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Social Media and Governance: The Yin and Yang of the New Public Governance (NPG) Age

Master Thesis

at the Chair for Information Systems and Information Management
(University of Münster)

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Date of Submission: 2025-06-02

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This master's thesis was conducted in strict adherence to the **Official Secrets Act (OSA)** and the **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**. This was necessitated by the inclusion of material relating to internal Kenyan government mechanisms provided by Kenyan state actors. All data collection and processing were carried out within the European Union (EU) under the supervision of an EU-based academic consortium.

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I hereby declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this Master Thesis titled “Social Media and Governance: The Yin and Yang of the New Public Governance (NPG) Age” is my own work. I confirm that each significant contribution to and quotation in this thesis that originates from the work or works of others is indicated by proper use of citation and references.

Münster, 02 June 2025



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Abbreviations

AG	Attorney General
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BDA	Big Data Analytics
BPMN	Business Process Model and Notation 2.0
CA/CAK	Communications Authority of Kenya
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CoB	Controller of Budget
CoK	Constitution of Kenya, 2010
COMPAS	Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CS	Cabinet Secretary
DG	Director-General
EA	East Africa
E-Government	Electronic Government
E-Participation	Electronic Participation
EU	European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
Gen Z	Generation Z
GoK	Government of Kenya
ICR	Inter-Coder Reliability
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICTA	Information and Communication Technology Authority
IG	Inspector General of Police
IS	Information Systems
KICA	Kenya Information and Communications Act
KIPPRA	Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis
KRA	Kenya Revenue Authority
KSG	Kenya School of Government
KUL	Katholieke University Leuven
LLM/LLMs	Large Language Model(s)
MERS	Middle East Respiratory Syndrome
ML	Machine Learning
NCIC	National Cohesion and Integration Commission
NIS	National Intelligence Service
NPG	New Public Governance
NPM	New Public Management
ORPP	Office of the Registrar of Public Participation
OSA	Official Secrets Act of 1968
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PPB	Public Participation Bill
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
PS	Purposive Sampling
PSC	Public Service Commission
QUAL	Qualitative Methodology
QUAN	Quantitative Methodology
SARS	Special Anti-Robbery Squad
SMS	Social Media-Based Systems
SRC	Salaries and Remuneration Commission

ST	Stakeholder Theory
SVM	Support Vector Machines
TPA	Traditional Public Administration
U.S.A.	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organisation

Abstract

This thesis examines the system attributes that enable and inhibit the use of social media for e-participation by Kenyan state actors to fulfil their public participation duties as outlined in the Constitution of Kenya (CoK) (The Republic of Kenya, 2010). It also explores the force-multiplying and attenuating nature of the interactions between these system attributes. The aim is to examine how state actors' perceptions of the system attributes shape the interests that inform their continued use of the technology. Guided by three research questions—what system attributes enable, what system attributes inhibit, and how these system attributes interact—it applies two complementary conceptual frameworks. The primary framework is Cenfetelli's (2004) Enabler–Inhibitor Framework which classifies the perceptions of state actors with respect to the system attributes they encounter. Stakeholder Theory (ST) for e-government by Rose et al. (2018) provides the secondary framework that allows further analysis through the normative, instrumental, and descriptive dimensions. These dimensions provide a means to explore how perceptions of state actors interact with their interests that underpin their decision to continue using social media for e-participation. A PRISMA-compliant literature review is paired with five semi-structured interviews and a one-month structured observation of eleven institutional social media pages. These pages are representative of all major constitutionally and legally established government entities in Kenya. The analysis of literature and empirical data identifies six system attributes that enable participation: **social media platform affordances, socio-economic factors, competence and strategies of public officials, citizen mobilisation, data-driven policymaking**, and the capability to **uphold democratic principles**. Three inhibiting system attributes are also identified: **disinformation and misinformation, hate content and activities**, and **security**—the latter emerging solely from the empirical data. The analysis of disinformation and misinformation contributes to the introduction of a novel term—*networked irrationality*—derived from established literature. It captures a dynamic exemplified by disinformation and misinformation. The system attributes underlying the enabling and inhibiting perceptions were found to interact in ways that deeply shape the nature of social media e-participation for state actors. Overall, the findings reveal broad convergences between global literature and empirical data along with divergences that result from contextual and temporal factors. Social media platform affordances are determined to be the foundational enabling system attribute, from which all others are directly derived. Their ambivalent nature—their ability to both promote and discourage participation—renders all other derived system attributes ambivalent as well. Although the interview sample size is modest, the study attains theoretical saturation through triangulation with structured observations, lending robustness to its findings. Therefore, the governance insights and policy recommendations it provides to Kenyan state authorities are the result of a scientifically credible process.

1 Social Media and Governance

Runya et al. (2015) observe that modern governance has shifted away from rigid bureaucratic structures toward a more dynamic and participatory model where citizens actively engage in decision-making. This shift reflects a broader transformation in public administration paradigms—from Traditional Public Administration (TPA), which prioritised hierarchy and bureaucratic control, to New Public Management (NPM), which introduced market-driven efficiency, and more recently, to New Public Governance (NPG), which emphasises collaborative democratic engagement (Runya et al., 2015).

This paradigm shift is particularly evident in Kenya, where public participation became a constitutional principle with the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 (CoK). Article 10(2)(a) of the CoK underscores the requirement for public participation in governance by stating: “*The national values and principles of governance include—patriotism, national unity, sharing and devolution of power, the rule of law, democracy, and participation of the people*” (The Republic of Kenya, 2010). The CoK reflects a broader international trend toward inclusive, participatory governance, as illustrated by Lin and Kant (2021). Specifically, citizen engagement is increasingly leveraged to ensure fair and transparent decision-making, thereby improving institutional legitimacy (Lin & Kant, 2021).

One solution countries have adopted to enhance collaboration between governments and citizens is e-government (Abdulkareem et al., 2022; Adnan et al., 2022; Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021). E-government refers to the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into governance frameworks, streamlining service delivery and facilitating citizen participation (Abdulkareem et al., 2022; Adnan et al., 2022). As illustrated by Adnan et al. (2022), e-government has evolved through three key phases—e-government 1.0, 2.0, and the current 3.0—each representing a shift toward more proactive, citizen-centric governance. E-government 1.0 replaced paper-based transactions with online service delivery but remained a one-way communication mechanism. Later, e-government 2.0 introduced two-way interaction between citizens and government, enabling participation and improving transparency. Currently, e-government 3.0 offers more efficient and individualised service delivery through advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) (Adnan et al., 2022). This evolution reflects a growing emphasis on ensuring that policy-making and service delivery align with public needs and expectations (Adnan et al., 2022; Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021).

Some scholars treat e-government and e-participation as synonymous (Adnan et al., 2022; Peristeras et al., 2009). However, others argue that e-government functions as an umbrella

term encompassing a range of digital government services, including e-courts, e-consultation, e-revenue, e-customs, and e-participation itself (Abdulkareem et al., 2022). For the purposes of this thesis, e-participation is defined as a subset of e-government that entails the use of ICT by state actors to engage citizens in governance processes (Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021; Yao & Xu, 2022). This definition aligns with the work of Randma-Liiv (2022), who conceptualises the government as the “supply side” of e-participation, responsible for organising and administering participatory mechanisms. Conversely, citizens represent the “demand side” or “society side”, utilising the services provided by the government (Randma-Liiv, 2022). Accordingly, e-participation is best understood as a dynamic interaction between its two primary stakeholders: citizens and the government.

Among e-participation tools, social media—integral to the e-government 2.0 paradigm—is one of the most significant mechanisms for facilitating citizen engagement (Adnan et al., 2022). Social media e-participation is a subset of e-participation that refers to institutional mechanisms that incorporate citizen input through social media platforms into formal governance processes (Arayankalam & Krishnan, 2022). These platforms are web-based applications that emerged from the Web 2.0 revolution (Adnan et al., 2022; Arayankalam & Krishnan, 2022). At their core, they facilitate the creation and dissemination of user-generated content (Arayankalam & Krishnan, 2022). Examples include Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat (Lin & Kant, 2021). Their popularity as e-participation conduits has been driven by the global rise in social media adoption among citizens (Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021; Lin & Kant, 2021).

Social media has increasingly permeated Kenya’s civic engagement environment across multiple levels and through various platforms (Ndeta, 2022; Omanga, 2019; Wamuyu, 2023). As early as 2015, key state institutions—such as national government ministries—had adopted social media as a medium for public communication and engagement (Ndeta, 2022). A pivotal illustration of this transformation was the live town hall event hosted on X (formerly Twitter) between President Dr. William Samoei Ruto and Kenyan citizens, as reported by Soy (2024) for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Convened in response to the Finance Bill 2024 protests, this event marked a historic moment: President Ruto became the first Kenyan head of state to engage the public through a real-time, interactive digital forum. It underscored the ambivalent nature of social media system attributes—revealing how state actors may perceive them as both enabling and inhibiting. While the president was able to engage candidly with citizens, he was also subjected to intense public hostility during the session, facilitated by those same system attributes (Soy, 2024). This event became the catalyst for the present study, highlighting the perceptions that Kenyan state actors may develop when interacting with social media system attributes during e-participation.

Consequently, the objective of this thesis is to investigate the system attributes of social media platforms that enable or inhibit their active use for e-participation by state actors in Kenya. As illustrated by President Ruto's historic X (formerly Twitter) town hall, it is essential to understand how digital engagement dynamics are shaped by these attributes in order to develop strategies that foster a viable and sustainable working environment for state actors. Failure to do so may lead Kenyan state actors to perceive social media as an unusable tool—thereby losing out on its established dominance as the most popular platform for e-participation (Tai et al., 2020).

For the purposes of this thesis, state actors are defined as individuals who carry out duties on behalf of, and under the authority of, the state, in a manner compatible with the CoK. This includes **state officers**, **judicial officers**, and **public officers** as set out in Article 260. In essence, state actors constitute parts of the structure through which sovereign power is delegated and exercised within the nation-state, as outlined in Article 1 of the CoK (The Republic of Kenya, 2010).

This study is guided by two complementary frameworks: Stakeholder Theory (ST), as adapted by Rose et al. (2018), applied within Cenfetelli's (2004) Enablers–Inhibitors Framework. Cenfetelli's (2004) framework distinguishes between “one's external beliefs about the system's attributes that influence [their] adoption or rejection decision” (Cenfetelli, 2004, p. 475). Although originally developed to explain initial adoption, the framework is also applicable to continued system use (Cenfetelli, 2004). In this thesis, the system attributes of social media e-participation form the basis for thematic analysis, from which perceptions of those attributes—whether enabling or inhibiting—are assessed from the perspective of state actors. ST, applied within this framework, provides a lens for examining how state actors' perceptions shape their navigation of these system attributes through normative, descriptive, and instrumental dimensions (Rose et al., 2018).

1.1 Research Gap

According to Ramzy and Ibrahim (2024), research on e-participation surged between 2010 and 2014, coinciding with the rise of social media platforms and their growing influence on civic engagement. This surge was further driven by increased global demand for transparency and openness in governance, particularly as a means to combat corruption. However, despite the growing role of social media in governance, developing democracies such as Kenya remain understudied in the context of social media e-participation. A key contributing factor is their limited access to international research cooperation agreements, particularly with nations leading in e-government scholarship (Ramzy & Ibrahim, 2024).

A recent systematic search of social media e-participation publications in the Katholieke University Leuven's (KUL) Limo database confirmed the persistent scarcity of research relevant to Kenya. This gap remains despite the global rise in social media e-participation during COVID-19, when restrictions on physical contact necessitated greater digital engagement (Amores et al., 2023). Compounding this concern is the fact that President Ruto has made championing Kenya's e-government transformation a central policy agenda (Wangechi, 2024). The continued absence of context-specific research is therefore troubling, as it risks undermining Kenya's digital transformation journey. Effective strategy development requires relevant, locally grounded evidence—without it, Kenya's digital governance ambitions may be hampered.

One might argue that research from developed democracies could be extrapolated to understand Kenya's social media e-participation landscape. However, this assumption is problematic, as e-government deployment is shaped by contextual realities that differ significantly between developed and developing democracies. Sabani et al. (2019) highlighted that, unlike developed countries, developing nations often have weaker institutions characterized by low transparency, limited accountability, and poor regulatory quality. Additionally, ICT infrastructure in resource-constrained countries is generally inadequate, with lower levels of internet penetration and a pronounced digital divide. Furthermore, human resource capabilities in developing democracies are often limited, particularly in terms of competency, awareness, and professional qualifications (Sabani et al., 2019). These structural disparities render direct comparisons between developed and developing democracies analytically tenuous—more akin to comparing apples and oranges.

1.2 Research Questions

To fill the aforementioned research gaps, this thesis addresses the following research questions:

1. What system attributes enable state actors to actively leverage social media for e-participation within Kenya's governance framework?
2. What system attributes inhibit state actors from actively leveraging social media for e-participation within Kenya's governance framework?
3. How do the system attributes underpinning enabling and inhibiting perceptions interact within Kenya's social media e-participation landscape?

1.3 Thesis Research Value

Answering the aforementioned research questions links directly to the *raison d'être* of this research—to generate actionable insights that can inform the strategic response of Kenya's competent authorities to the dynamics of social media e-participation. President Ruto's experience illustrates how social media system attributes may be perceived by state actors as both enabling and inhibiting to governance. This duality reflects the evolving posture of Kenya's security organs, which have formally classified social media misuse as a significant national security threat—one predominantly targeted at state actors (Chesenge, 2025).

Presently, the Government of Kenya (GoK) is in the process of legislating the Public Participation Bill (PPB) (2024). The bill seeks to make the public participation process by Kenya's national executive government bodies more uniform and compliant with the CoK. It mandates that national executive government bodies follow a structured public participation process when working on public policy, legislative proposals, statutory instruments, or government projects. Accounting officers—such as Principal Secretaries, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), and Directors-General (DGs)—will be responsible for conducting inclusive public participation through various means, including digital media (Public Participation Bill, 2024). This inclusion lays the groundwork for integrating social media into formal governance processes. Oversight of public participation activities is assigned to the proposed Office of the Registrar of Public Participation (ORPP). The Registrar, operating under the Cabinet Secretary (CS) responsible for public participation, will be tasked with receiving and approving participation plans submitted by national executive entities (Public Participation Bill, 2024).

The effectiveness of the proposed legal framework may hinge not only on its robust design but also on its successful implementation. In this regard, the present study is potentially both contemporarily significant and of potential policy relevance. It highlights how governance practices, ICT infrastructure, and human resource capacity—both within and beyond Kenya's state institutions—influence the outcomes of social media e-participation. These insights may help explain when and why such efforts succeed or falter. They may also offer an evidence-based lens for structuring and operationalising the ORPP in alignment with the state's broader strategic objectives. Specifically, the mandate, organisational design, and staffing of the proposed ORPP could be better aligned with the demands of a rapidly evolving digital state (Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), 2024).

