

Missional insights for engaging Generation Z: A Kenyan perspective

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Abstract

Missional insights for engaging Generation Z (born 1997-2012) require the church to shift from traditional, attractional models to authentic, digitally-first, and intergenerational approaches. Gen Z is characterised as the first post-Christian, techno-savvy generation, often marked by anxiety, yet possessing a deep hunger for authenticity, justice, and spiritual experience. Considering this, the article seeks to present some missional insights on Generation Z (youths, *hereafter* Gen Z) whose protests against Church-State relations climaxed on 25th June 2024, when they stormed Kenya's Parliament and later expressed anger toward churches perceived as indifferent to national hardships. In Gen Z's protests against the "state of the nation", which refers to the perceived over-taxation, overpromising, cynical church-state relations, and the discredited Finance Bill 2024, among other concerns, theo-social vulnerabilities were exposed. In appreciating the religio-communal-interdependent nature of the African context, how can theo-missional concerns be effectively addressed considering the Gen Z revolt; and is Fred Davis' (1989) theoretical model of the growing level of techno-developmental acceptance the ideal tool in counteracting these vulnerabilities? Methodologically, it is quantitative research that utilises social media tools to understand Gen Zs who have been dubbed as 'digital natives' in some quarters. An extensive review of the relevant literature has also been done.

Keywords

Generation Z; missional concerns; #OccupyParliament and #OccupyChurches; social media networks

Introduction

Ordinarily, missional concerns in post-colonial Africa includes, but are not limited to, the need to address the Africanisation of Christianity (inculturation), revising theological curriculums, focussing on Afro-Pentecostalism disquiets, decolonising knowledge, battling economic dependence, navigating religious pluralism, the New Religious Movement's fears, charismatization of ecclesia, social transformation, prophetic voice, xenophobia, ethno-racial tensions, culture-gospel strains, and religion and other pillars of culture (economic, aesthetics, kinship, politics, and ethics). It also includes the youth agenda, equity and equality, gendered leadership, corruption and good governance, and the ecclesiological task in mentoring others. Other missional concerns, within the African context, will include: developmental projects, a non-evangelistic agenda that empowers the needy, missional ecclesiology that is afro-centric and simultaneously apostolic, doctrinal vulnerabilities, and rethinking mission in light of pandemics such as COVID-19 and globalisation.

In his book, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, Jesse Mugambi (1995:176179) has boldly spelt out his missional concerns when he highlighted the future of the Church and contrasts it with the Church of the future in Africa. He says that the Church of the future ought to rehabilitate the following groups: a). Refugees and displaced persons, b). The women, c). Youth and students, d). The disabled, e). The hungry. He, however, did not come out strongly on the agenda of children in the Kindergartens, the Nursery Schools and Sunday schools, among other vulnerable cases. Yet, the authentic future is in the hands of under-15s who constitute 40% of the African masses; and translates to 15% of the global population (United Nations 2024). And with such a significant percentage, it triggers the agenda of youth and students and/or adolescents (Generation Z), which are implied in Mugambi's (1995) book. And with the United Nations (2024) showing that sub-Saharan Africa has the youngest population globally, at 70%, who are cumulatively under the age of thirty, it amounts to a missional concern, as the bigger the size of the population, the more vulnerable the society becomes. While being tagged as the 'youngest continent' connotes potential growth for Africa, the Church and Government's failure to view the Youth Agenda as a missional concern may translate to "sitting on a volcano that is ready

to erupt” (Gathogo 2015:2). While including the under-15, the youth and students in innovative activities and in decision making organs, is a positive step; appreciating missional responsibilities that are well spelt out in the scriptures (Deut 6:6-7, Ex 20:12, Prov 1:8, Prov 13:24, Lk 2:52, Col 3:21) is logical, as it amounts to forearming the vulnerable people with relevant education.

As a concept, “missional” refers to that which is linked to a religious task. Furthermore, a ‘missional Church’ refers to the incarnational ministry¹ in a post-Christendom context (Knoetze 2016). In retrospect, a missional ecclesiastical archetype emphasises reaching out beyond the confines of the Church compound, and dynamically dialogues with the global happenings, as it takes Christological love to diverse societies and contexts. In view of this, a missional perspective goes beyond mere evangelism, Church planting, and conversion to the faith; but addresses diverse cosmological needs (Knoetze 2016), as it builds relationships in diverse contexts and situations. Indeed, acts of service define a missional Church; for while evangelism is a critical pillar in understanding the God of Christendom, holistic discipleship is the ultimate goal.

