pattern, but differences are retained because posts and interviews have distinct communicative and evidentiary functions.

D. Analytical Procedure and Trustworthiness

The analysis followed a qualitative coding framework established for the study. Posts were examined for issue or theme, dominant frame, deliberative function, platform affordance, mobilization or participation, theoretical relevance, and contradictory or outlying responses. Account-level coding was synthesized across the seven accounts and compared with interview material.

Framing was interpreted through problem definition, causal attribution, evaluation and proposed response (Entman, 1993). Public discussion was considered through a plural understanding of public communication (Fraser, 1990); platform features were analyzed as practices of circulation, not as evidence of automatic technological effects.

Trustworthiness was supported by retaining the defined sample and account-level coding records, applying standardized categories, comparing interpretations with interview testimony and attributing contested claims. Engagement metrics were treated as indicators of visibility and interaction, not direct measures of participation or impact.

E. Ethics and Limitations

Public accessibility does not remove ethical responsibilities. The analysis avoids reproducing unnecessary personal information, distinguishes audience replies from account-owner statements, and attributes contested allegations unless independently corroborated. Interview participants are identified by pseudonymous codes, and informed consent was obtained before participation. Clearance to proceed with data collection was granted by St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) through an official letter issued by the Vice Chancellor; this clearance is not represented as formal ethics committee approval. A NACOSTI research license had not been issued when data collection was undertaken, and the application remains pending at the time of writing. This regulatory documentation limitation is disclosed transparently.

The study has several limitations. The seven accounts are purposively selected and heterogeneous, so the findings cannot be generalized statistically to all Kenyan citizens, activists or X users. The 140 posts are an analytically focused sample, not a comprehensive record of platform communication. Interviews are retrospective and may reflect participants' later interpretations. The design does not establish causal effects: reported connections between online communication and offline participation are presented as participant accounts and observed communicative pathways, not proof that X independently caused protest attendance.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Contesting the Finance Bill: Economic Grievances and Competing Policy Frames

The selected X posts presented the Finance Bill, 2024 as more than a technical fiscal proposal. They connected taxation and government revenue to questions of household welfare, employment, corruption, public responsibility and political legitimacy. However, these interpretations were not expressed identically across the seven sampled accounts. Activist and public-figure accounts often combined policy criticism with direct advocacy, while media and civil-society accounts communicated the dispute through their respective reporting, analytical and rights-based roles.

Boniface Mwangi's post of 24 June 2024 offered a particularly direct example of the language through which economic grievances were framed:

"Budgeted corruption. Zakayo wants to raise Sh4 trillion ($23b) to run his corrupt government. This is more than Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda budgets combined. Our population is 54 million; Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda's total population is 120 million. #RejectFinanceBill2024" -Boniface Mwangi, BM02, 24 June 2024

The phrase "Budgeted corruption" compresses a policy criticism and an accusation into two words. Rather than presenting the proposed revenue raising as a neutral budgetary measure, the post associates it with alleged corruption and questions the legitimacy of the government's fiscal priorities. The comparison with neighboring countries supplies a numerical rationale for the criticism, while #RejectFinanceBill2024 links the post to a wider public demand. The accusation remains Mwangi's framing; the post itself does not independently establish corruption or verify the comparative budget claims.

Interview evidence similarly indicates that participants understood the dispute through its anticipated economic consequences. One interviewee described the competing interpretations of the Bill as follows:

"From the people's perspective, the bill was presented as a very oppressive bill and that would have negative implication on the lives of people, negative implication on the job opportunities for the young people. And generally, it was presented as a very bad bill for the economy of Kenya and the tax burden for the people of Kenya. On the other side, on the side of government, it was presented as a good bill and a bill that would help government to raise finances to cater for the budget process. So that means there were two sides of the coin." — Interview P-02, transcript extract on framing

The extract identifies a public criticism of the Bill and a competing government rationale. The terms "oppressive" and "tax burden" frame the proposal as a threat to people's lives and employment prospects, while the government rationale is represented as raising revenue for the budget process. The interviewee's description of "two sides of the coin" is important because it acknowledges competing frames rather than suggesting that all participants interpreted the Bill identically.