In addition to informing legal frameworks on public participation, this research contributes to policy-relevant academic discourse on social media e-participation. It

addresses a critical gap in e-government studies relevant to the Kenyan context, as previously discussed. Specifically, it identifies and explores the social media e-participation system attributes that generate enabling and inhibiting perceptions for state actors in Kenya that may not be fully represented in global literature. It also conceptualises the ways in which the underlying system attributes interact. Furthermore, it introduces a potentially valuable term—*networked irrationality*—to characterise the complex dynamics that are particularly exemplified by social media platforms. Collectively, these contributions may reinforce the value placed by Kenyan policymakers on scientific inquiry as a means of addressing governance challenges.

1.4 Thesis Structure Overview

This thesis is organised into six main chapters, including this introduction, each contributing to a structured analysis of the research questions. The chapters that follow in progressive order are **methodology**, **literature review**, **empirical findings and analysis**, **discussion**, and **conclusion**.

The **methodology** chapter outlines the dual-phase research design, which contrasts global findings in the literature with empirical data from Kenya. In the **literature review**, thematic findings from global scholarship are analysed through the lens of the conceptual frameworks guiding the study, leading to the development of a working hypothesis. The primary framework is Cenfetelli's (2004) Enabler–Inhibitor Framework, while the secondary framework is Stakeholder Theory (ST) as adapted by Rose et al. (2018). The **empirical findings and analysis** chapter presents new insights derived from five semi-structured interviews and a one-month structured observation of eleven institutional social media pages. These findings are used to examine and refine the working hypothesis through the same conceptual frameworks applied in the literature review. The **discussion** chapter explores the convergences and divergences between global literature and empirical findings, illustrating how context and time influence the manifestations of enablers and inhibitors of social media e-participation. It concludes by revisiting the working hypothesis developed during the literature review and highlighting key governance takeaways that may be drawn from the analysis. Finally, the **conclusion** summarises the study's main findings, outlines its limitations, and identifies directions for future research based on the insights developed.

2 Methodology

The following methodology is presented in sufficient detail to support both replicability and reproducibility. According to Balafoutas et al. (2025) and Heers (2021), replicability involves restudying a phenomenon using different datasets to verify the credibility of findings. To operationalise replicability, the thesis provides a detailed account of the research procedures used to generate its conclusions and recommendations. Reproducibility is further enabled through the inclusion of pseudonymised empirical data in Appendices [K](#) and [L](#). This level of transparency allows authorised third parties to apply the same methods to the original dataset, thereby facilitating independent verification of the study's conclusions (Balafoutas et al., 2025; Heers, 2021).

2.1 Conceptual Frameworks

The primary conceptual framework of this thesis is provided by Cenfetelli's (2004) Enabler–Inhibitor Framework. Originally developed to categorise perceptions of system attributes—specifically system functionality and design—that influence system adoption or rejection, the framework is also applicable to perceptions that affect the continued, active use of information systems (IS). It classifies these perceptions as either enablers or inhibitors. In this thesis, **Enablers** represent perceptions of the system attributes of social media e-participation that can either encourage or discourage continued use by state actors, depending on valence. Valence refers to the positive or negative manifestation of an enabling system attribute. **Inhibitors**, by contrast, operate independently of enablers and are thought to have separate causal factors. They act solely to discourage continued use of social media for e-participation by state actors. Crucially, inhibitors do not have a positive counterpart, and their absence does not necessarily promote the active use of social media e-participation by state actors (Cenfetelli, 2004). This framework informs both the inductive and deductive analysis of themes drawn from literature and empirical data. Each theme reflects a system attribute, and its classification as either an enabler or an inhibitor is based on how that attribute may be perceived by state actors.

However, it is important to note that Cenfetelli (2004) acknowledges the role of user perspective in shaping system perceptions. Accordingly, the persona of the state actor used in this analysis is anchored in the normative values espoused in the Constitution of Kenya (CoK). While Feenberg (1990) theorises that technology is inherently ambivalent—for example, weapons may serve both defensive and offensive purposes—their primary utility often lies in harm. Similarly, the potential harm linked to certain system attributes cannot be overlooked, even when those attributes are theoretically

neutral. To disregard such potential harm would risk rendering the normative foundation of this thesis unconstitutional *ab initio*.

Cenfetelli's (2004) Enablers and Inhibitors Framework is suited for this research because it was developed for the IS field. The framework focuses on how user perceptions affect technology adoption and continued use within IS environments (Cenfetelli, 2004). According to Khan (2012), Social Media-Based Systems (SMS) fall within the domain of IS research. SMS refers to the application of social media-based technologies in both organisational and non-organisational contexts to facilitate engagement and information sharing (Khan, 2012). This conceptualisation of social media closely mirrors how state actors use social media for e-participation, a key aspect of this study.

The secondary framework in this thesis is Stakeholder Theory (ST) as outlined by Rose et al. (2018). ST emphasises that stakeholder interests are central to the successful implementation and sustained use of e-government initiatives, including social media e-participation. In this thesis, ST is adapted to focus specifically on state actors as the central stakeholder group. It is used to critically examine how their perceptions of social media e-participation system attributes—identified and classified through Cenfetelli's (2004) Enabler–Inhibitor Framework—influence their interests.

Stakeholder Theory (ST) by Rose et al. (2018) is operationalised through its three interconnected dimensions, as illustrated in Figure 2.1. This thesis adapts these dimensions to the context of social media e-participation through the perspective of state actors. First, the **normative dimension** captures the broader public values, goals, and objectives that state actors view as inherently important and shape their legitimate interest in social media e-participation (normative value positions). Second, the **instrumental dimension** assesses how the involvement of state actors—whose interests may diverge from those of other stakeholders—can influence the outcomes of social media e-participation processes. Finally, the **descriptive dimension** focuses on the interests of state actors within the digital participation landscape vis-à-vis their salience. Specifically, how their salience within social media e-participation may shape their interests in utilising the technology for governance. Salience is a measure of the degree to which state actors possess legitimacy, power, and urgency within the social media e-participation environment (Rose et al., 2018).

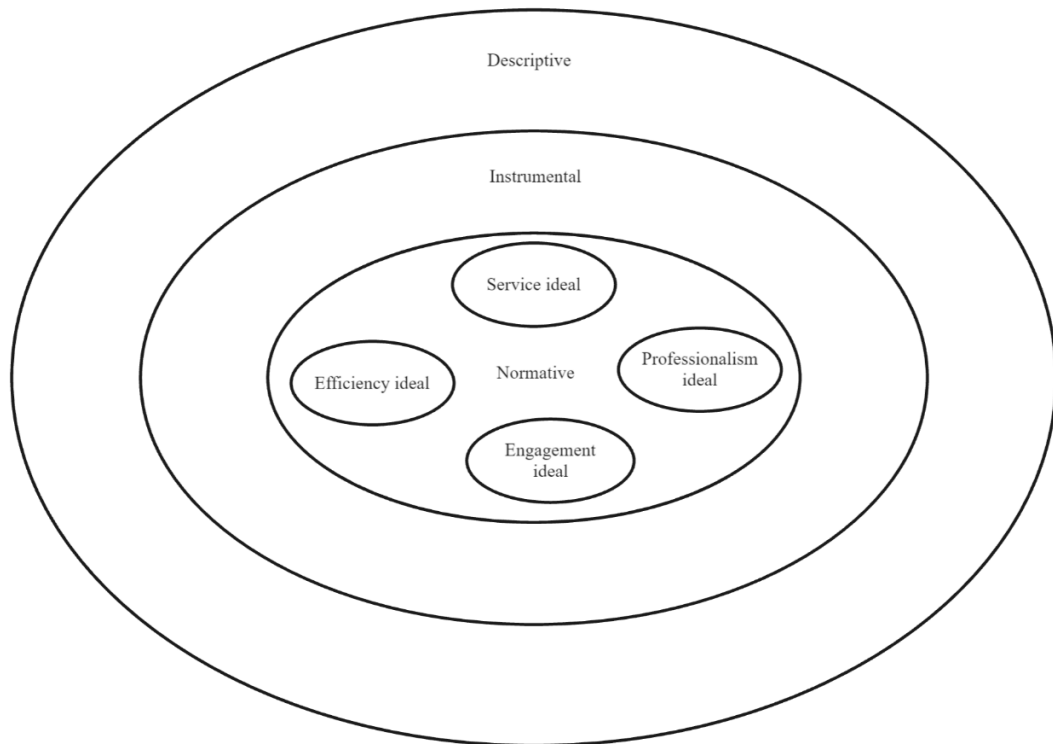


Figure 2.1: Stakeholder Theory (ST) for e-government adopted from Rose et al. (2018).

The value positions within the normative dimension are represented by four ideals—shown in Figure 2.1—that are adapted for this thesis as follows:

- **Professionalism Ideal** – This ideal emphasises the need for state actors to maintain a consistent, rule-based, and accountable social media presence with a public record. Their social media activity should align with governance standards, uphold institutional credibility, and reflect adherence to public sector regulations such as accountability, durability, legality, and equity (Rose et al., 2018).
- **Efficiency Ideal** – This ideal highlights how state actors can use social media to streamline administrative processes and minimise public resource wastage. State actors can leverage social media to optimise communication, reduce inefficiencies, and deliver public services in a more responsive and resource-efficient manner (Rose et al., 2018).
- **Service Ideal** – This ideal prioritises state actors providing services via social media that deliver value to the public. State actors can leverage social media to offer high-quality, citizen-centric public services (Rose et al., 2018).
- **Engagement Ideal** – This ideal underscores the importance of state actors using social media e-participation to support the co-production of public policy. Liberal

democratic principles envision the technology as a “social relations tool” for promoting democracy, deliberation, and participation (Rose et al., 2018).

In summary, the combination of ST by Rose et al. (2018) and Cenfetelli's (2004) Enabler–Inhibitor Framework allows deeper analysis of the research questions. Social media e-participation system attributes serve as the basis for the thematic units of this thesis. These attributes are first identified, then classified as enablers or inhibitors based on state actors' perceptions using Cenfetelli's (2004) Enabler–Inhibitor Framework. The resulting perceptions are subsequently analysed through the normative, instrumental, and descriptive dimensions of ST. This multidimensional analysis helps uncover how these perceptions influence the interests that underpin state actors' decisions to continue using social media for e-participation. It exposes the tensions between perceptions and interests from the perspective of state actors who utilise social media as a governance tool.

2.2 Literature Review Methodology

The literature review followed a systematic review approach, adhering to the PRISMA 2020 reporting guidelines as outlined by Page et al. (2021). This ensured transparent and structured reporting of academic sources for third-party verification (Page et al., 2021).

Moreover, the literature review aimed to inductively identify and explore themes related to the social media e-participation system attributes that enable and inhibit continued use of the technology by state actors. This was achieved by applying Cenfetelli's (2004) Enablers-Inhibitors Framework and the analytical process outlined by Naeem et al. (2023). The identified themes were further analysed through the three dimensions of ST from Rose et al. (2018).

2.2.1 Search Phrase Generation

The literature review process began with the generation of search phrases for use in the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven's (KUL) Limo database. This platform was chosen due to its comprehensive access to high-quality, peer-reviewed academic publications.

To construct the search phrases, keywords were first extracted from two categories of sources. The first category comprised **legal documents relevant to Kenyan e-participation policies and laws**, including the CoK and the Public Participation Bill (PPB) (2024). The second category included select **academic literature relevant to this thesis and its context**, such as Adnan et al. (2022), Ndeta (2022), and Omanga (2019).

The keywords from these sources were reviewed for relevance, then combined using a structured phrase template designed to reflect both context and conceptual alignment:

“[Social media or a specific social media platform used for e-participation in Kenya] [e-participation or a synonym of e-participation found in Kenyan legal texts or global academic literature].”

In line with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines as outlined by Page et al. (2021), an Excel spreadsheet was created for systematic record-keeping. Each phrase was entered into Limo, and the total number of retrieved records was recorded. If no results were found, a value of zero was entered.

The search results were then filtered to include only peer-reviewed journal articles published after 2020. This cutoff was applied to capture publications that reflected a point of increased reliance on social media e-participation due to public health measures (Amores et al., 2023). It has been observed that the increased use of technology allows its societal impacts to become more visible (Wiberg & Wiberg, 2025). After filtering, the number of remaining records was logged in the spreadsheet.

All filtered publications were then downloaded and placed into folders labelled by their corresponding search phrase. This procedure was repeated for all search phrases until all reasonable keyword combinations were exhausted, yielding a total of 35 distinct search phrases.

The complete results of this process are presented in [Appendix A](#) (Table A.1), detailing record counts before and after filtering. To further enhance transparency and replicability, [Appendix D](#) (Figures D.1 to D.4) presents a Business Process Model and Notation (BPMN) diagram illustrating the search and filtering workflow. For clarity, the diagram is divided into four sequential parts, arranged left to right and stacked top to bottom.

2.2.2 Filtration of Reports

The downloaded publications, also known as reports, were subjected to a manual filtering process, visually represented through a BPMN diagram in [Appendix E](#) (Figures E.1 to E.4). This process comprised eleven distinct evaluation stages. Notably, the seventh stage introduces a decision fork—allowing for conditional progression rather than automatic exclusion. This preserved potentially relevant studies for further review. For clarity and ease of interpretation, the BPMN diagram is divided into four sequential sections (Parts 1 to 4), arranged from left to right and stacked vertically from top to bottom. This structured and transparent representation aligns with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines outlined by Page et al. (2021), ensuring replicability and methodological rigour in the screening process.

The first five stages ensured compliance with basic eligibility criteria. The **first stage** involved checking whether the publication was a duplicate. The **second stage** verified that the publication had been written in English. English functions as the lingua franca of academic scholarship, meaning most social science journal articles are published in that language (Eykens et al., 2020). The **third stage** confirmed that the publication was a peer-reviewed journal article. This ensured that only independently evaluated research was used to form the foundation of this thesis. The **fourth stage** determined whether the publication had been published before 2020. The **fifth stage** checked whether the publication had been made available online before 2020. The 2020 cutoff point corresponds with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 was officially declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). The pandemic marked a period of heightened reliance on social media e-participation as a mechanism for engaging citizens under restrictive public health measures (Amores et al., 2023). It has been observed that the increased use of technology allows its societal impacts to become more visible (Wiberg & Wiberg, 2025).

The **sixth stage** involved applying Cenfetelli's (2004) Enablers and Inhibitors Framework within the inductive thematic analysis approach by Naeem et al. (2023). This step ensured that each publication contained themes related to the enablers and inhibitors of social media e-participation for state actors.