In Kenya, the overrunning of Parliament during the so-called Black Tuesday by Generation Z, on 25th June 2024, was a climactic moment that brought out youth challenges as a diaconal concern.² They protested the

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- 1 Incarnational ministry refers to the practice of embodying Christ’s love by immersing oneself directly into a local culture or community, rather than ministering from a distance. It prioritises long-term presence, relationship-building, and identification with the needs, language, and lifestyle of the people served (Kabongo 2022). Key examples of Incarnational Ministry include: cross-cultural adaptation, hospitality and presence to others such as opening one’s home to the community, similar to Jesus relying on the hospitality of others during his ministry, relational youth work where ‘adult world’ enters into the culture of adolescents – as in the case of going to high school football games, sitting in the lunchroom, and sharing life with them; and neighbourhood incarnation where one goes to specific neighbourhoods so as share their daily joys and struggles rather than commuting to a ministry site (Knoetze 2016).
 - 2 Key aspects of diaconal concern include: Ministry of charity where we bring Christ’s love to the world through actions, such as ministry in prisons, hospitals, and support for the marginalized; prophetic voice where the missional church advocates for justice and acts as a voice for the voiceless within society; Providing holistic care to the vulnerable, including companionship for the lonely and comfort for the distressed; community equipping as in the case of encouraging Diaconal leaders (deacons) and training church members to perform their own acts of service; and other diaconate works that strives to meet the needs of the community (Kabongo 2022, Knoetze 2016).

Government-sponsored Finance Bill 2024, among other socio-ecclesial concerns; a phenomenon that opened the vulnerability of both Church and State, as the duo were largely seen as singing from one hymnbook. As corruption cases increased, the cost of living went a notch higher, and as health and education sectors appeared to nosedive, it was Gen Z who led countrywide demonstrations in 35 out of 47 counties that constitute Kenya (Kaberia and Nzau 2024). Later, Gen Z's warnings to Church leaders to stop receiving money from some "corrupt" politicians also pointed to the vulnerability of the religious sector, who were ironically getting 'streamlined' by Gen Z (Kaberia and Nzau 2024). And this drives us to the problem under consideration: In appreciating the communal-interdependent nature of the African context, how can such concerns be effectively addressed in light of Gen Z revolts; and does Fred Davis' (1989) theoretical model of the growing level of techno-developmental acceptance provide the ideal tool in counteracting these vulnerabilities? And was the vulnerability of the Church the most significant exposure in these discourses?

Methodology

This is a quantitative research article, whose key research methods include, but are not limited to: a structured approach which often employs designed tools, such as surveys and comparability of data collection; generalizability, correlation of variables, statistical analysis, numerical data, experiments, observation, longitudinal studies (examining trends and patterns), and descriptive appeal through surveys and observations. In this case, it largely employs secondary sources such as credible media sources, refereed journal articles that raise issues that are connected to the problem under consideration, and an extensive review of other published works that are relevant to the Gen Z revolution that exposes Church and State's vulnerability; and utilises a critical-analytical research design. With limited published works on the so-called Gen Z revolution in Kenya since 25th June 2024 when they caught the national and global attention (Nabiswa 2025), media sources have remained a critical partner in gathering and correlation of data.

Besides, the use of mainstream³ and social media, as breakthroughs of science and technology, in gathering and correlating data, their relevance in modern research is a testament to the fact that their critical value cannot be gainsaid. In particular, utilising some of the aspects of mainstream media and/or traditional news sources (television, radio, and newspapers) and social media (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok and WeChat among others) resonates with the Kenyan Gen Z tools of communicating their idiosyncrasies and practices (Sharabati 2018). Interestingly, a couple of scholars have underlined the value of social media in higher education, including motivating educational discourses, improving interactions, and building collaborative capabilities (Kolan and Dzandza 2017). Certainly, social media has transformed people’s lifestyles immeasurably and has fast-tracked knowledge acquisition across the globe (Sharabati 2018), as epistemological sharing and socialisation receive a major boost. In view of this, Fred Davis (1989) utilises the diagram below to build a theoretical model that relevantly demonstrates the level of acceptance for technological developments, which affirms the mainstream and social media as epistemological tools that cannot escape our scholarly attention.