This pattern is consistent with Entman's (1993) account of framing as the selection and salience of particular aspects of an issue. In the material examined here, economic consequences were made salient through references to the cost of living, taxation, employment and the distribution of public resources. Political responsibility was also made explicit: the interviewee attributed the Bill to the executive and legislature, while Mwangi's post directly attributed the proposed revenue raising to the government. These examples show how a fiscal proposal was interpreted through broader questions about who bears economic costs and who should answer for policy decisions.

The account-level findings indicate differences in emphasis. The selected posts from NTV Kenya and Citizen TV Kenya more often foregrounded taxation, political developments and the institutional response to the Bill. The Elephant's material more explicitly connected the protests to youth identity, collective resistance and the political significance of Generation Z. KHRC emphasized rights and accountability, while Africa Uncensored's reporting provided visual and lived-experience material through which protest events and state responses could be interpreted. These distinctions should not be read as evidence that each account used only one frame. Rather, they indicate differences in emphasis within a heterogeneous sample.

The first finding, therefore, is that economic grievance served as an organizing frame through which the Bill became a broader dispute about government responsibility and public welfare. The posts and interviews show how participants articulated and interpreted this dispute. They do not establish how frequently these frames appeared across all X activity, nor do they demonstrate that any particular frame independently caused protest participation.

B. From Policy Criticism to Accountability Demands: Political Responsibility, Rights and State Action

The sampled communication also moved beyond whether the Finance Bill was economically justified. It raised questions about the responsibility of elected representatives, the legitimacy of state action and the appropriate targets of public pressure. These demands took different forms, including criticism of political decision-making, calls to scrutinize representatives' voting records, and rights-based claims concerning the treatment of protesters.

KHRC's post of 20 June 2024 stated:

"Kenyans, if your MPs voted for the Finance Bill, 2024, they have betrayed you. It's time to recall them. The court has made it easier to remove them from office. Don't let your voice be ignored - hold them accountable now. #RejectFinanceBill2024 #OccupyParliament" - KHRC, Post 08, 20 June 2024

The wording moves from an evaluation of the Bill to a demand directed at elected representatives. "They have betrayed you" supplies a moral judgement; "It's time to recall them" proposes a response; and "hold them accountable now" frames political representation as an ongoing obligation rather than a relationship limited to election day. The hashtags connect this institutional demand to the broader protest discourse. Analytically, the post illustrates how a civil-society account articulated an accountability pathway through electoral and constitutional mechanisms.

Hanifa Farsafi's post of 28 June 2024 provides a related example of continued scrutiny of representatives:

"We still haven't forgotten about NE MPs, literally all of them voted yes. One by one. #RutoMustGo" - Hanifa Farsafi, HF24, 28 June 2024

The phrase "We still haven't forgotten" presents political memory as a resource for continued accountability. The post links MPs' voting behaviour, as characterized by Farsafi, to a demand for political scrutiny after the President's announcement. Its wording presents continued public attention as a means of holding elected representatives accountable.

A particularly revealing example of contestation appears in Mwangi's BM39 post of 27 June 2024. Mwangi argued for occupying Parliament rather than State House, presenting Parliament as the appropriate site for making public demands. He wrote:
"Today, we fully occupy Parliament and make our demands. Parliament is our ground zero, where brave young people sacrificed their lives for a more equal and humane Kenya."
He later stated:
"We are occupying parliament, not State House."
The post's argument linked protest strategy to institutional legitimacy. Parliament was framed as the site where citizens should make demands, while an attempted invasion of State House was presented as a dangerous or counterproductive alternative. The replies, however, show that this position was not universally accepted. One respondent challenged the distinction between the two institutions:
"You say the presidency aka statehouse is an institution and protected area that doesn't warrant being occupied by the citizens. Yet you ask us to occupy parliament which is also an institution and protected area. Don't you see the irony? #RutoMustGo #OccupyStateHouse" — audience reply to BM39
The reply questions the consistency of Mwangi's reasoning and offers an alternative interpretation of institutional legitimacy. Other replies supported his preference for Parliament, while some advocated different targets. The exchange provides evidence of contestation over strategy and institutional authority.
This disagreement complicates any portrayal of X as a space where users simply repeated a unified message. It shows competing positions being articulated, but does not establish that the exchange was inclusive or deliberatively ideal (Fraser, 1990).
Rights-based posts added another dimension to accountability. KHRC's selected material addressed state response, the rights of demonstrators and demands for accountability for alleged violations. Africa Uncensored's selected material similarly included reporting on state action and lived experiences of the protests. These posts are analyzed as public communication, documentation and rights advocacy; the present analysis does not independently establish every reported death, injury, arrest or allegation of unlawful conduct.
The examples show several targets of accountability: elected representatives and their voting records, the government's handling of the Bill, and state institutions in the context of protest response. The evidence concerns the presence and form of these demands, not proof that they produced institutional consequences.