The **seventh stage** introduced a bifurcation in the screening process. If a publication explicitly referenced COVID-19 or pandemic-related events, it was automatically accepted. Otherwise, the publication was subjected to further date-based screening.

For the latter case, a set of sequential date-based filters was applied, each corresponding to one of the eighth through eleventh checking stages in the screening process. These filters were based on key milestones in the publication process. A publication was accepted if it passed any one of the filters; failure at a given stage triggered continued screening at the next. At **Stage 8**, publications were accepted if the “received” date was on or after April 2020. **Stage 9** screened for an “accepted” date on or after October 2020. At **Stage 10**, publications were accepted if the final “published” date was on or after June 2021. **Stage 11** was activated only if the specific day or month of publication was unavailable. It set the default publication year to 2022. Failure to pass all four stages resulted in disqualification.

The received, accepted, and published date estimates for the reports were based on the findings of Björk and Solomon (2013), as illustrated in Figure 2.2. Their study's graph indicates that Social Science publications typically take approximately six months from submission to acceptance, followed by an additional eight months from acceptance to

publication. A baseline received date of April 2020 was selected and Björk and Solomon's (2013) publication timeline estimates were then applied. The selected baseline date ensured that the included publications were at least partially developed after the pandemic's onset.

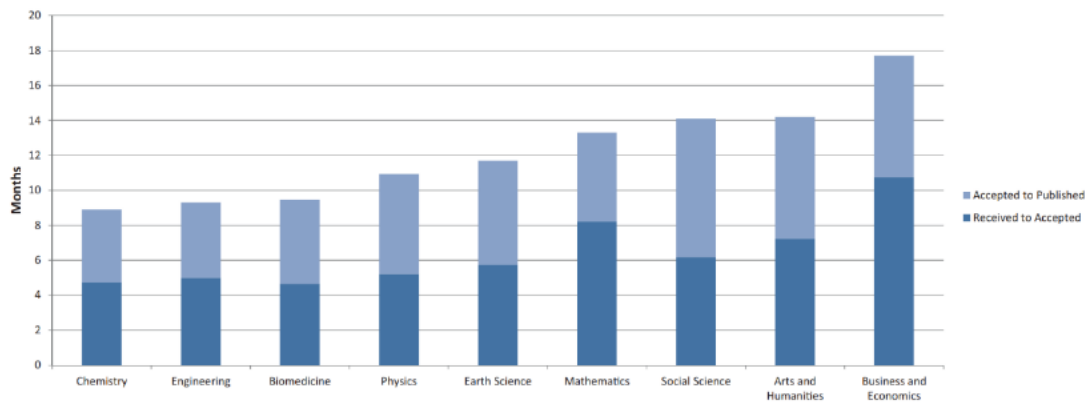


Figure 2.2: Average publication times in months by discipline adopted from Björk and Solomon (2013).

To ensure transparency in recording disqualification reasons, an Excel sheet was maintained in accordance with PRISMA 2020 guidelines as outlined by Page et al. (2021). This sheet is provided in [Appendix B](#) (Table B.1) and contains a detailed record of exclusion reasons for publications retrieved from each of the search phrases used. For each disqualified publication, the first applicable checking stage at which it failed was recorded as the reason for exclusion.

2.2.2.1 Report Inclusion Filters

In summary, the manual filtration process for selecting publications was structured using the following series of inclusion filters to ensure methodological rigor. First, a duplicate check was applied to eliminate any repeated entries. Next, a language check ensured that only publications written in English were included. To maintain academic credibility, a peer-review check was conducted, limiting the selection to peer-reviewed journal articles. Given the study's focus on the pandemic period, a date check was implemented, excluding any publications that were published or made available online before 2020. Additionally, a thematic relevance check was conducted to confirm that each publication contained themes directly relevant to the research questions. The final filtering criterion, the COVID-19 reference check, applied a fork-in-the-road decision-making process. Publications explicitly referencing COVID-19 or pandemic-related events were automatically included. However, for those that did not explicitly mention the pandemic, an additional sequence of date verifications was applied: the received date had to be on

or after April 2020, the accepted date on or after October 2020, and the published date on or after June 2021. In cases where the specific month of publication was unavailable, only publications from 2022 or later were considered. This structured filtering approach ensured that the selected literature aligned with the study's methodological framework.

2.2.3 Literature Review Thematic Analysis

The publications that passed the manual filtration process were subsequently subjected to a full thematic analysis. This analysis followed the sequence in which the reports as represented by their search terms were logged in the Excel sheet as seen in [Appendix B](#) (Table B.1). Specifically, analysis proceeded in the order of earliest examined search terms, following a six-step inductive process adapted from Naeem et al. (2023).

The process began with the identification of keywords related to aspects of social media e-participation system attributes that either enabled or inhibited continued use by state actors. These keywords were then used to generate codes that captured the core meanings in the data. The identified codes were subsequently grouped into themes that connected meaningfully to the research questions. In developing themes, it was necessary to strike a balance between granularity and abstraction: themes had to be broad enough to capture patterns across codes, yet sufficiently specific to preserve the connections between keywords. Finally, interconnections among the resulting themes were examined to construct a conceptual model of the phenomenon. This model encapsulates the findings and insights derived from the data and reflects the study's overall contribution to knowledge (Naeem et al., 2023).

Within this inductive method, the frameworks by Cenfetelli (2004) and Rose et al. (2018) were applied to classify and examine system attributes that enable or inhibit social media e-participation by state actors. Specifically, the aforementioned themes were represented by system attributes and categorised as enablers or inhibitors using Cenfetelli's (2004) Enabler–Inhibitor Framework. These attributes were then analysed through the three dimensions of ST proposed by Rose et al. (2018).

To evaluate whether further analysis would add meaningful insight, the emergent themes were systematically tracked using a concept matrix adapted from Klopper et al. (2007) to determine the point of theoretical saturation. According to Rahimi and Khatooni (2024) and Saunders et al. (2018), theoretical saturation occurs when the collection and processing of additional data about a theoretical structure no longer yield new insights. In other words, further data collection would not introduce new themes that alter the overall understanding of the phenomenon (Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024; Saunders et al., 2018).

To preserve analytical efficiency and avoid expending effort on data unlikely to yield new insights, a preliminary assessment of theoretical saturation was conducted after thematically analysing the publications accepted from the search carried out on 15th November 2024. This assessment involved examining the concept matrix, which indicated that saturation had likely been reached. As shown in [Appendix C](#) (Table C.1), the current themes and their interconnections became increasingly redundant, suggesting that further analysis would not generate additional conceptual categories relevant to the research questions.

For convenience and full adherence to PRISMA 2020 guidelines, the methodological process of the literature review is summarised in a modified PRISMA 2020 flow diagram presented in [Appendix F](#) (Figure F.1). To provide a more accessible visualisation of the PRISMA reporting process, a Sankey diagram is also included in [Appendix F](#) (Figures F.2 and F.3). It is split into two sequential sections—Part 1 and Part 2—for enhanced readability. The diagram flows from left to right and is structured top to bottom for clarity.

2.3 Empirical Data Collection and Analysis Methodology

The empirical data collection and analysis process employed a qualitative dual-method design, combining five semi-structured interviews with state actors and one month of structured observation across eleven institutional social media pages. These pages were selected to represent all major constitutionally and legally established government entities in Kenya. This design enabled a grounded assessment of the relevance of global trends—identified in the literature review—within the Kenyan context. The use of multiple data sources also enhanced methodological diversity, increasing the likelihood of reaching data saturation (Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024), which is crucial given the heightened sensitivity surrounding social media e-participation in Kenya (Chesenge, 2025).

The interview data analysis methodology followed a deductive-inductive analysis framework, adapted from Proudfoot (2023) and further informed by procedures outlined in Naeem et al. (2023). This approach integrated deductive validation of pre-established themes from the literature review while allowing for inductive identification of emerging themes from the interview data.

The structured observation of institutional social media pages followed methodological guidance from Ciesielska and Jemielniak (2018) and Wilson and Streatfield (1981). These were conducted as non-participant observations. The process was organised around the emergent themes identified in literature and interviews in line with the approach by Wilson and Streatfield (1981). Observations were analysed deductively using the framework outlined by Naeem et al. (2023).

2.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they provide a balance between structure and flexibility, as outlined by Galletta (2013). Predefined questions, based on themes from the literature review, guided the interviews while still allowing for deeper exploration through open-ended responses. This format enabled both the testing of literature-derived themes and the emergence of new insights.

Moreover, semi-structured interviews were particularly suited to this research, as they could be combined with structured observations to enhance analytical depth (Galletta, 2013) and diversify data collection methods (Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024). This was especially important given the sensitive nature of the topic, which limited access and made it difficult to secure a high number of interviews. Even so, Rahimi and Khatooni (2024) advise that achieving data saturation is essential for ensuring research credibility.

Following a modification of Galletta's (2013) structure, the interviews began with theory-informed discussions, examining themes from the literature review. The themes were centred around the enablers and inhibitors of social media e-participation for state actors. Then after, the concluding segment encouraged theoretical reflections, enabling participants to critically assess social media's influence on public participation and contribute new insights. This modified approach ensured that both anticipated and emergent themes were thoroughly explored.

2.3.1.1 Participant Selection

Participant selection followed the Purposive Sampling (PS) methodology, as outlined by Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024). Specifically, criterion sampling was used to select participants who met predefined criteria relevant to the study. Criterion sampling was chosen because it ensured that all selected participants possessed the requisite expertise and decision-making authority. This ensured that they could provide meaningful insights into social media e-participation in Kenya.

The primary selection criterion was that all interviewees held positions classified under the strategic skill level within a state institution, as defined by the Salaries and Remuneration Commission (SRC). This level typically includes officers serving as heads of departments or occupying higher-ranking roles. These positions involve high-level policy formulation and implementation, including decisions related to communication and public participation strategies aimed at fulfilling Article 10 obligations under the CoK (Salaries and Remuneration Commission, 2016).

Notably, participants were not limited to current government employees but included both former and serving officials who had held strategic-level positions after 2015. This year was selected as a reference point because it marks the period when Ndeti (2022) analysed the use of social media by Government Ministries in Kenya. This decision provided greater flexibility in participant selection while ensuring that all interviewees had operated at the strategic level during a time when social media was already integrated into public institutions.

For flexibility, strategic level state actors were given the option to assign institutional proxies for interviews where they deemed it appropriate. This was deemed methodologically valid, as the designated representatives were authorised to speak on behalf of their managers. It was reasonably assumed, in good faith, that they had been provided with the relevant institutional knowledge and direction necessary to accurately convey their manager's perspectives. This rationale aligns with Trakaniqi (2020), who argues that effective delegation requires both authority and the transfer of information for task execution.

Despite careful planning, only **five** interviews with strategic-level state actors and their proxies were conducted. This was due not only to their limited availability but also to the heightened national sensitivity surrounding the research topic at the time of data collection. The Director-General (DG) of the National Intelligence Service (NIS) had identified the misuse of social media as a significant national security threat (Chesenge, 2025). This environment complicated efforts to conduct a sufficient number of interviews to achieve data saturation. According to a systematic review by Hennink and Kaiser (2022), data saturation in qualitative study groups typically occurs after 9–17 interviews or 4–8 focus groups. However, in more homogeneous samples, such as this study's targeted interview group, saturation has been reported with as few as five (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022) or six interviews (Guest et al., 2006). The homogeneity assessment for the interview target group was based on their shared institutional obligations under Article 10 and Chapter 6 of the CoK. Therefore, the number of interviews conducted falls within the reported range for achieving saturation. Nonetheless, a pragmatic workaround was adopted to enhance the robustness of the findings.

The solution involved assessing saturation by tracking redundancy across both semi-structured interviews and structured observations. This was part of triangulation—a qualitative research strategy for developing a clear understanding of the phenomenon under investigation through the use of multiple methods (Carter et al., 2014). Most importantly for this thesis, Rahimi and Khatooni (2024) argue that employing triangulation can aid in achieving saturation by reducing reliance on a single data source.

One could argue that, given the challenges of accessing strategic-level state actors, it might have been worthwhile to include lower-level officials who could also offer valuable insights. However, the rationale for focusing exclusively on strategic-level actors lies not only in the value of their individual experiences but also in their ability to reflect broader peer-level perspectives. Research indicates that individuals with similar levels of experience and institutional rank tend to form tightly knit professional networks and share common viewpoints (Di Tommaso et al., 2020; Murase et al., 2019). As such, the insights gathered from these high-ranking officials were considered reflective of broader strategic-level thinking within the government.

Moreover, input from strategic-level state actors was essential because they are responsible for high-level communication and public participation strategy decisions. According to Sol (1985), these decision-makers have access to more aggregated data than their counterparts at lower levels, enabling them to form a more complete picture of institutional patterns and trends. Although lower-level officials may access some of this information, their knowledge is likely to be narrower in scope and therefore less suited to the aims of this research. As Kumar et al. (1993) argue, researchers tend to choose participants based on their knowledge of the issues being addressed. While such participants may not be statistically representative, excluding those whose roles are not relevant helps minimise response errors and strengthens the validity of informant data (Kumar et al., 1993).

Furthermore, officials below the strategic level generally require clearance from their superiors before disclosing information regarding internal state matters, in accordance with the Official Secrets Act (OSA) (1968). This obligation is underscored in the OSA (1968) declaration form, which notes that information provided to officers in the course of their duties cannot be shared with unauthorised individuals, either during or after their tour of duty (Government of Kenya, 1968). Enforcement of this rule is stricter when dealing with sensitive files in order to protect the integrity of the state. Thus, even when targeting lower-level actors, access would still ultimately hinge on the cooperation of strategic-level gatekeepers. Accordingly, it is methodologically sound to focus on strategic-level actors who are both knowledgeable and willing to communicate about the subject matter, as noted by Kumar et al. (1993).

2.3.1.2 Interviewing Process

Interviews were conducted remotely, preferably via audio calls, using either Microsoft Teams or WhatsApp. This approach was necessitated by the geographical distance between the interviewer and participants. Microsoft Teams was the preferred platform due to its recording and transcription features (University of Lincoln, 2025). WhatsApp

was adopted both as a backup and for its high penetration rate among Kenyans (Wamuyu, 2023). Its asynchronous messaging capabilities also provided additional flexibility during the interview process (WhatsApp, 2025).

This methodological choice was informed by Opdenakker's (2006) distinction between the benefits of synchronous and asynchronous communication. The author argues that synchronous audio calls enable real-time engagement at a distance, particularly when non-verbal social cues are not critically important. In contrast, asynchronous communication offers greater flexibility for busy participants (Opdenakker, 2006).