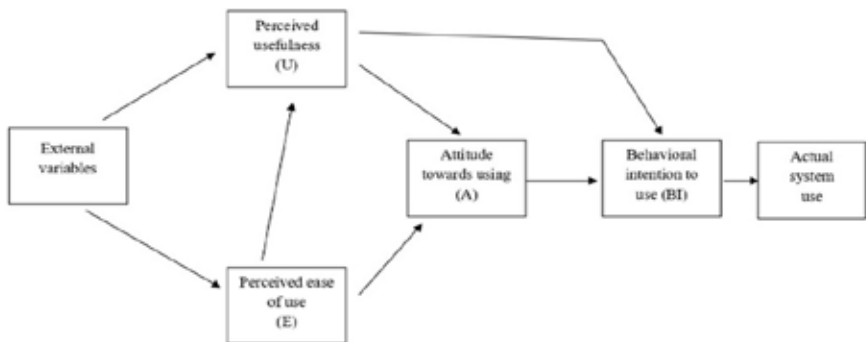


Figure One on Technology Acceptance Model (Davis 1989)

3 Mainstream media (MSM) refers to large, traditional news organisations – such as print, television, and radio—that reach broad audiences and significantly influence public opinion. These outlets, including major networks like the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and The New York Times, generally emphasise professional, editorial-led journalism and are often controlled by corporations (Sharabati 2018).

Thus, Davis' (1989) theoretical model confirms this treatise's hypothesis that mainstream and social media are effective technological tools that aid knowledge acquisition. As Gen Z shared their views on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, Threads, ShareChat, and LinkedIn (Acheaw 2016), among other social media websites, it was easier for the researcher to follow up. Certainly, there are obvious dangers and threats in social media, unlike in mainstream media, as verification of posted works is not always done. Technokinesis (the psychic ability to mentally manipulate electronic and digital technology) is another danger that a researcher should guard against. Besides, cyberbullying, privacy breaches, and disinformation are other vulnerable areas. Furthermore, as Kenya's Gen Z shared videos regarding their demonstrations against the State and the "wayward" Church on social media websites (Gen Z 2024a, Gen Z 2024b), their telemechanics (using an automation to operate a mechanism from a distance) could as well create a non-existent vulnerability that could not be cured easily. Nevertheless, these social media weaknesses do not erase the scholarly value of social media, particularly in motivating educational discourses, and in building collaborative capabilities (Kolan and Dzandza 2017)."

Understanding Generation Z

Generation Z, popularly called Gen Z, refers to persons who were born between 1997 and 2012. In this case, Z is the abbreviation for "Zoomer", which is etymologically derived from the fact that it is the generation that is known to "zoom" the internet (Parker and Igielnik 2020). It differs from the Millennials in that the latter precedes it. Both generations are generally viewed as techno-savvy, even though Gen Z has the upper hand in this. Across the generations since the 20th century are: The Greatest Generation (1901–1924), The Silent Generation (1925–1945), Baby Boomers (1946–1964), Generation X (1965–1980), Millennials/Generation Y (1981–1996), Generation Z (1997–2012), Generation Alpha (2013–2025), and Generation Beta (2025–2039) (Cottrell 2024). As Sarah Cottrell has cautioned, "The exact timeline of each generation isn't exactly easy to decipher. While there is *some* consensus among social scientists about the general periods associated with each generation, there's no clear-cut line defining when one generation ends and another begins" (Cottrell 2024:1). In demonstrating

the uniqueness of Generation Z, Kim Parker and Ruth Igielnik (2020) have explained that it provides the first children who were born into a global society which immediately taught them to connect, largely through the social media, particularly through Smartphones, Tablets, and Screens. Like their immediate predecessors (the Millennials, 1981-86), Gen Ze's (or Gen Z) are characteristically inclusive, environmentally conscious, politically alert, appreciate the value of voting in an election, and easily accept others. This socio-political alertness is well replicated in all social institutions, as they understand their limitations and institutional expectations, a phenomenon that explains their open conflicts with both Church and state in Kenya prior and after June 2024 protests.