C. Communicating Contestation on X: Hashtags, Visual Narratives and Public Debate

The selected posts included hashtags, replies, reposts, quote-posts, links, images, videos and time-sensitive information. These practices sometimes connected policy interpretation, public expression, coordination and accountability claims. The analysis distinguishes communication about participation from evidence of participation itself.
Mwangi's BM02 post illustrates how a hashtag connected an individual post's economic criticism to a recognizable protest demand. In the BM39 exchange, replies enabled users to challenge the author's strategic argument, introduce alternative proposals and question the consistency of his reasoning. The two posts thus show different communicative functions: the first condensed a policy grievance into a memorable formulation, while the second became a focal point for explicit strategic disagreement.
Interview evidence supports the interpretation that hashtags and live communication were used for more than symbolic expression. In describing coordination during the protests, an interviewee explained:
"People were posting on that hashtag, to reject the finance bill. People were on X spaces, giving direction on either side the police are, this is the side we should go, and such kind of things." — Interview P - 01, transcript extract on coordination
The extract links hashtag use with real-time information exchange and practical directions. It reflects one participant's recollection; it cannot establish the accuracy of every message or whether all users received or acted on the information.
The original-post compilation also contains examples of media and civil-society accounts inviting or circulating public material. For instance, The Elephant's post of 27 June 2024 asked:
"Did you join the recent #RejectFinanceBill2024 demos? Do you have an epic photo, video, or story? Share it with us and let your voice be heard!"
This post invited people to submit photographs, videos or accounts of the demonstrations. It illustrates how an established media account could provide a route for circulating public narratives and experiences. At the same time, a reply questioned the purpose of collecting images and raised concern that they could be used to identify protesters. That response is analytically important: it demonstrates that requests for public contributions could themselves become objects of scrutiny and distrust. The invitation should not be treated as proof that submitted material was used in a particular way, or that the post author endorsed the concerns raised in the reply.
The different account types therefore performed overlapping but distinct communicative roles. Activist accounts combined advocacy with calls for action and discussion of strategy. KHRC used its platform for rights-based claims and institutional accountability demands. Africa Uncensored contributed investigative and visual reporting, while NTV Kenya and Citizen TV

Kenya circulated news and institutional developments. The Elephant connected protest events with youth identity and analytical commentary, as well as inviting public contributions. These roles sometimes converged around shared hashtags or events, but they should not be collapsed into a single category of activist participation.

A platform-affordance perspective explains these patterns without assuming that technical features determine outcomes. Hashtags connected posts, replies enabled contestation, quote-posts circulated commentary, and multimedia carried visual accounts. These practices created opportunities for exchange but also exposed communication to misinformation, privacy risks and disputes over credibility.

D. From Online Communication to Observable Participation

The material suggests several participation pathways: public expression, protest mobilization, practical coordination, representative accountability, rights advocacy and humanitarian support. A mobilization appeal is evidence of a call to act; a location post indicates coordination-oriented communication; an interviewee's account of attending a demonstration is reported offline participation. Engagement metrics alone cannot establish that a user acted.

Interview accounts also described the use of X to circulate protest schedules, locations and real-time information. P-02 recalled that "Schedules were there. Locations were there. Real time information was being shared across the platform." This account suggests that communication was used to navigate an evolving situation, rather than only to express an opinion about the Bill. It remains one participant's recollection and should not be generalized to every protester.

The coded post sample includes posts concerning fundraising, victim support and accountability for resource handling. These examples broaden participation to practical support and public scrutiny, but posts alone do not verify amounts raised, distribution or outcomes.