For synchronous interviews, audio calls were conducted at pre-agreed dates and times. The interview questions were shared with participants in advance to allow sufficient time for reflection and preparation. During the interviews, the conversation followed the pre-distributed questions. Responses were documented in real time using a Microsoft Word template of the interview guide. After each session, the interview notes were responsibly edited for clarity and coherence, without altering the substance of participant responses.

When interested participants were unavailable for synchronous interviews, a Microsoft Word template containing the interview questions was shared with them. These participants were respectfully asked to complete and return the document by a preset deadline. Reminder messages were politely sent during the waiting period to encourage timely responses. Where necessary, clarifications were requested to ensure accurate interpretation of the responses. The final responses were then responsibly edited for precision and clarity, without altering the substance of participant contributions.

Prior to all interview data collection, informed consent forms were provided to participants. These forms outlined the nature and purpose of the study, assured participants of confidentiality, and affirmed their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. They also included a request for consent to audio-record the interviews for transcript-based analysis. However, none of the participants gave their consent to be recorded. As a result, detailed interview notes taken during the sessions were used for empirical data analysis instead.

2.3.2 Structured Observations

Observation is recognised as a foundational research method in the social sciences, especially when applied through a structured methodological lens (Ciesielska & Jemielniak, 2018). This thesis employed a non-participant structured observation approach, drawing methodological guidance from Ciesielska and Jemielniak (2018) and Wilson and Streatfield (1981).

According to Wilson and Streatfield (1981), structured observation is oriented around the goals of the research. In this sense, the research aims determine the observational structure, much like in other systematic qualitative approaches. Although observational structure can involve both pre-defined and emergent categories, this thesis adopted exclusively pre-determined categories (Wilson & Streatfield, 1981). This is because, unlike interviews, observations were used exclusively to assess the manifestation of themes that had already emerged from the literature review and interview data. These themes directly informed the development of structured note-taking templates, following a similar logic to Wilson and Streatfield's (1981) use of note-taking cards. This approach facilitated a deductive analysis of the structured observation data, in line with the thematic analysis process described by Naeem et al. (2023).

Moreover, the use of non-participant observational techniques was intended to avoid influencing social media engagement patterns. As noted by Ciesielska and Jemielniak (2018), non-participant observation allows researchers to collect data without interfering in the behaviours or dynamics being observed. Therefore, this technique enabled the observation of the natural flow of social media e-participation in Kenya.

To operationalise the observation process, data was collected from the official social media pages of select public institutions. Institutional accounts were preferred over personal ones, as they represent the collective voice of state actors operating within the organisation. As such, public engagement with these accounts can be interpreted as engagement with the state actors formally representing those institutions. This logic aligns with the theoretical perspective offered by Larsen et al. (2025), who extend Michael Lipsky's foundational work on Street-Level Bureaucracy. The advent of New Public Governance (NPG) led to structured and coordinated decision-making practices in state organisations (Larsen et al., 2025). This can be understood to have created a cohesive institutional voice that is perceivable by citizens as representative of the state institution. Moreover, institutional social media pages offer greater continuity and stability for longitudinal observation. While individual officeholders may change, the institutions and roles within them persist as long as they remain lawful. This continuity ensures that observed engagement patterns reflect enduring governance and social phenomena rather than transient behaviours.

Institutions were selected to represent each of the three branches of government at both the national and county levels. Furthermore, the sample also included a constitutionally independent body and a national security agency. For counties and state corporations, two institutions—representing variances in solvency (fiscal capacities) and development levels (urban-rural disparities)—were selected in each category to explore the socio-

economic theme introduced in the literature review. This sampling strategy ensured broad representation across different categories of state institutions as outlined in the CoK. As such, it allowed for a comprehensive outlook on social media e-participation patterns across a diverse range of state actors. This breadth was particularly important for achieving the research goal of producing insights that could be applicable across all Kenyan state institutions. Given the challenges of securing interviews with a broad range of state actors, observations functioned as a strategic countermeasure to ensure that all major categories of Kenyan state institutions were captured in the empirical data. [Appendix G](#) (Table G.1) provides general descriptions of the eleven institutions observed and the rationale for their inclusion in the structured observation process.

2.3.2.1 Observation Process

Observations were conducted on the Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) pages of the state institutions listed in [Appendix G](#) (Table G.1). These platforms were selected due to the ease of access to government social media content, which does not require approval or invitation to view. Moreover, Ndeti (2022) identified Facebook and Twitter (now X) as the widely used platforms among Kenyan state bodies in her 2015 study.

Monitoring was conducted once every weekday over a continuous one-month period, beginning from the onset of the data collection period (15th March 2025). This schedule allowed for the capture of activity during periods of heightened social media engagement in Kenya, such as political controversies. Weekdays were specifically chosen to align with the typical posting patterns of government institutions. They generally operate within standard public service hours—Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.—as guided by the operating hours of the Public Service Commission of Kenya (2025).

As previously established, observations were recorded using structured field note templates developed around themes identified in the literature review. The field notes consisted solely of neutral and respectful textual descriptions of the observed social media activity. No verbatim content was captured in order to safeguard the dignity and anonymity of all involved stakeholders. Additionally, all social media profiles were pseudonymised to ensure the protection of institutional identities. This approach allowed the observation data to meaningfully complement interview insights while maintaining both legal and ethical integrity.

Each institution's first observation began with a retrospective review of posts spanning the previous two years. This initial scan aimed to establish contextual understanding of the institution's content and posting patterns. Examples of the information sought included public reactions to posts—particularly during contentious periods—and shifts in

engagement strategies over time. After this baseline assessment, subsequent observations focused exclusively on posts made on the observation day or since the previous recorded entry. This ensured a structured and continuous tracking process while avoiding redundancy in data collection. The only deviation from this approach was a second retrospective review of posts, conducted to assess the presence of emergent themes identified in the interview data after the initial scan had been completed.

2.3.3 Thematic Analysis for the Empirical Data

The empirical analysis adopted a QUAL + QUAL configuration, modifying Proudfoot's (2023) original QUAN + QUAL design to reflect a fully qualitative framework. This modification allowed for greater analytical depth by integrating multiple qualitative tools while avoiding the structural constraints of quantitative analysis. In particular, a fully qualitative approach enables a richer, more contextualised understanding of the studied phenomenon. It captures the nuance, complexity, and interpretive dimensions that numeric indicators might overlook (Ciesielska & Jemielniak, 2018).

Interview data were analysed using a deductive-inductive thematic analysis framework, adapted from Proudfoot (2023) and further informed by procedures outlined in Naeem et al. (2023). This hybrid approach assessed predefined themes derived from the literature review while remaining open to new themes emerging exclusively from participant narratives. The result was a theory-informed yet flexible analytic process that allowed for nuanced contrasts between global literature and context-specific empirical insights.

In contrast, the structured observation data followed a deductive thematic analysis grounded in the interpretive framework developed through the literature review. This deductive process—following Naeem et al. (2023)—enabled the analysis of emergent literature and interview themes within the social media pages of state institutions. Wilson and Streatfield's (1981) structured note-taking approach was used to operationalise this deductive process.

The QUAL + QUAL design enabled methodological triangulation, which served as a primary strategy for assessing theoretical saturation in the empirical data analysis. As previously defined, triangulation is the use of multiple methods in qualitative research to develop a clear picture of the phenomenon under investigation (Carter et al., 2014). Therefore, theoretical saturation through triangulation can be achieved when no new insights emerge from the combined analysis of multiple data sources. This threshold aligns with the findings of Rahimi and Khatooni (2024), who argue that triangulation facilitates a more efficient path to saturation by reducing dependence on any single data

source. This is particularly useful in the study of sensitive topics such as social media e-participation in the current security climate in Kenya (Chesenge, 2025).

Beyond saturation assessment, Carter et al. (2014) emphasise that triangulation strengthens the validity of findings by enabling convergence across multiple data sources. Rahimi and Khatooni (2024) reinforce this by highlighting triangulation's role in enhancing the credibility of empirical findings. In this study, triangulation helped mitigate the limitations of interviews, particularly the risk of skewed or selective participant perceptions (Galletta, 2013). This was especially important given the difficulty of securing a broad representation of participants. Moreover, it added critical context to the observation data, which captures observable behaviours but not the underlying motivations behind them (Ciesielska & Jemielniak, 2018).

2.3.4 Legal and Ethical Considerations in Empirical Data Handling

This thesis is under embargo due to the collection and processing of interview data involving internal government procedures shared by Kenyan state actors, in accordance with the OSA (1968). For example, the declaration form signed by civil servants upon appointment—under the OSA (1968)—prohibits them from disclosing any information obtained during their official duties to unauthorised individuals (Government of Kenya, 1968).

Additionally, this research is subject to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2016), as it was conducted within the European Union (EU) under the supervision of an EU-domiciled academic consortium. The GDPR governs the collection and processing of sensitive personal data within the EU.

Accordingly, several measures were implemented to ensure full compliance with both the OSA and GDPR. Access to the thesis is restricted to authorised individuals within the academic framework and select Kenyan state actors. All raw data with personal identifiers were permanently deleted following pseudonymisation. Interview data were processed with informed consent, and safeguards were applied to prevent re-identification. Participants retained the right to access, rectify, restrict, or delete their data, and would be notified in the event of a breach. They were also informed of their right to seek compensation for any harm resulting from a GDPR violation.

3 Literature Review

The methodology (see [Chapter 2](#)) employed in this thesis identified **six enablers** and **two inhibitors** of social media e-participation for state actors. This was the result of a PRISMA 2020-compliant systematic review of global literature from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven's (KUL) Limo database. The enablers include **social media platform affordances, socio-economic factors, competence and strategies of public authorities, citizen mobilisation, data-driven policymaking, and upholding democratic principles**. Conversely, the identified inhibitors are **disinformation, misinformation, and hate content/activities**. A concept matrix indicating the presence of these inductively developed themes across the global literature reviewed is provided in [Appendix C](#) (Table C.1).

3.1 Enablers

As covered in [Chapter 2](#), this thesis adopts Cenfetelli's (2004) framework. It defines enablers of social media e-participation for state actors as perceptions about system attributes of social media that influence their active use. The effect of each enabler is shaped by its valence—whether the system attribute is perceived to encourage or discourages engagement—making enablers inherently dynamic and context-dependent.

3.1.1 Social Media Platform Affordances

Social media platform affordances refer to all of the inherent features and functionalities that shape how state actors engage with the digital platforms for e-participation. Specifically, they provide mechanisms for state actors to encourage citizens to express their views on policy decisions, offer citizens access to information and services from the state, and allow citizens to monitor governance activities to promote transparent, accountable, and credible governance (Alcaide Muñoz & Rodríguez Bolívar, 2021). These affordances include social media e-participation features such as information dissemination tools and dialogical loop structures that facilitate two-way communication (Amores et al., 2023). Additionally, they encompass Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven elements, such as cropping algorithms that selectively frame images to fit platform content structures, shaping how visual narratives are presented and perceived (Shane, 2023). Another critical social media affordance is the networked structure, which facilitates seamless connectivity and real-time interactivity on platforms such as Weibo. This allows discussions to rapidly scale and trends to go viral, amplifying public discourse and engagement (Y. Guo et al., 2023). Ultimately, social media affordances act as the overarching enabling social media e-participation system attributes, shaping the conditions that give rise to all other enabling and inhibiting system attributes.

3.1.1.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

Social media platform affordances enable state actors to fulfil their professional responsibilities of engaging citizens efficiently (Alcaide Muñoz & Rodríguez Bolívar, 2021; Lin & Kant, 2021). Moreover, they enhance the ability of state actors to disseminate important public information, particularly in times of crisis (Svirak et al., 2023). These affordances therefore support all normative ideals: *professionalism*, *efficiency*, *service*, and *engagement*. The nature of citizen engagement through social media varies according to governance requirements. It includes efforts to encourage public participation (Alcaide Muñoz & Rodríguez Bolívar, 2021; Lin & Kant, 2021). Additionally, it involves mobilising citizens around critical initiatives, such as efforts to combat the spread and mitigate the dangers of the COVID-19 pandemic (Amores et al., 2023; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). In the context of government communication, social media platforms enable state actors to disseminate timely and accurate information on essential public matters (Amores et al., 2023; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021; Svirak et al., 2023). This role was exemplified during the pandemic, where real-time updates on public health guidelines played a crucial role in ensuring public awareness and adherence to safety measures (Amores et al., 2023; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021).

3.1.1.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

Lin and Kant (2021) demonstrated how state actors have effectively utilised social media affordances to gather public input on governance issues, allowing for more citizen-centric policymaking. For instance, their study highlighted how the Alkmaar municipal authorities leveraged the Facebook page “@ibikeAlkmaar” to gather feedback from citizens specifically on bicycle-related matters, including parking, safety, and route planning. This feedback was then directly applied to enhance the safety and attractiveness of cycling as a mode of transportation within Alkmaar (Lin & Kant, 2021). Additionally, Svirak et al. (2023) emphasised social media's effectiveness in facilitating rapid dissemination of critical information to broad audiences. Their research revealed that several Czech Republic municipalities extensively relied on Facebook for major public announcements during the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach demonstrated social media's significant capacity to accelerate information flow and improve public communication in municipal governance, particularly during crisis periods (Svirak et al., 2023).

However, certain social media affordances have also introduced challenges that diminish the appeal of social media to state actors. For instance, Shane (2023) highlighted a problematic AI-driven feature on Twitter (now X), specifically an image-cropping algorithm that demonstrated subtle racial bias. When presented with a photo containing

portraits of President Barack Obama and Senator Mitch McConnell, the algorithm consistently cropped out President Obama. This outcome reinforced previous troubling instances of AI bias, such as models labelling images of African-Americans as ‘gorillas’. The controversy surrounding this discovery was significant enough that X eventually discontinued the use of the algorithm and publicly disavowed algorithmic image cropping altogether (Shane, 2023). Additionally, the creation and dissemination of potentially offensive content such as political memes further complicate social media engagement for state actors. Political humour, including memes, tends to be aggressive and unflattering, frequently depicting state actors negatively or ridiculing them as the target of jokes (Chmel et al., 2024). The inherently viral nature of social media platforms enables negative portrayals and controversies involving state actors to escalate rapidly and unpredictably (Akerele-Popoola et al., 2022; Arora, 2022).

3.1.1.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

In summary, the strategic use of social media affordances for e-participation can, under certain conditions, reinforce the authority of state actors. For instance, Lin and Kant (2021) illustrated how the Alkmaar municipal authorities strategically leveraged their Facebook page "@ibikeAlkmaar" to effectively guide citizen participation. By actively leading the dialogue, municipal authorities ensured that interactions remained constructive, positive, and respectful (Lin & Kant, 2021). Similarly, L. Guo and Chen (2022) demonstrated how Chinese state actors strategically recruited internet influencers to amplify official messages and enhance their public image. These influencers, known as the ‘fifty-cent army’, disseminated government-approved messaging and diverted attention from dissident voices. Their name originated from rumours claiming they were paid fifty cents for every supportive post. Additionally, an unpaid volunteer group—the ‘voluntary fifty-cent army’—emerged organically to support these efforts by defending the Chinese state authorities online. This case demonstrates that structured online campaigns involving trusted, state-sanctioned digital personalities can effectively legitimise the authority of state actors and steer public discourse to align with their governance objectives (L. Guo & Chen, 2022).