Main concerns in Gen Z revolt

Gen Zs are generally the children of Generation X (people born between 1965 and 1980). The latter raised them to be independent-minded and be “able to figure out things for themselves,” a phenomenon that makes them “need less positive reinforcement, as opposed to Millennials” (Tanner 2025:1). In the United States of America, the Gen Z “are the most racially and ethnically diverse generation” and who are globally the largest and trailblazers (:1). In the Kenyan case, they viewed the socio-ecclesial context as wanting and in need of radical surgery; as it rewarded vices as opposed to virtues (Kaberia and Nzau 2024). As Alex Nabiswa (2025:1) has noted,

What began as peaceful youth-led demonstrations against a contentious tax bill tragically escalated, resulting in the deaths of 25 youths killed by police bullets as they engaged in protest. The turmoil has also led to extensive destruction of property and businesses estimated at over 2.4 billion Kenyan shillings. On June 25, the country saw its Parliament and City Hall engulfed in flames after lawmakers advanced the highly controversial bill to its final stage ... Corruption remains a persistent issue, undermining economic progress and eroding public trust in government institutions. Efforts to combat corruption have been hampered by political interference, inadequate enforcement, and systemic weaknesses in governance structures. Youth unemployment is another critical issue affecting Kenya and the broader African continent, where a significant

portion of the population is under 30 years old. The high levels of unemployment, coupled with disparities in access to education and economic opportunities, contribute to youth disillusionment and disenfranchisement.

Moreover, Samson Kapinde (2025:8) contends that the Gen Z were not just protesting against heavy taxation and Church-state ‘alliances’ amidst poverty, but had other factors such as bad governance, “corruption, ethnicity and unaccounted foreign public debt.” Kapinde (2025:8) goes on to say that the #Occupy Parliament, #Occupy Churches, #Occupy City Hall tags were a clear vote of no confidence against Church and state. By failing to trust legislators, the executive arm of government, and the Church, the Gen Z were sounding an alarm that society was headed in the wrong direction. Kapinde (2025:8) further contends that the “widespread lamentation that the political class had captured Churches in Kenya; and that clerics used Churches as spaces for *politik*”, was equally irking to the general populace. They only intervened by protesting on behalf of the general society who were stoically observing the unfolding scenario. Further, the Gen Z were attempting to “block the conspiracy by the clergy and politicians from using Churches to legitimise the oppressive economic policies drafted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Many Churches that had invited politicians for fundraising initiatives were forced to cancel the events fearing the youths’ wrath” (Kapinde 2025:8).

This implies the Gen Z were also seeking to push the Church to reclaim her lost prophetic voice, which was evident during the dark days of single-party dictatorships of the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, a prophetic Church is a missional Church, a feat that she lost in the 21st century. But during the 1980s and 1990s,

Bishop Henry Okullu of the Anglican Diocese of Maseno teamed up with Gitari and other like-minded Church leaders (such as the Revd Dr Timothy Njoya of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Africa, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches from 1988 to 1993; the Rev Dr Julius Kobia; Bishop Prof. Zablon Nthamburi of the Methodist Church; Archbishop Raphael Mwana’a Nzeki of the Catholic Church; Archbishop Manases Kuria of the Anglican Church of Kenya (1980-2002); Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth of the

Kisumu Diocese of the Catholic Church; Archbishop John Njue of the Catholic Church, and Bishop Alexander Muge of the Eldoret Anglican Diocese), in saying that seventy percent of the sixth Kenyan parliament was selected and not elected [among other state malpractices] (Gathogo 2007:243)

In decrying the lost prophetic voice of the missional Church, Kapinde (2025) appreciates that this is a pan-African problem which is also evident in post-Apartheid South Africa, where the once vocal Church went “secular” as the cleric became all manner of state operatives, administrators, government appointees, as some took strategic positions in the national politics. To this end, Kapinde (2025:8) expresses this pan-African concern, thus:

J.G. Strydom raises pertinent issues concerning the moribund gospel preached in contemporary Churches in South Africa (Strydom 1997). He observes that post-apartheid South Africa is not free of corruption, economic exploitation, xenophobia and discriminatory policies, yet the Church is silent. The pulpit silence of South African clergy is well captured by Johan Cilliers (2015), who wonders where prophetic preachers have disappeared. He recounts the prophetic preaching of Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak and Beyers Naudé during apartheid, and their replacement with those who legitimise the status quo and resist the disruptive influences of the pulpit (Cilliers 2015:374). Like Kenya, many South Africans have lost faith in the Church as they search for a new theological identity.