The evidence identifies several pathways connecting X communication with political participation, but these pathways were varied and non-deterministic. Some communication involved direct mobilization and coordination; other communication centered on public expression, rights advocacy, humanitarian support or continued accountability. The data support an interpretation of X as part of a broader communicative environment, but do not establish that X alone caused attendance or that every online appeal resulted in action.

E. Synthesis and Contribution

Across the findings, the sampled material presents X as a contested space where economic grievances, accountability demands and protest narratives were articulated and circulated. Activist/public-figure accounts, civil-society organizations and media accounts contributed from different positions, sometimes converging around shared events and hashtags.

The contribution lies in connecting three dimensions: framing made the Bill a dispute about economic burden and government responsibility; accountability communication directed demands at representatives and institutions; and platform practices enabled these interpretations to circulate. Interviews add retrospective accounts of information-sharing, discussion and coordination.

Taken together, the findings support a qualified interpretation through Public Sphere Theory, Framing Theory and a platform-affordance perspective. The sample contains public discussion and disagreement, competing interpretations and practical information exchange. It does not establish an ideal or equally accessible deliberative sphere, independent effects of particular frames, technological determinism or causal effects of X on offline participation.

The findings are bounded by the seven purposively selected accounts, 140 posts and eight interviews. They concern the forms and meanings of communication within this sample, not a statistically representative account of all Kenyan X users or the wider protest movement.

V. CONCLUSION

This article examined how selected X accounts contested Kenya's Finance Bill, 2024, and articulated public demands for government accountability during the protest period in Nairobi. Across 140 purposively selected posts from seven heterogeneous accounts, supplemented by eight semi-structured interviews, three patterns were identified. Economic-burden and policy-grievance frames connected proposed taxation to household welfare and political responsibility; contestation extended to elected representatives and state institutions; and hashtags, replies, reposts, quote-posts, multimedia and real-time information supported practices of explanation, circulation, disagreement and coordination.

The findings show why digital protest communication should be analyzed as more than mobilization messaging. In the selected material, policy interpretation, accountability claims and practical communication overlapped. Account roles mattered: activist/public-figure accounts combined advocacy with direct mobilization and scrutiny; KHRC foregrounded rights and institutional accountability; media accounts circulated reporting and official statements; and The Elephant placed greater emphasis on youth identity, collective resistance and analytical commentary. These differences show how actors in distinct communicative positions contributed different forms of material to a contested information environment.

The theoretical contribution lies in bringing together Public Sphere Theory, Framing Theory and a platform-affordance perspective. Public Sphere Theory helps identify discussion, disagreement and accountability claims, while Fraser's (1990) critique cautions against imagining a singular, equally accessible public. Framing Theory clarifies how a fiscal proposal was represented as an economic and political grievance. The platform-affordance perspective draws attention to the practices through which messages circulated and information was exchanged, without assuming that platform features automatically produce democratic outcomes.

The findings must be interpreted within the study's limitations. The posts are not statistically representative; interviews are retrospective and cannot establish causal effects; engagement metrics do not prove participation; and allegations require independent corroboration before being stated as fact. The analysis identifies challenges associated with information circulation, although the study does not measure their prevalence.

Future research could compare platforms, include ordinary users with lower visibility or limited connectivity, and examine how policy frames and accountability claims changed across protest phases. It could also investigate how digital claims were taken up by institutions or connected to sustained civic activity.

DECLARATIONS

A. Funding

This research received no external funding. The publication fee was paid by the student author.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

B. Institutional Clearance and Consent to Participate

Clearance to proceed with data collection was granted by St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) through an official letter issued by the Vice Chancellor. All interview participants provided informed consent before participating in the study.

C. Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study, including selected X posts and interview materials, are subject to institutional access restrictions. Access is restricted to the student author, the supervisors, and the SAUT Directorate of Postgraduate Research, in accordance with the applicable institutional arrangements. Interview materials are not publicly available.

D. Author Contributions

Gilbert Kenya conducted the research and prepared the manuscript under the guidance and supervision of Judith Wanda-Schuetz and Kaanaeli Kaale. All authors contributed to the intellectual development of the manuscript, reviewed the draft, and approved the final version.

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