However, the authoritative position of state actors is increasingly challenged when citizens leverage social media affordances to critique government actions. For example, Arora (2022) discusses how Nepalese citizens utilised social media platforms to openly criticise their government's disaster response efforts. Such public criticism significantly contributed to the government's discomfort, reinforcing its existing considerations about potentially banning or restricting social media platforms as part of crisis narrative control measures (Arora, 2022). Similarly, Akerele-Popoola et al. (2022) illustrate how the

Nigerian government's authority was significantly undermined during the #EndSARS protests. The global nature of the #EndSARS movement, facilitated by social media, made it exceedingly difficult for state actors to suppress dissent or control narratives, resulting in notable reputational damage. The involvement of the then Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Twitter (now X), Jack Dorsey, further amplified the protests, exacerbating the Nigerian government's vulnerability and discomfort (Akerele-Popoola et al., 2022).

3.1.2 Socio-economic Factors

Socio-economic factors refer to the internal and external social and economic conditions influencing state actors' ability to effectively leverage social media for e-participation. Depending on the circumstances, the interaction between social media and these factors can be either constructive or destructive. In particular, social media can mitigate barriers created by socio-economic conditions or, conversely, exacerbate them (Lin & Kant, 2021). Socio-economic factors influenced by social media include participation costs (Arora, 2022; Lin & Kant, 2021; Yao & Xu, 2022). Examples of participation costs include the time and money citizens require to engage in participation activities (Yao & Xu, 2022). Additionally, social media impacts how varying skill levels influence the effectiveness and inclusiveness of e-participation (Anyanwu et al., 2024; Arora, 2022; Svirak et al., 2023). Furthermore, social media accessibility, which involves factors such as the presence and quality of technological infrastructure, can influence participation outcomes (Arora, 2022). Collectively, these socio-economic factors critically affect state actors' abilities to uphold democratic principles, develop competence and strategies, utilise data-driven policymaking, and mobilise citizens effectively through social media.

3.1.2.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

Social media e-participation has the potential to reduce barriers to participation associated with socio-economic conditions and increase overall participation rates (Lin & Kant, 2021). This capability enables state actors to align with all normative ideals: *professionalism*, *efficiency*, *service*, and *engagement*. Governments recognise that inclusion is a fundamental principle of governance, particularly in societies with complex and diverse interests (Lin & Kant, 2021). Moreover, governance has long been associated with inclusion, and e-participation is increasingly viewed as a mechanism for expanding access to decision-making processes (Abdulkareem et al., 2022). As social media access continues to grow, previously marginalised citizens have found a platform to express their voices and engage in governance (Anyanwu et al., 2024; Abdulkareem et al., 2022).

3.1.2.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

A greater adoption of social media e-participation by state actors can help address socio-economic challenges while fostering broader public engagement for improved service delivery (Lin & Kant, 2021; Svirak et al., 2023). Traditional, offline participation often imposes socio-economic costs—such as time, financial burdens, and educational prerequisites—that discourage engagement and heighten exclusion (Yao & Xu, 2022). In contrast, social media offers state actors a lower-cost, widely accessible alternative that can reach a broader demographic (Abdulkareem et al., 2022). Even rural, semi-literate individuals can participate through social media, making it a more inclusive tool for engagement (Anyanwu et al., 2024). This is particularly relevant as citizens often lack enthusiasm for engagement, and the choice of participation method significantly influences turnout and representation (Senior et al., 2023). Designing e-participation tools that account for citizens' circumstances helps reduce barriers to engagement and enhances participation rates (Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021). As illustrated by Lin and Kant (2021), this approach has already proven successful in Utrecht. The municipality integrated social media into its public participation framework to engage citizens reluctant to attend physical meetings. By leveraging digital platforms, Utrecht ensured a wider array of voices were included in the participatory process, making engagement more inclusive and representative (Lin & Kant, 2021).

While social media e-participation can help state actors overcome socio-economic barriers to reach a wider audience, it can also deepen societal digital divides (Arora, 2022; Lin & Kant, 2021; Senior et al., 2023; Yao & Xu, 2022). These disparities may widen the gap between participating and non-participating citizens, potentially skewing public policy and leading to biased governance decisions (Wang et al., 2023). In Nepal, for instance, Arora (2022) describes how social media access is often considered a luxury, primarily available to urban, higher-income individuals. As a result, non-tech-savvy citizens remain excluded from this 'elite' medium, leaving them unheard in digital governance (Arora, 2022). This divide extends beyond citizens; as Svirak et al. (2023) explain, some government authorities also struggle with digital literacy, limiting their ability to use social media for e-participation. In certain municipalities in the Czech Republic, public administrators reported insufficient social media knowledge and training, preventing them from effectively leveraging these digital platforms for governance. Some even perceived social media as primarily suited for younger generations, whom they viewed as more tech-savvy (Svirak et al., 2023).

3.1.2.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

Consequently, the use of social media for e-participation by state actors can enhance their perceived legitimacy by increasing accessibility and inclusivity in governance processes (Abdulkareem et al., 2022; Lin & Kant, 2021; Svirak et al., 2023). By reducing socio-economic participation barriers, social media offers citizens alternative avenues to engage with the government (Abdulkareem et al., 2022; Anyanwu et al., 2024; Lin & Kant, 2021; Svirak et al., 2023). Government interaction with citizens via social media fosters working relationships and strengthens public trust (Abdulkareem et al., 2022). A study on Utrecht's Overvecht district by Lin & Kant (2021) illustrated these benefits, showing that increased participation contributed to perceptions of government openness and responsiveness. To achieve this, municipal authorities integrated flexible participation tools, including social media, to facilitate greater engagement in an urban planning project (Lin & Kant, 2021). Such cases demonstrate that when e-participation tools are designed with citizens' needs in mind, they lead to higher participation rates (Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021). Furthermore, such initiatives show that when governments adopt inclusive governance approaches, they also build public trust because citizens feel their views are genuinely valued (Abdulkareem et al., 2022).

On the other hand, the use of social media for e-participation by state actors can negatively impact their public image. Specifically, it can reveal socio-economic challenges that hinder their competitiveness compared to their peers (Svirak et al., 2023). In their study on Czech Republic municipalities, Svirak et al. (2023) found that some administrators struggled with social media due to limited digital literacy, hindering their ability to develop strategic content and engagement approaches. This made it difficult to compete for visibility and establish a strong municipal brand, particularly compared to larger cities. While administrators acknowledged the importance of social media proficiency, they felt constrained by their lack of digital skills (Svirak et al., 2023). Moreover, social media as a tool for e-participation may inadvertently exclude certain citizens which might make state actors appear exclusionary (Arora, 2022; Lin & Kant, 2021). Digital platforms require users to possess the necessary experience and skills to navigate government participation initiatives, potentially marginalising those without such competencies (Yao & Xu, 2022). If state actors select inappropriate e-participation tools, they risk failing to achieve the expected benefits of increased participation rates (Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021).

3.1.3 Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities

The competence and strategies of public authorities encompass the skills, expertise, and approaches that state actors employ to engage effectively in social media e-participation.

This includes their ability to utilise social media as a branding tool to shape public image and stand in front of their peers (Svirak et al., 2023). It also involves the strategic deployment of social media campaigns to attract public attention and drive engagement (Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021; Amores et al., 2023; Hariguna et al., 2021; Rauchfleisch et al., 2023; Svirak et al., 2023). Such strategies are particularly critical in public mobilisation efforts, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 response, where governments used social media to disseminate information and influence public behaviour (Amores et al., 2023). Beyond direct engagement, public authorities may be looking towards utilising Machine Learning (ML) tools for data-driven policymaking. Effective use of these tools requires the capacity to filter and process digital data to extract actionable insights (Labafi et al., 2022). Ultimately, the competence and strategic capacities of public authorities shape their ability to uphold democratic principles, harness data analytics in policy processes, fight misinformation, disinformation, and hate, and mobilise citizens for participatory governance.

3.1.3.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

Normatively, public authorities must possess the appropriate levels of competence and strategic awareness in their use of social media to fully realise its governance potential. The competence and strategies of state actors in social media e-participation influence all normative ideals: *professionalism*, *efficiency*, *service*, and *engagement*. The effectiveness of social media e-participation depends on state actors' ability to leverage digital tools appropriately in governance initiatives (Svirak et al., 2023). Social media campaigns are not a one-size-fits-all approach; state actors must identify and implement the most effective strategies for engaging their target audiences (Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021; Amores et al., 2023; Hariguna et al., 2021; Rauchfleisch et al., 2023; Svirak et al., 2023). Furthermore, the use of social media data in policymaking, particularly when integrated with ML techniques, requires careful oversight. Relying on improperly processed or unfiltered data can lead to policy failures based on misleading insights (Labafi et al., 2022).

3.1.3.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

When public authorities possess the necessary competence and strategies for effective and efficient social media e-participation, they can significantly expand their audience reach (Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021; Hariguna et al., 2021; Rauchfleisch et al., 2023). Ensuring that communication strategies resonate with citizen expectations can enhance engagement leading to more representative public participation initiatives (Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021; Amores et al., 2023; Hariguna et al., 2021; Rauchfleisch et al., 2023).

This is especially evident when rich media and dialogic features are employed to encourage responsiveness and feedback (Amores et al., 2023). The closer government communication strategies align with citizen expectations, the greater the trust and participation they generate (Abdulkareem et al., 2022). Moreover, in the realm of data-driven policymaking, state actors with strong analytical competencies can effectively distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information when applying ML techniques. This helps in mitigating the risk of poor policy decisions caused by the use of unreliable data (Labafi et al., 2022). While AI techniques offer transformative potential for governance and public service delivery, their effectiveness depends on ethical deployment and robust oversight to ensure alignment with democratic and societal values (Valenzuela-Aguilera et al., 2024).

However, when public authorities fail to strategically implement social media e-participation, they risk missing out on its engagement benefits (Hariguna et al., 2021). To achieve higher participation rates, e-participation tools must be carefully planned and implemented in alignment with citizen needs and expectations (Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021). Additionally, the structure and clarity of messaging are crucial to prevent overwhelming the public and reducing the risk of misinterpretation (Rauchfleisch et al., 2023). Moreover, governments should also avoid treating social media e-participation solely as a one-way information dissemination tool without fostering incentives for active citizen engagement (Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021). Citizens are often aware of superficial engagement tactics and may choose not to participate if they perceive the initiative as insincere (Abdulkareem et al., 2022). Apart from engagement, Valenzuela-Aguilera et al. (2024) caution that relying on AI techniques trained on biased data in governance can lead to significant consequences. When state actors fail to identify and remove biases from social media data used in AI training, the resulting decisions can reinforce systemic discrimination and flawed policy outcomes (Labafi et al., 2022; Valenzuela-Aguilera et al., 2024). A notable example is the COMPAS (Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions) system, developed to support judicial decision-making in the United States of America (U.S.A.), which produced biased outcomes, leading to unfair sentencing and the unjust denial of parole for certain groups (Valenzuela-Aguilera et al., 2024).

3.1.3.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

Consequently, when state actors possess the competency to implement social media e-participation in a way that actively engages citizens, it can foster greater trust and enhance their legitimacy (Abdulkareem et al., 2022). Citizens expect meaningful interaction with their government, and when this expectation is met, it creates a positive feedback loop.

Greater engagement leads to increased trust, reinforcing their willingness to participate because they feel heard (Abdulkareem et al., 2022; Amores et al., 2023). The more state actors cater to the needs and expectations of their audience, the more receptive citizens become to governmental messaging (Rauchfleisch et al., 2023). Other than engagement, effective deployment of data-driven policymaking reduces the likelihood of public backlash. When citizens perceive that their concerns are proactively addressed, they are less inclined to engage in disruptive online activism, such as social media storms (Labafi et al., 2022).

However, if state actors fail to implement effective social media e-participation strategies that demonstrate a genuine commitment to engagement, citizens may lose trust in them (Abdulkareem et al., 2022). A decline in public trust can, in turn, erode the state's legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens. People are highly perceptive of insincere engagement efforts and can recognise when state actors are merely being performative rather than genuinely interested in dialogue (Abdulkareem et al., 2022; Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021). State actors must acknowledge the reputational risks associated with superficial participation, as repeated attempts to mislead the public can have lasting consequences (Abdulkareem et al., 2022). Beyond engagement, relying on poor-quality data for data-driven policymaking can have serious repercussions. When citizens feel that their voices are dismissed or misinterpreted, they may resort to online activism, generating widespread backlash (Labafi et al., 2022). Furthermore, governance decisions based on biased data fed into AI systems can further alienate affected individuals, making it unlikely that they will maintain a positive perception of the government. If state actors fail to apply appropriate safeguards when deploying AI in governance, they risk inflicting significant harm on the state's credibility and public image (Valenzuela-Aguilera et al., 2024).

3.1.4 Citizen Mobilisation

Citizen mobilisation refers to the process through which state actors engage the public via social media to generate support for governance initiatives. Such public support is widely regarded as essential for the successful implementation of state agendas (Oh, 2022; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). Social media platforms are particularly effective for mobilisation efforts due to their expansive, interconnected networks that facilitate rapid information dissemination and collective engagement (Akerele-Popoola et al., 2022). Within the political sphere, state actors have increasingly adopted social media to galvanise support for electoral campaigns, leveraging digital platforms to shape public opinion in their favour (Ben Lazreg & M'Sallem, 2023). To further enhance engagement, political actors have even incorporated political memes into their mobilisation strategies,

using them to attract attention and connect with targeted audiences (Chmel et al., 2024). More broadly, social media has proven critical in shaping public opinion around specific policy initiatives and narratives, influencing both sentiment and behavioural intent (L. Guo & Chen, 2022; Vespa et al., 2022). However, while social media-driven citizen mobilisation can strengthen democratic participation and assist in data-driven policymaking, it may also facilitate the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and hate-related content/activities.