Although the Kenyan Gen Z revolts (June 2024) did not trigger a regime change, unlike Bangladesh where they forced the Prime Minister (Sheikh Hasina) to flee from Dhaka on 5 August 2024 after a 3-weeks revolt (Tanner 2025), they ‘forced’ the Kenyan President (William Ruto) to engage the opposition leader (Raila Odinga); and a broad-based government was eventually formed (Nabiswa 2025). They also “forced” the Anglican Church, which is the largest protestant Church in Kenya, to bar politicians from speaking within the Church; and make their respective giving silently (Citizen 2025).

“Occupy Churches” mantra

As a Kenyan catchphrase, “Occupy Churches” was ushered in by the Gen Z in June 2024, as they urged their comrades to come out in large numbers and stop Churches and their leadership from receiving huge sums of money from politicians, especially at a time when inflation had reduced ‘everyone’ to a pauper. Seen as proceeds of corruption, the Gen Z could not understand how some privileged members of the political class were doing well economically, and donating extravagantly to some selected Churches, yet the 2023-2025 national inflation led several businesses to close shops, and scores rendered jobless (Nabiswa 2025). During this period, at least two political leaders were trending on social media after they donated 20 million Kenya shillings (154, 800 USD) at ago, in two different Church services; and continued to donate across the various Churches (Al Jazeera 2025). Without necessarily appealing to biblical exegesis, some Gen Z were insisting that giving should only be done in secret, as God promises to reward such ‘non-Pharisaic’ actions (Mt. 6:1–4). They were also reading mischief in such hefty donations, as unholy alliances were bound to ‘kill’ the Church, which has historically stood as the conscience of society. Some Church leaders would counter this by invoking the biblical story of the poor widow (Lk 21:1–4; Mk 12:41–44, Embu 2025) whose giving was visible to the public, as Jesus himself pronounced it. Coming from a communalistic society, open giving is viewed as a hallmark of a true African Christian, an act of solidarity, and a form of religio-social engagement (Gathogo 2001).

After the June 25, 2024, parliamentary storming, Kenyans hoped that the country had been reborn. As the President sacked the entire Cabinet following the massive protests, Kenyans hoped that a new ‘clean’ Cabinet was to be re-appointed. They also hoped that Politicians who were arrogantly displaying affluence amidst the poverty of the masses would be censured in diverse ways. Similarly, they hoped that clerics would stop their collaborations with the donating politicians (Nabiswa 2025). While there were real changes to the national psyche after the June 25 demonstrations, pockets of “bad” habits were gradually sneaked back after a break. In this case, Jesus Winner Church, also called under two other names (Chapel or Ministry), became a target for Gen Z, among other ecclesiastical outfits.

On Sunday, March 9, 2025, massive Gen Z youths gathered at the Jesus Winner Ministry/Church, at Roysambu, in the environs of Nairobi city, and protested against a huge donation that had been given to the Church by a senior government officer, during the previous week (Ominde 2025).

Previously, they were mobilising under the hashtag #OccupyJesusWinner on X(Twitter). Their concerns were that there was a misallocation of resources amidst economic hardships, as Senior government operatives took public monies to the church so as to earn political support during the forthcoming general elections, slated for 10 August 2027. One of the pressing matters that needed more allocation of funds, they insisted, was the Social Health Insurance Fund (SHIF). In demonstrating their knowledge of digital activism, Gen Z flooded the local Bishop, Edward Mwai, “with messages and calls” and jammed the handset, a phenomenon that forced him to “change his phone number” which he had used for the last 15 years (Ominde 2025:1). And although there was heavy Police presence within the precincts of the Church, before the planned attacks by Gen Z, rioter’s activities still took place. During this messy environment where the Church service was interrupted by the youths, the Kenyan Police strived to keep law and order and arrested dozens of Gen Z operatives (Ciuri 2025).

As a counter to the Gen Z digital activism, some Pastors (mainly the Afro-Pentecostal wing of the Church) responded in diverse cases by utilising social media networks. They employed biblical texts in their defence of these huge donations (Embu 2025). They argued that judging all politicians as embezzlers of public funds is in itself unscriptural, as it contradicts the dictum, “thou shalt not judge” (Mt 7:1-5). President William Ruto who also claims to be an evangelical Christian, defended this hefty giving when he said in part, thus:

My giving is towards God, to fight drugs among the youths, by ensuring that the Church plays a key role in ensuring morality among the youths. ... The Devil has become very arrogant in Kenya. I want to say this, as the President of Kenya and by God’s grace, the leader of this Nation: The Bible tells us in Daniel 11:32 that those who know their God will be strong and will do great exploits. I want to say Kenya shall know God, and we shall do great exploits ... Do not be intimidated by social media warriors [Gen Z] saying

we cannot build churches for God; we shall build churches in this country. We shall build God's Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail. Those who are against the Word of God in Kenya and those [who] are against the building of sanctuaries in Kenya will fail; they will not succeed because they will not overcome us (Ominde 2025:1).

Towards a missional church

Jonathan Leeman (2010:1) traces the missional church story back to conversations that started within the ecumenical and missiological circles in the 1950s and slightly earlier. He argues that the “missional church story” took place about the same time that Donald McGavran's Church Growth theories⁴ were arousing interest among evangelicals in the United States of America. He says, thus:

Darrell Guder didn't coin the term, but this Princeton Seminary professor suggests that the book *Missional Church*, which he co-wrote and edited in 1998, must be held accountable, it appears, for the rapid spread of the term *missional* in many circles of discussion dealing with the situation of the church in North America ... At a conference of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1952, Wilhelm Anderson, building on the work of Karl Barth, proposed that both church and mission should be taken up into the *missio Dei* – the mission of God. Missions is not just a function of the church. And the church is not just the outcome of missions. Rather, both are grounded in a Triune God on mission. The Father sent the Son; the Father and Son sent the Spirit; and now the Spirit sends

4 Donald McGavran (1887–1990), the father of the modern **Church Growth Movement**, developed his theory by moving away from traditional mission methods to focus on how people become Christians within their own social structures. He defined church growth as “effective evangelism” – specifically, finding the lost and bringing them into responsible membership in Christian churches. His approach blended theological conviction with sociological and anthropological research to understand why some churches grow while others remain stagnant. Key Principles of McGavran's Theory can be categorized into three pillars, namely: theological (where it was rooted in the Great Commission and the authority of the Bible), sociological (where he used some insights from anthropology and sociology to understand how societies change), and practical (a phenomenon where he focused on effective methods and “ruthless research” to achieve growth) (McIntosh 2019).

the church. The church has a missionary – we now say missional – nature.” (p.1)

Leeman (2010:1) goes on to explain that the basic premise of the missional church is that “missions is not simply one of the functions or programs of a church”, as it constitutes the very heart of ecclesia. In other words, missional, as a concept, is taken from Jesus words: “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (Jn 20:21). Considering this, Cray (2017) explains how the Anglican Church became “missional”, thus:

At the local level there is a new imagination about the forms the church can take for the sake of mission. Missional imagination and missional leadership are being released, often in unexpected places. Instead of being trapped within a tightly defined traditional picture of church, mainline Christians are imagining being church in ways they would not have considered before. Fundamentally this is a grassroots movement of the Spirit’ (p.102).

As noted in the introductory section, missional concerns in post-colonial Africa include, but are not limited to, contextualization, inculturation, revising theological curricula, decolonising knowledge, battling economic dependence, and navigating religious pluralism among other concerns. The Gen Z concerns on ‘unholy’ alliances between church and state, use of technology to mobilise their membership, and their general use of modern sciences become a missional concern, as the latter can also be used to disciple them effectively, as with the rest of society.

Undoubtedly, the Gen Z revolt against the “unholy” alliances between the Church and state in Kenya has opened the need to revisit the ideal missional Church and the resultant missional paradigm, as opposed to the attractional model that refuses to be objective and critical of the context and situation. A missional Church appreciates God’s revolutionary grace, which Bonhoeffer (1949) described as “costly grace”.