3.1.4.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

Public authorities use social media e-participation to efficiently expand engagement in civic and governance initiatives (Oh, 2022; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). Social media is also widely adopted as a political campaign tool to efficiently reach and engage constituents through targeted messaging and visibility strategies (Ben Lazreg & M'Sallem, 2023). These practises align with both the *engagement* and *efficiency* normative ideals. In civic and governance contexts, state actors have seen the efficiency merits of promoting participation through social media. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when digital platforms were used to mobilise public adherence to health guidelines (L. Guo & Chen, 2022; Oh, 2022; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). In broader political settings, social media facilitates inclusive, large-scale citizen engagement, fostering interaction, mobilisation, and narrative alignment across diverse voter groups (Ben Lazreg & M'Sallem, 2023). When combined with strategic communication formats such as memes, these platforms enhance the reach and impact of political messaging (Chmel et al., 2024).

3.1.4.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

Effective utilisation of social media e-participation for civic and governance engagement enables state actors to build a united front in addressing key issues (Oh, 2022; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). This was clearly demonstrated in the study by Santoveña-Casal et al. (2021), which examined the Spanish government's #EsteVirusLoParamosUnidos campaign on Twitter (now X) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative aimed to foster national solidarity, promote social cohesion, and encourage public appreciation for health workers. This collective sentiment contributed to citizen compliance with public health measures and supported the government's broader efforts to contain the spread of the virus (Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). Similarly, Lin and Kant (2021) describe how municipal authorities in Utrecht used Facebook to mobilise citizens and gather public input on the redesign of roads in the Overvecht district. By framing the initiative as a public competition, the city successfully mobilised citizen participation and encouraged

widespread engagement (Lin & Kant, 2021). In the political domain, Ben Lazreg and M'Sallem (2023) highlight how candidates in Tunisia's 2019 presidential elections strategically used social media to mobilise supporters. Candidates actively cultivated their image online, which voters viewed as a key factor influencing their electoral decisions. In some cases, candidates successfully recruited supporters to carry out digital campaigns on their behalf, further amplifying their political messaging through citizen-driven engagement (Ben Lazreg & M'Sallem, 2023). In summary, social media-driven mobilisation not only enables state actors to rally citizens around specific initiatives but can also lead citizens to take an active role in supporting and extending the reach of those efforts (Ben Lazreg & M'Sallem, 2023; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021).

However, citizen mobilisation through social media e-participation for civic engagement can result in disruptive outcomes if not properly monitored and managed by state actors. This was evident in Oh's (2022) coverage of South Korea's response during the MERS outbreak. In that instance, public authorities attempted to withhold information to prevent public panic. This approach backfired, instead prompting citizens to seek their own sources of information. One outcome was the creation of citizen-made online MERS maps, some of which contained false information, ultimately contributing to the spread of misinformation and widespread public confusion (Oh, 2022). In another scenario, Akerele-Popoola et al. (2022) describe how social media's mobilisation effects were instrumental in organising anti-government protests. This was the case with the #EndSARS movement in Nigeria, where citizens used social media to mobilise against what they perceived as bad governance. Twitter's expansive and interconnected networks amplified the demonstrations to such an extent that the Nigerian government eventually banned the platform (Akerele-Popoola et al., 2022).

3.1.4.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

When state actors effectively mobilise citizens through social media e-participation, they can enhance their legitimacy and attract public attention (Lin & Kant, 2021). This applies to both governance initiatives and political campaigns. In the context of governance, when citizens feel genuinely included in the decision-making process, they are more likely to support state-led initiatives and align with institutional goals (Lin & Kant, 2021; Oh, 2022; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). In the political domain, successful mobilisation can transform citizens into active participants in the electoral process. When individuals feel that their engagement matters, they are more likely to vote and trust the value of their participation in democratic life (Ben Lazreg & M'Sallem, 2023). The strategic use of memes can further enhance this engagement by making political messages more relatable, emotionally resonant, and shareable across social media platforms (Chmel et al., 2024).

Conversely, when citizen mobilisation through social media e-participation turns against state authorities, it can trigger significant public unrest and reputational harm, ultimately undermining government legitimacy (Akerle-Popoola et al., 2022; Arora, 2022). This was evident during the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria, as documented by Akerle-Popoola et al. (2022), where citizens mobilised against what they perceived as bad governance. The scale of social media-driven mobilisation was so extensive that the Nigerian government experienced reputational damage on both domestic and international fronts (Akerle-Popoola et al., 2022). A similar dynamic is evident in Arora's (2022) study of Nepal's response to the 2015 earthquake. In that context, citizens used social media to collectively criticise state authorities for what they viewed as an inadequate and self-serving response. Many users expressed frustration that their concerns were being ignored because government platforms largely focused on curated displays of authority and self-promotion (Arora, 2022). In both cases, citizen mobilisation via social media became a powerful mechanism for exposing governance failures, leading to reputational decline at multiple levels.

3.1.5 Data-Driven Policymaking

Data-driven policymaking refers to the practise of leveraging data extracted from social media platforms to inform governance decisions and guide policy formulation (Y. Guo et al., 2023; Labafi et al., 2022; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). This approach entails the analysis of public sentiment, the identification of emergent trends, and the application of predictive analytics to generate policies that are more responsive to citizen needs (Labafi et al., 2022). It frequently relies on ML and Big Data Analytics (BDA) techniques to process and interpret large-scale datasets (Labafi et al., 2022; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). For instance, emotional analysis on Twitter (now X) commonly employs both ML and lexicon-based approaches. Moreover, social media text mining in general commonly applies methods such as Support Vector Machines (SVM), qualitative content analysis, Principal Component Analysis (PCA), clustering, descriptive statistics, imputation techniques, emotional co-creation scores, emotional text mining, sentiment analysis, and network analysis (Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). When implemented effectively, data-driven policymaking holds the potential to uphold democratic principles. It can help align public policy with citizen sentiment and foster greater responsiveness to societal concerns.

3.1.5.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

Normatively, public authorities could utilise social media data in data-driven policymaking to better anticipate and respond to the policy directions desired by citizens.

This practice aligns with the *efficiency* and *service* normative ideals. It promotes proactive governance and enhances the responsiveness of public institutions to citizen concerns. Remaining attuned to the evolving needs and sentiments of the public enables authorities to serve more effectively and allocate resources more strategically (Labafi et al., 2022). Through sentiment prediction and trend analysis, data-driven policymaking empowers state actors to implement pre-emptive measures grounded in real-time public feedback (Y. Guo et al., 2023; Labafi et al., 2022; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). Ultimately, such approaches contribute to the development of more robust, reasonable, and adaptive public policies (Yang & Su, 2020).

3.1.5.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

If public authorities possess the capacity to implement social media-supported data-driven policymaking, they can proactively design policies that are more closely aligned with public needs. For instance, in the case of Shanghai analysed by Y. Guo et al. (2023), authorities could have applied sentiment analysis to Sina Weibo comments during the COVID-19 pandemic to better gauge citizens' concerns and expectations. Emotional fluctuations expressed on social media would have offered valuable insights into the public's subjective perception of the crisis. Equipped with this information, public authorities could have strategically managed information dissemination to reduce panic and reinforce public confidence (Y. Guo et al., 2023). Similarly, Labafi et al. (2022) illustrate how state actors in Iran could apply ML algorithms—such as decision trees—to analyse data from Twitter (now X) in order to better understand citizen needs. This approach enables continuous monitoring of public sentiment and facilitates the identification of preferred policy directions. Ultimately, when citizens feel acknowledged by state institutions, they may be less inclined to engage in disruptive social media backlash or ‘storms’ (Labafi et al., 2022).

However, public authorities can only implement social media-supported data-driven policymaking effectively if they possess the necessary skills to understand and apply its underlying mechanisms. This potential skills gap is highlighted by Svirak et al. (2023), who found that in some Czech municipalities, public officials lack digital confidence and proficiency. Without basic digital competence, it becomes difficult for state actors to engage meaningfully with advanced tools such as ML algorithms or BDA (Svirak et al., 2023). More broadly, Yang and Su (2020) argue that government institutions often lack professional talent with big data expertise, resulting in limited capacity to independently apply these techniques. Consequently, authorities frequently rely on external technical support from private enterprises, which can be costly and may raise concerns about reduced public oversight and control (Yang & Su, 2020). Furthermore, the use of AI-

driven policymaking tools carries the risk of biased decision-making, as demonstrated by Valenzuela-Aguilera et al. (2024). These tools depend heavily on the quality and representativeness of the underlying data. For instance, the COMPAS system in the U.S.A. led to discriminatory outcomes in criminal justice due to biases embedded in its training data (Valenzuela-Aguilera et al., 2024). This lack of data representativeness is further exemplified by Arora (2022) who mentions that access to social media is uneven across populations, particularly affecting marginalised groups. As a result, the data collected from these platforms may not accurately reflect the broader public, introducing representational bias into the policymaking process (Arora, 2022).

3.1.5.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

Should public authorities effectively utilise social media-supported data-driven policymaking, they can enhance their credibility and legitimacy by fostering greater policy transparency. When citizens perceive that government policies are responsive to their expressed needs, they are less likely to initiate social media backlash or ‘storms’ (Labafi et al., 2022). Just as governments monitor social media to gauge public sentiment, citizens use these platforms to assert their needs and hold authorities accountable (Anyanwu et al., 2024). There is an increasing expectation that policymakers not only observe these expressions but respond to them in a meaningful and timely manner (Labafi et al., 2022; Lin & Kant, 2021). Ultimately, Lin and Kant (2021) state that citizen participation is intended to promote transparent and inclusive governance. Therefore, when public authorities employ data-driven policymaking in a manner that upholds these values, they reinforce the legitimacy of state institutions (Lin & Kant, 2021).

However, if public authorities are ill-equipped to utilise social media-supported data-driven policymaking and do so irresponsibly, they risk undermining their legitimacy. This is because, as noted earlier, the use of AI techniques in policymaking must rely on accurate and representative data to be effective and equitable (Valenzuela-Aguilera et al., 2024). In addition, this data must be carefully filtered to remove unreliable inputs—particularly those resulting from misinformation and other distortions commonly found on social media platforms (Labafi et al., 2022). If such safeguards are not in place, AI systems may produce unfair outcomes that disproportionately affect marginalised communities (Valenzuela-Aguilera et al., 2024). Beyond algorithmic injustice, poor-quality data can also lead to flawed policy decisions more broadly (Labafi et al., 2022). In such circumstances, the relationship between the government and its citizens is likely to suffer.

3.1.6 Upholding Democratic Principles

Democratic principles refer to the core values that underpin democratic governance. These values include policy transparency, governance credibility, and citizen oversight of public institutions (Labafi et al., 2022). Collectively, they enable a more collaborative approach to governance between the state and its citizens (Amores et al., 2023). Civic engagement is essential to ensuring that governments remain responsive to the needs of citizens (Alcaide Muñoz & Rodríguez Bolívar, 2021; Senior et al., 2023). It serves as an avenue through which citizens are empowered to actively participate in governance processes (Alcaide Muñoz & Rodríguez Bolívar, 2021; Lin & Kant, 2021; Svirak et al., 2023). E-participation in particular is intended to enhance both democratic legitimacy and institutional responsiveness (Alcaide Muñoz & Rodríguez Bolívar, 2021). This is because the adoption of participatory e-government platforms has been shown to increase citizens' trust in government institutions (Hariguna et al., 2021). Consequently, social media e-participation offers a channel through which citizens can exercise their democratic role in influencing government decisions (Abdulkareem et al., 2022; Lin & Kant, 2021; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021; Svirak et al., 2023). The democratic role played by citizens through social media can range from solving minor societal challenges to tackling large issues such as corruption (Arayankalam & Krishnan, 2022). Pressure on state actors to uphold democratic principles compels them to address socio-economic barriers to participation and to counter misinformation, disinformation, and hate. It also highlights the need to improve institutional competencies to better mobilise citizens and leverage data-driven policymaking.

3.1.6.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

Social media e-participation offers public authorities an efficient means of upholding democratic principles by fostering citizen engagement. This aligns with the normative ideals of *professionalism*, *efficiency*, and *engagement* that guide public service delivery. In particular, social media participation enhances core democratic values such as policy transparency, governance credibility, and citizen oversight of institutional performance (Labafi et al., 2022). Civic engagement through these platforms supports this function by providing inclusive and accessible spaces where citizens can fulfil their democratic responsibilities (Abdulkareem et al., 2022; Lin & Kant, 2021; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021; Svirak et al., 2023). Moreover, social media-based civic engagement facilitates the efficient incorporation of citizens into the governance process, enabling collaborative problem-solving (Amores et al., 2023; Arayankalam & Krishnan, 2022; Lin & Kant, 2021). This process is essential for maintaining democratic legitimacy, as it fosters public

trust by empowering citizens through participatory e-government mechanisms (Hariguna et al., 2021).

3.1.6.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

When state actors effectively utilise social media to uphold democratic principles, they can counteract governance failures such as corruption. This relationship is well documented by Arayankalam & Krishnan (2022), who examine how social media e-participation functions as an anti-corruption mechanism. Their study found that social media diffusion positively influences digital engagement, which in turn has a negative effect on corruption. As a result, higher levels of social media diffusion in society are associated with lower levels of corruption. This effect can be attributed to the way social media platforms enhance transparency and accountability within governance structures. Moreover, social media enables citizens to actively participate in anti-corruption efforts, which are amplified by the network effects of these platforms (Arayankalam & Krishnan, 2022). These findings align with Ramzy and Ibrahim (2024), who observed that the rise of social media e-participation research has coincided with increased scholarly attention to themes such as transparency in government. As the authors note, many governments are working to raise the openness and transparency of information disclosure, which leads to less corruption (Ramzy & Ibrahim, 2024).

However, when state actors exploit social media to advance personal or partisan agendas rather than uphold democratic principles, they risk eroding their own legitimacy. Historically, social media was co-opted by governments as a tool for disseminating propaganda, a legacy that now complicates efforts to regulate such misuse (Anyanwu et al., 2024). Indeed, it is well documented that social media was initially adopted by many state actors to broadcast controlled narratives—an approach that continues in various forms today (Anyanwu et al., 2024; Svirak et al., 2023). As Arora (2022) observes, citizens are often keenly aware when governments engage in tokenistic e-participation efforts as public relations strategies. In Nepal, such performative digital engagement provoked public backlash, as citizens used the same platforms to expose government insincerity, thereby undermining the intended image-building campaigns (Arora, 2022). In some contexts, as the study by Akerele-Popoola et al. (2022) illustrates, this public criticism can escalate into widespread civil unrest. When Nigerian authorities failed to uphold democratic ideals and appeared indifferent to citizen grievances, mass mobilisation erupted in the form of the #EndSARS protests. While these demonstrations were initially sparked by anger over police brutality, they quickly evolved into a broader indictment of bad governance. The refusal of state actors to acknowledge or engage with

the public's frustrations only deepened distrust and exhausted any remaining goodwill (Akerele-Popoola et al., 2022).