In this regard, Geoffrey Njogu (2018) insists that the missional Church must learn from the German Evangelist, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose concerns were expressed during the 1930s Nazi regime. This will lead the Church to embrace a concept of “radical focusing”, a phenomenon that will

be critical in addressing the myriads of problems facing the youth and the rest of society. He says, thus:

By “Radical Focusing”, it means employing the whole armour for combat in our bid to dismantle this destructive trajectory that principally threatens to wipe out the youth, and the boy-child in particular. The concept of radical focusing is largely inspired by Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s concept of the “Costly Grace.” In this concept of ‘costly grace’ in Nazi Germany of the 1930s, Bonhoeffer fought injustices to the point of his own physical destruction during the era of Adolf Hitler. Owing to the sad scenarios of the day, Bonhoeffer inspired us to fight vices to the very end and radically focus on the noble agenda throughout (Njogu 2018:1).

Njogu (2018:8) recalls Bonhoeffer’s 1949 publication, *The Cost of Discipleship*, which was initially entitled *Nachfolge* (Discipleship), and widely viewed as a classic Christian treatise. It is in this book, initially published during the heydays of Adolf Hitler’s brutal regime in 1937, that the concept of the Costly Grace for the missional Church was introduced to the global scene. In vouching for the costly grace, Bonhoeffer (1949:1) says that the “cheap grace [in contrast] is grace without discipleship, [and] grace without the cross” and/or responsibility to the needy neighbour.

Njogu (2018) goes on to recall how Bonhoeffer (1949) sought to retrace ecclesiastical history, as the Church spread across global contours, a phenomenon where the missional Church was lost to secularisation. This drove it to entertain non-missional aspects that contradicted the “demands of obedience to Christ to the dictates of the society” (cf Rom 12:1–3, Njogu 2018:9). Henceforth, “the world was Christianised, and grace became its common property” (Bonhoeffer 1949:2), a phenomenon that made grace to be taken for granted. This widespread acceptance, however, carried the risk of cheapening grace, making it a superficial aspect of culture rather than a transformative force in people’s lives.

In the Kenyan context, the quest for a missional Church, after the 25th June 2024 Gen Z revolt, points out to the need of surpassing the attractional church model and embrace cosmological Christ who engages all pillars of culture (religion, politics, economics, ethics, kinship and aesthetics) (Kibicho 2006). In light of the foregoing, engaging the state uncritically

and/or failing to utilise media networks and dialogue with all stakeholders, including the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z among others, for updates on the local and national concerns, will not augur well for the holistic prosperity of the country. Relationality and interdependence, as lived conceptual factors in the African context, play well for the Kenyan context – as all stakeholders will need to dance in the same rhythm. In this case, as in other variables, working with groups in society is a missional expectation; but being seen as a mere department of the state is neither missional nor an attractional model of the Church.

Critical appreciation

Although there are challenges in discipling Gen Z, who are loosely called ‘digital natives’, as elders may not be techno-savvy, a missional church must strive hard towards this end. As ecclesiastical leadership demonstrates humility to Gen Z, maintaining a strong relationship with them is equally important. Discipling the Gen Z will not just involve guidance in their spiritual growth via applying faith, mentoring, and teaching, but also utilising the social media networks such as: X(twitter), Messenger, Telegram, Threads, ShareChat, Xiaohongshu (RedNote), Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok and WeChat (Sharabati 2018, Acheaw 2016), among others, that they are conversant with. To mentor the Gen Z without understanding them, and speaking their ‘language’, as is the case today, will only aid alienation and disconnect. This resonates with Pope John Paul II’s (cited in Njino 1992:7) famous aphorism, thus: “Teach Latin to the Youth, [but] it is not enough to know Latin, [rather it] is [more] important to know the Youth.”

In appreciating the socio-ecclesial vulnerability that was exposed by the Gen Z as they stormed some designated institutions, it comes out clearly that discipleship will be done within the African context of interdependence and community; and within the framework of social media networks that the latter utilises fervently. Appreciating that Elders or specialists such as: Medicine men/women, Diviners/Mediums, Blacksmiths, Priests, Rainmakers, Prophets/Seers and leaders, in the African indigenous society were always held with a lot of respect (Mbiti 1969), is an important

recollection for a society that is diverting from this trend. If such ancestral recollections of respect trigger the value of interdependence across professional dexterity, it will eventually minimise some of the vulnerabilities noted herein. Indeed, the techno-savvy generation will need Elders' counsel from time to time, just as elders would need them for technological updates.

Undoubtedly, Fred Davis' (1989) theoretical model, which endorses the view that technological developments are becoming societal norms, hence earning broad-based acceptance, cannot be taken at face value. For society to enjoy the benefits of technological acceptance across the board, collegiality across gender and age divides will deliver the promise. This translates to vouching for a symbiotic relationship across the various actors in the socio-ecclesial activities. Undeniably, a missional Church will not escape this great breakthrough of science and technology just as the writer of Hebrews 2:3 cautions against eternal ruin when he poses the question: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Clearly, escaping an agenda that has the potential of improving the quality of life is tantamount to fuelling vulnerability rather than working against.

From the foregoing, post-June 2024 missional engagement must address the Kenya's Gen Z Movement's demand for radical transparency. It has to address key critical concerns: First, digital skepticism has to be addressed, as Gen Z navigates high tech-facilitated violence and state surveillance. The state has to offer safe, encrypted online spaces devoid of frightening surveillances. Second, missional engagement with Gen Z will have to address their intergenerational trauma, as they harbour deep grief from the June 2024 protests; as some were censured by state operatives and the 'legal' systems. The Church and state have to provide safe healing spaces. Such healing spaces may include: community-led healing circles, somatic workshops, and cultural reconnection therapies where storytelling amongst other models reclaims personal identity. Establishing who stewards these critical spaces remains another concern. Third is the need for decentralized leadership, as the Gen Z operates in leaderless, digital networks. In their relevant spaces, the church and state have to shift from rigid, top-down structures to peer-to-peer discipleship. The fourth key concern amongst the Gen Z is the civic disillusionment, as the youths face systemic joblessness and distrust the ruling compradors. The ecclesiastical society has to

connect theological hope with physical, economic empowerment rather than competing on how best they can appear to be in working harmony with the state. Conversely, this engagement falls short of addressing Gen Z concerns from the perspective of indigenous knowledge systems and its resultant religiosity. Indeed, one may wonder whether there is any authentic epistemology in Africa devoid of indigenous knowledge.

Conclusion

The research article sought to understand the missional insights considering the Gen Z revolt in Kenya, where youths took to the streets in more than 35 out of 47 counties that constitute the country. The storming and partial burning of Kenya's Parliament on 25 June 2024 remains the climactic moment since 18 June 2024 when street protests began. Previously, their protests were confined to social media websites. With Bangladesh's Gen Z enforcing a regime change on 5 August 2024, after 3-weeks revolts, a techno-savvy way of dealing with the former became a necessity. The Gen Z's #OccupyParliament, #OccupyChurches, #OccupyCityHall and #OccupyJesusWinner's Church hashtags also make the Church, which should be beyond suspicion, as guilty as the state, as being accused of allying with a "corrupt" government operatives hurts the Church. Donating generously to some selected churches, among politicians, may hurt her missional agenda to the cosmos. In its findings, the article has established the critical role of technological devices in promoting and/or addressing the socio-ecclesial agenda of the 21st century. While discipling Gen Z, the missional Church may need to equally employ social media networks such as Threads, ShareChat, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, X(Twitter), Messenger, Telegram, WhatsApp, TikTok and WeChat, among others, to build relationships that are simultaneously rooted in the Bible and the relational concepts that define the African context. To this end, Missional insights for engaging Generation Z prompt the church to shift from traditional, attractional models to authentic ones and embrace digital technology as one of the many ways of reaching out and/or discipling the modern generations.

In other words, a mere call for the "prophetic voice" of the church will not do justice if the Gen Z concerns are not addressed. With the under-15

constituting 40% of the African masses, which translates to 15% of the global population, the techno-savvy youth agenda becomes a missional concern (Jn 3:16). Further, with the sub-Saharan Africa having the youngest population globally (at 70%); and who are cumulatively under the age of thirty (United Nations 2024), the need to fully embrace the mainstream and social media as effective technological tools that aids knowledge acquisition, as noted in Davis' (1989) works, becomes the ideal way of discipling and imparting ecclesial epistemologies to the masses of people in Africa and beyond.

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