3.1.6.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

Ultimately, when state actors utilise social media e-participation to uphold democratic principles, they can reinforce their democratic legitimacy (Alcaide Muñoz & Rodríguez Bolívar, 2021). Participatory decision-making processes supported by e-government tools have been shown to foster trust between citizens and state institutions (Hariguna et al., 2021). However, this trust is contingent upon the perceived authenticity of the participatory process; citizens are unlikely to view government as legitimate if engagement mechanisms are merely symbolic (Abdulkareem et al., 2022). When citizens support the governance process, they are more inclined to participate voluntarily in government initiatives such as anti-corruption campaigns (Arayankalam & Krishnan, 2022). Social media, therefore, must not be reduced to a one-way broadcasting tool—nor should the authentic voices of citizens be dismissed as ‘noise’ (Alcaide Muñoz & Rodríguez Bolívar, 2021). In short, governments that embrace meaningful participatory practises through social media are more likely to secure broad public support due to the increase in trust (Abdulkareem et al., 2022).

However, when government officials perceive public engagement as mere ‘noise’ and neglect the democratic principles underpinning governance, they risk undermining their own legitimacy (Alcaide Muñoz & Rodríguez Bolívar, 2021). This erosion of trust is particularly acute when citizens interpret digital participation initiatives as superficial public relations exercises rather than genuine attempts at inclusion (Abdulkareem et al., 2022; Arora, 2022). As noted by Alcaide Muñoz and Rodríguez Bolívar (2021), it is not uncommon for some policymakers to regard citizen participation as disruptive rather than constructive. In such contexts, Chmel et al. (2024) suggest that frustrated citizens may turn to digital forms of resistance, including the creation of satirical memes that publicly criticise state actors. These acts of ridicule can tarnish the perceived authority and dignity of public officials within the digital public sphere (Chmel et al., 2024).

3.2 Inhibitors

In contrast to enablers, inhibitors according to Cenfetelli (2004) are system attributes that consistently and independently exert a negative influence on state actors' engagement with social media platforms for e-participation. Unlike enablers, their effect is not contingent on valence—they inherently discourage use.

3.2.1 Disinformation and Misinformation

Disinformation and misinformation refer to false or misleading information that spreads through social media platforms (Akerele-Popoola et al., 2022; Arora, 2022; L. Guo & Chen, 2022; Y. Guo et al., 2023; Hayes, 2021; Oh, 2022; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021; Svirak et al., 2023). Such content has demonstrable adverse effects on public perception, governance processes, and democratic engagement (Akerele-Popoola et al., 2022; Arora, 2022; Y. Guo et al., 2023; Hayes, 2021; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021; Svirak et al., 2023). According to Broda and Strömbäck (2024), *misinformation* describes inaccurate content shared without intent to deceive, while *disinformation* is deliberately false material crafted to manipulate opinion, distort facts, or serve political agendas. *Fake news*—that is, false information presented as legitimate journalism—is a form of *disinformation* and should not be conflated with *misinformation* (Broda & Strömbäck, 2024). Social media provides a fertile environment for both phenomena due to its highly interconnected networks that cluster likeminded individuals (Akerele-Popoola et al., 2022; L. Guo & Chen, 2022; Hayes, 2021). Within these networks, users can, for example, share misleading memes that rely on specific contextual knowledge to be decoded, thus enabling selective exposure among susceptible audiences (Chmel et al., 2024). This dynamic gives continued oxygen to false narratives, allowing them to flourish and recirculate within digital communities. Ultimately, the prevalence of disinformation and misinformation undermines the state’s capacity to uphold democratic principles. It also impedes citizen mobilisation by the state towards initiatives that generate public value, affects effective data-driven policymaking, and contributes to the proliferation of hate.

3.2.1.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

The proliferation of disinformation and misinformation on social media undermines all four normative ideals: *professionalism*, *efficiency*, *service*, and *engagement*. Misleading information erodes perceptions of professionalism by diminishing public trust in the credibility, competence, and legitimacy of state actors (Hayes, 2021; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). The efficiency ideal is equally threatened when false or manipulated data infiltrates data-driven policymaking processes. Such contamination can lead to policies that misalign with citizen needs and result in the delivery of unnecessary or wasteful services (Labafi et al., 2022). This misalignment in turn compromises the service ideal by producing interventions that fail to advance the public good (Valenzuela-Aguilera et al., 2024). Engagement, meanwhile, loses its democratic substance when public discourse is overwhelmed by conspiracy theories, falsehoods, and manipulation—factors that obstruct meaningful deliberation and participatory dialogue (Hayes, 2021; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021).

3.2.1.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

Einstein is thought to have said, “Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I’m not sure about the universe” (Ben-Naim, 2019). While the remark predates the digital age, recent studies demonstrate how social media echo chambers can create geographically dispersed groups centred around strongly emotive but demonstrably false ideas (Hayes, 2021; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). This thesis refers to this phenomenon as *networked irrationality*—a term intended to capture the three key characteristics that define its modus operandi. First, the *networked* aspect refers to the structure of **social media echo chambers** that amplify bias (Diaz Ruiz & Nilsson, 2023). Second, the *irrationality* component builds on a modified definition of collective irrationality. While collective irrationality typically involves strongly held group identity and moral opinions reinforced through epistemic mechanisms, the information that underpins it does not need to be false (Voinea et al., 2023). In contrast, the *irrationality* in *networked irrationality* is characterised by belief in **demonstrable falsehoods** and a **resistance to correction**—inherited from collective irrationality. Therefore, networked irrationality can be defined as collective irrationality driven by social media echo chambers and centred specifically on demonstrated falsehoods. The term was deliberately coined in plain, accessible language because, as Rauchfleisch et al. (2023) observe, jargon and complex phrasing can overwhelm non-academic readers, whereas simpler wording helps research messages resonate beyond academic audiences. While terms such as *cyber tribalism* share some similarities, [Appendix O](#) demonstrates that they fall short on at least one of the three defining characteristics (Duile, 2017). Irrational behaviour in isolation may pose limited risk. However, when such beliefs are incubated within tightly connected online communities, they could be dangerous. At critical mass, these behaviours may, for example, pose a threat to democratic order (Hayes, 2021).

A striking example of the damaging effects of networked irrationality can be found in the events surrounding the 2020 U.S.A. presidential election. Hayes (2021) details how President Donald Trump posted misleading content on Twitter (now X) to persuade his followers that the 2020 election was stolen. Through the propagation of what came to be known as “The Big Lie”, President Trump galvanised a base of radicalised supporters who treated his claims with unwavering loyalty. On January 6th, 2021, he urged his supporters to march on the U.S.A. Capitol, culminating in a violent attempt to subvert the democratic process (Hayes, 2021). A parallel case is found in Spain during the COVID-19 pandemic, as examined by Santoveña-Casal et al. (2021). In that instance, pandemic denialists circulated false claims on social media suggesting that COVID-19 was a fabrication intended to justify government-imposed population control. While such beliefs may appear fantastical, their real-world consequences were far from trivial.

Denialists escalated their attacks by labelling state actors as “manipulators”, “mafia goons”, and “psychopaths”, fuelling a climate of distrust and hostility toward public institutions (Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). Together, these cases underscore the dangers of networked irrationality—where demonstrable falsehoods, reinforced within echo chambers and shielded from correction, may fuel the proliferation of hate, as in Spain, and threaten democratic governance, as in the U.S.A.

However, state actors may also weaponise misleading content on social media to advance their own agendas (Anyanwu et al., 2024). While early uses of social media by governments were often propagandistic, many later adopted it for factual communication and civic engagement (Svirak et al., 2023). This evolution reveals the dual nature of social media—its capacity to enable both democratic participation and strategic manipulation. The potency of such manipulation is amplified by algorithmic systems that spread irrational and demonstrably false content at scale (Hayes, 2021; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). When state actors deliberately seed doubt across digital platforms, they can mobilise public discontent and aim it at their rival state actors and institutions. As previously illustrated in Hayes (2021) analysis of the 2020 U.S.A. presidential election, strategic disinformation can escalate into democratic backsliding and civic unrest. In such instances, the exploitation of networked irrationality by state actors does not merely distort reality—it poses an existential threat to democratic governance itself (Hayes, 2021).

3.2.1.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

As a result, the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation on social media can significantly undermine the perceived legitimacy and integrity of state institutions. Manipulated narratives may give rise to public accusations against the state for injustices it has not committed, eroding institutional credibility (Akerle-Popoola et al., 2022). In parallel, the use of fake profiles and inauthentic accounts may further damage public trust by spreading falsehoods that distort the state’s image (Svirak et al., 2023). Collectively, such distortions can lead citizens to perceive state actors as illegitimate, unreliable, and untrustworthy. Over time, this erosion of trust may strain the relationship between the government and its constituents, ultimately making effective governance increasingly difficult (Hayes, 2021; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021).

However, state actors who weaponise misleading information against their rivals may be likened to practitioners of modern-day McCarthyism—using sensational falsehoods to fabricate legitimacy and discredit opposition (Genter, 2018). President Trump’s strategic use of disinformation to strengthen his claim to the presidency may be viewed as a modern-day McCarthyist tactic for fuelling networked irrationality for political gain

(Hayes, 2021). The digital environment amplifies the impact of disinformation far beyond what was possible during the McCarthy era (Genter, 2018; Hayes, 2021). This is supported by Chmel et al. (2024), who observe that social media platforms facilitate the circulation of content such as memes embedded with coded messages. Such messages often require a specific cultural or political context to decode, making them particularly effective tools for targeted disinformation campaigns (Chmel et al., 2024).

3.2.2 Hate Content/Activities

Hate in social media e-participation refers to the use of digital platforms to facilitate the spread of harmful behaviour (Arora, 2022; Hayes, 2021; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). This conduct is often referred to as *trolling* and the perpetrators are called *trolls* (Arora, 2022). It is frequently directed at individuals or groups based on their identity, beliefs, or affiliations. Hate can propagate through content and online harassment activities such as cyberbullying (Hayes, 2021; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). Social media affordances—such as public comments and like/dislike mechanisms—facilitate the spread of hate, particularly through persistent negative feedback and hostile messaging (Svirak et al., 2023). Memes are also widely used to propagate hateful or demeaning content, often under the guise of humour or satire, making them particularly potent vehicles for political and social polarisation (Chmel et al., 2024). The inherently networked and viral nature of social media accelerates the visibility and diffusion of such content, enabling its rapid uptake and reproduction across platforms (Hayes, 2021). Ultimately, the presence of hate undermines democratic principles, impedes constructive citizen mobilisation, and lowers the efficacy of data-driven policymaking.

3.2.2.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

The proliferation of hate content on social media undermines all four normative ideals expected of state actors: *professionalism*, *efficiency*, *service*, and *engagement*. Hostile and aggressive discourse can make it difficult for state actors to uphold their professionalism and foster positive dialogue around social issues, ultimately weakening participatory engagement (Hayes, 2021; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). In such environments, some citizens may be discouraged from contributing to discussions altogether, either due to fear of backlash or aversion to toxic online spaces (Arora, 2022). This reduces the inclusivity and representativeness of citizen input. As a result, valuable perspectives may be lost, leading to gaps in the information available for public service improvement. This can produce inefficiencies in service design and delivery, as policy decisions become informed by incomplete or skewed data (Labafí et al., 2022). In sum, the presence of hate on social media triggers a cascading effect. It first undermines democratic engagement

and then impairs the state's ability to understand and respond to the evolving needs of its citizens.

3.2.2.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

One of the key consequences of hate on social media is the reduced willingness of state actors to engage with these platforms. It is understandable that public officials may withdraw from digital spaces that compromise their dignity and mental well-being. Svirak et al. (2023) highlight this dynamic in the Czech Republic, where municipal authorities reported psychological distress due to sustained exposure to hostile and offensive comments. One participant lamented the daily presence of hateful posts, describing them as harmful to both administrators and the reputation of municipal pages. Such an environment constitutes a form of digital workplace abuse, which would be unacceptable in any other professional setting (Svirak et al., 2023). Moreover, Arora (2022) documents how, during the Nepal earthquake, citizens expressing legitimate concerns about the government's disaster response were subjected to trolling. The resulting fear of harassment deterred many from voicing their opinions, leading to a suppression of critical perspectives. This creates a skewed communicative environment where social media data no longer reflects the broader public, ultimately compromising the legitimacy of any policy decisions derived from such data (Arora, 2022).

However, for state actors who deliberately weaponise hate to consolidate power and safeguard their interests, hate can function as a strategic tool for political gain. This dynamic is clearly illustrated in Hayes (2021), who examines President Donald Trump's use of enthymemes on social media to construct divisive and hateful narratives. In the lead-up to the 2020 U.S.A. presidential election, President Trump actively mobilised his political base through emotionally charged language. President Trump often combined misleading or factually dubious claims with rhetoric designed to incite fear and deepen social fragmentation. One illustrative example of this strategy can be found in a post on Twitter (now X), where President Trump wrote:

“The ‘suburban housewife’ will be voting for me. They want safety & are thrilled that I ended the long-running program where low-income housing would invade their neighbourhood. Biden would reinstall it, in a bigger form, with Cory Booker in charge!” (Hayes, 2021, p. 22).

3.2.2.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

As a result, social media fuelled hate can undermine the dignity of state actors and erode the legitimacy of public institutions (Hayes, 2021; Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). When

disgruntled citizens use derogatory labels such as “manipulators”, “mafia goons”, or “psychopaths” to attack government officials, it creates a toxic and demoralising work environment (Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021). It is therefore unsurprising that some state actors may have become increasingly reluctant to engage on social media, perceiving it as a space that devalues both their professional roles and the institutions they represent (Svirak et al., 2023). Such divisive behaviour may lead to the erosion of democratic values such as inclusivity and tolerance.

However, state actors who use social media to spread hate against their political rivals may gain legitimacy among their supporters, as documented by Hayes (2021). In highly polarised environments, aligning with the emotional tone of one’s base can elevate a state actor’s perceived authenticity. This alignment may involve the use of derogatory language or exclusionary narratives. By echoing constituents’ grievances, these state actors can be viewed not only as relatable but also as defenders of a shared cause. This dynamic enhances their stakeholder salience by making them appear committed and responsive to key issues affecting their base. Yet while this may offer short-term political advantages, it risks legitimising hate as an acceptable mode of political expression, thereby eroding public values over time.

3.3 Overall Conceptual Model

In summary, the system attributes that underpin the enablers and inhibitors of social media e-participation do not operate in isolation of each other—they are deeply interconnected forces. As demonstrated throughout the thematic analysis, these system attributes shape and reshape one another in complex, multidirectional ways. The nature of these interrelationships—ranging from force-multiplying to attenuating—can be summarised as follows and is visually mapped in [Appendix H](#) (Figure H.1).

3.3.1 Enablers

Social media affordances act as the primary system attributes that influence all other attributes which enable and inhibit social media e-participation for state actors. They represent all the design and functionality decisions that make up social media platforms.

Socio-economic factors influence the ability of state actors to uphold democratic principles, develop effective social media strategies, mobilise citizens, and conduct data-driven policymaking. Socio-economic conditions—particularly in areas such as education and financial resources—directly shape state actors’ capacity to understand and use social media and its data for governance. These factors also determine the extent to

which citizens can access and participate in digital spaces, thereby influencing the effectiveness of public engagement, data representativeness, and democratic outreach.

The competence and strategy of public authorities directly shapes the capacity of state actors to mobilise citizens, apply data-driven policymaking, counter misinformation, disinformation, and hate, and uphold democratic principles. The digital skill level and strategic approach adopted by public officials often determines whether social media is used to foster inclusion and evidence-based governance—or misapplied in ways that hinder participation and policy responsiveness. Moreover, the ability of state actors to effectively counter harmful content is contingent upon their level of digital literacy.

Data-driven policymaking enhances the ability of state actors to uphold democratic principles. When effectively deployed, AI techniques applied to social media data allow governments to proactively identify public needs and formulate policies that are timely, targeted, and grounded in citizen input.

Citizen mobilisation bolsters democratic participation and contributes to richer datasets for data-driven policymaking, but can also facilitate the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and hate. While mobilisation strengthens civic engagement and provides state actors with more data to inform evidence-based policymaking, it also creates openings for malicious or misinformed actors to hijack public discourse, erode institutional trust, and polarise society. Moreover, large-scale mobilisation can be used by citizens to collectively challenge or rise up against the government.

The imperative to **uphold democratic principles** compels state actors to address socio-economic barriers to participation and mitigate hate in order to ensure adequate representation. Additionally, transparency—a core value of democratic governance—requires state actors to actively combat misinformation and disinformation to preserve the integrity of the information they provide. Upholding these principles also demands improvements in institutional competencies, enabling state actors to better mobilise citizens and effectively leverage data-driven policymaking.

3.3.2 Inhibitors

Disinformation and misinformation can fuel hate against state actors, diminish their ability to mobilise citizens, compromise data-driven policymaking, and ultimately erode democratic governance. When such content infiltrates datasets used by AI systems, it distorts the evidence base and leads to misaligned or misguided policy interventions. Moreover, misleading content can heighten societal tensions and incite hostility toward public institutions, further weakening the foundations of democratic society.

Hate content/activities impede citizen mobilisation, distort policymaking processes, and diminish the state's ability to uphold democratic values. Hate can alienate citizens, discourage digital engagement, and skew the representativeness of social media data. Ultimately, this compromises the effectiveness of governance efforts.

3.4 Hypotheses

Utilising the preceding analysis of literature, this thesis proposed three working hypotheses—each corresponding to one of the research questions presented in [Chapter 1](#). The use of working hypotheses allowed for flexibility, wherein the following initial theories were generated before being refined through the research process (Barroga & Matanguihan, 2022). These working hypotheses were refined through semi-structured interviews with five state actors, using the questionnaire in [Appendix I](#). In parallel, structured observations of the social media pages of eleven state institutions were conducted using the template in [Appendix J](#).

3.4.1 Hypothesis 1

The system attributes that enable social media e-participation in Kenya will align with those identified in the literature. However, their perceived enabling effects, as understood by state actors, may be shaped by the Kenyan context. In addition, the way in which social media affordances exert influence may evolve over time. This evolution is driven by the Red Queen Effect, which compels platform providers to continuously innovate in order to maintain their market position (Voelpel et al., 2005).

3.4.2 Hypothesis 2

The system attributes that inhibit social media e-participation in Kenya will align with those identified in the literature. However, their perceived inhibiting effects, as understood by state actors, may be shaped by the Kenyan context.

3.4.3 Hypothesis 3

The interactions between system attributes underpinning enabling and inhibiting perceptions within Kenya's social media e-participation landscape will resemble those observed in the literature. However, these interactions may be shaped by contextual factors specific to Kenya and by the evolving nature of social media affordances over time.

4 Empirical Findings and Analysis

The analysis of the empirical findings ([Appendix K](#) and [Appendix L](#)) based on the methodology set out in [Chapter 2](#) confirmed the existence of six enablers and two inhibitors of social media e-participation for state actors identified in the literature review. It also provided contextual insights into their manifestation within the Kenyan setting. Moreover, the interview data ([Appendix K](#)) revealed an additional theme, **security**, which was subsequently corroborated through the observation data ([Appendix L](#)). An assessment of theoretical saturation is provided at the end of this chapter, based on the completeness of thematic development and the coherence of the overall conceptual model.

4.1 Enablers

4.1.1 Social Media Platform Affordances

All interviewees suggested that Kenyan state actors actively engage a range of social media affordances to support their governance activities and initiatives. For instance, Interviewee 4 referenced activities—such as real-time hackathons, live audio discussions, and the dissemination of timely updates—carried out by their institution through the use of social media features. These accounts were corroborated by structured observation data from X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook. All sampled institutions posted images; several incorporated videos and livestreams; multiple had obtained verification badges; and most employed hashtags or tagged other official accounts.

However, observation data also appeared to indicate the presence of algorithmic filtering on both platforms. Some sharply worded replies were systematically hidden from public view, even after visibility settings were adjusted—suggesting potential automated moderation which may have impacted participation dynamics. Platform-specific content differences were also noted between Facebook and X. Facebook tended to foster a more moderated environment, whereas X accommodated a broader spectrum of content, including posts that leaned into divisive rhetoric. This may in part be a result of the greater anonymity afforded by X to its users as seen from the low number of users who appeared to be using their real-world identities.

Evidence from observations also indicated the presence of additional platform affordances beyond moderation behaviours. X appeared to offer a silver verification badge exclusive to government-affiliated users. Facebook, by contrast, provided its own type of verification badge, which may not have been unique to state institutions, as well as event promotion tools. Observation data also indicated that X gave citizens access to

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as Grok and Perplexity. These tools appeared to be used by citizens to examine and summarise government posts—such as the press releases made by the National Security Organ on their account. Potential AI-generated images and memes that appeared to ridicule state actors were also observed in the comment sections of several government accounts—for instance, those of the National Executive. However, it remains speculative whether such content originated directly from Grok and Perplexity or other AI tools such as ChatGPT. Citizens also employed the Community Notes feature on X to annotate or contest government narratives, particularly on the National Security Organ’s account.

Overall, social media affordances collectively appeared to deeply shape the social media e-participation dynamics. In particular, they seemed to constitute the foundational system attributes from which all other enabling and inhibiting attributes emerged.

4.1.1.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

The enabling factor of social media affordances intersects with all four normative ideals: *service*, *efficiency*, *engagement*, and *professionalism*. All interview findings suggest that social media promotes professionalism. It does so by enhancing transparency and accountability, primarily through the public dissemination of institutional information. Structured observation data across all institutions corroborated this pattern, showing that sampled institutions used social media to communicate updates about their activities and to address matters of public concern. However, posting frequency and information quality varied. For example, institutions such as the Judiciary posted frequently and in detail, while others, such as the Small State Corporation, posted sporadically and potentially disseminated inaccurate information.

In terms of efficiency, all interviewees emphasised the rapid and extensive reach of social media. Interviewees 3 and 4 further highlighted its appeal to younger demographics in particular. Observation data supports this by noting the presence of slang terms—potentially associated with Kenyan youth—in the comments of nearly all institutional accounts.

Beyond dissemination, social media was also identified as a tool for public engagement. Interviewee 5 described two-way communication mechanisms used to gather citizen feedback on policies, budgets, and financial decisions. This aligns with observation data, which recorded the use of tools such as social media polls by the Large State Corporation to solicit public input. However, most posts from all institutions appeared to be framed as one-way announcements rather than dialogic exchanges.

For service delivery, social media was also described as a platform for assisting citizens, such as helping them access and understand the complaint filing processes, as illustrated by Interviewee 3. Some institutions—such as the Judiciary—appeared to readily respond to citizens asking for help in the comments. This suggests that some institutions may be providing services directly through social media. However, responsiveness across the observed institutions was inconsistent. It can though not be excluded that some responses were sent via private messaging to preserve citizen privacy (Data Protection Act, 2019).

4.1.1.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

Interview findings revealed that state actors strategically leveraged social media affordances to improve public communication. All interviewees described the successful use of social media to provide information to citizens and stakeholders. Interviewee 1, for example, noted that it had replaced fax machines for official government communication. Structured observation data corroborated this pattern, showing that all institutions primarily used social media as a channel for disseminating information. It generally appeared that the goal across all state institutions was to sensitise the common *Mwananchi* (citizen) rather than to create space for dialogic exchange.

Although Interviewee 5 expressed a desire to engage the public actively and foster a sense of inclusion, observation data revealed little evidence that such interactive engagement was taking place in practice. The reluctance of state actors to fully embrace social media engagement may be attributed to several key factors. First, X (formerly Twitter) was often observed to host numerous accounts using pseudonyms and unaffiliated profile images, making it difficult for institutions to verify the identities of users commenting beneath official posts. By contrast, Facebook users more commonly displayed what appeared to be their real names, and their profile pictures often resembled their actual identities. Second, content moderation on X was consistently more permissive. Several commenters posted strongly worded, hostile, and sometimes threatening messages. Notably, one account belonging to a high-ranking Judicial State Actor, reposted by the Judiciary account under observation, had its comment section locked. A review of that state actor's post history suggested that the decision followed sustained exposure to abusive commentary, including attacks targeting their innate characteristics. Third, users frequently made unverified claims without supporting evidence. This was particularly observed on high-engagement accounts, such as those belonging to the National Executive—possibly due to their broader reach. These dynamics may have complicated efforts to assess the credibility of public input for policymaking. Collectively, they contributed to an environment that state actors likely perceived as hostile and chaotic—one that was, therefore, ungovernable.

4.1.1.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

Social media affordances have generally supported the legitimacy of state actors by enabling them to respond quickly and with urgency to a wide audience. All interview findings suggested that state institutions used social media to demonstrate transparency and accountability by providing real-time information about their initiatives. This was corroborated by observation data, which appeared to show that the public actively consumed and reacted to such information across all observed state institutions. Social media also allowed state actors to partner with the public in addressing key issues such as corruption, as illustrated by Interviewee 3. This was reflected in observations, where citizens consistently engaged with posts on national challenges like corruption, particularly on Judiciary accounts. Additionally, Interviewee 2 reported that their institution used social media to issue timely press statements to dispel rumours and protect its reputation. This was also reflected in the Large State Corporation's accounts.

Nonetheless, social media affordances have also weakened the legitimacy of some state actors by aiding in reputational damage. Specifically, social media users disseminated information that appeared to question the credibility of the state institutions under focus. This concern was raised by all interviewees, who suggested that counter-narratives circulating on social media had harmed the reputation of their respective organisations. Structured observation data supports these claims, showing that commenters frequently posted alternative narratives in response to official content. In some cases, users employed memes and other visual content to discredit government messaging. This was observed across many accounts, but especially on high-engagement ones such as the National Executive's accounts. Notably, some users were also observed using AI tools—such as Grok and Perplexity—to challenge and fact-check institutional claims in real time. This too was most common on high-engagement accounts. Furthermore, the X (formerly Twitter) account of the National Security Organ was community-noted twice on its press releases. In both instances, commenters used the feature to fact-check the institution's claims by referencing alternative narratives they regarded as more credible.

4.1.2 Socio-economic Factors

Interview findings revealed that, depending on context, social media could either alleviate or intensify existing socio-economic barriers. On the citizen side, Interviewees 2 and 3 identified several structural constraints, such as limited digital skills and inadequate or unaffordable infrastructure. Interviewee 3 also uniquely highlighted insufficient English proficiency as a barrier. These factors collectively contribute to a persistent digital divide, limiting meaningful participation to specific population segments. This divide was also evident in the observation data, where all state institutions published content almost

exclusively in English, despite Kenya's constitutional recognition of two official languages (The Republic of Kenya, 2010). On the government side, Interviewee 3 highlighted challenges in institutional digital literacy, particularly among older state actors who had limited exposure to social media technologies. Resource constraints—especially in branch offices—were also noted as limiting the frequency and quality of online engagement. This was corroborated by structured observations: larger, better-resourced institutions such as the Judiciary posted more regularly and employed a wider range of content formats, including videos and infographics. Collectively, these socio-economic factors shape the capacity of state actors to uphold democratic principles, demonstrate institutional competence, implement data-driven policymaking, and mobilise citizens through social media.

4.1.2.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

The socio-economic realities surrounding state actors significantly influence their ability to effectively leverage social media for communication and service delivery. These realities consequently impact all four normative ideals: *professionalism*, *efficiency*, *service*, and *engagement*. Regarding professionalism, state actors primarily use social media to demonstrate transparency and disseminate institutional information—a pattern confirmed across all interview and structured observation data. However, their heavy reliance on English-language communication may exclude certain segments of the population, as highlighted by Interviewee 3. Structured observations of the Constitutionally Independent Office's social media accounts showed that some citizens explicitly requested bilingual communication. Notably, when the Judiciary posted Swahili-language content, it received highly positive responses. In terms of efficiency, digital literacy gaps compel institutions such as the one represented by Interviewee 2 to supplement their communication efforts with traditional methods, such as bulk SMSs (short messaging services—not to be confused with social media-based systems), in order to reach users unable to navigate social media platforms. These socio-economic barriers also undermine service and engagement, as digitally marginalised citizens are unable to use social media to seek assistance or interact meaningfully with public institutions. At the same time, state actors facing similar constraints—such as limited digital skills or inadequate resourcing—struggle to respond effectively or maintain meaningful engagement online. These limitations were underscored by Interviewee 3.

4.1.2.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

The presence of socio-economic factors has compelled state actors to adapt their social media strategies to reach disconnected citizens. Interviewee 2, for instance, mentioned

the use of WhatsApp Business to engage stakeholders more familiar with simpler platforms. This approach aligns with a combined media strategy referenced by Interviewee 5, who described it as a way to overcome socio-economic barriers and expand audience reach. Furthermore, the institution represented by Interviewee 4 is undertaking initiatives to improve access to digital devices and expand infrastructure in underserved areas. This effort corresponds with Interviewee 3's recommendation to prioritise affordable and reliable internet infrastructure as a means of closing the digital participation gap. In parallel, the provision of training for state actors in social media use—referenced by all interviewees—is expected to improve the overall quality of institutional content. Although a noticeable disparity in output remains between well-resourced and under-resourced institutions (e.g. County Executive accounts versus National Executive accounts), both interview and observation data suggest that improvements are underway. Earlier posts from many institutions, such as the Large State Corporation, tended to be less structured, while more recent content reflects growing competence in formatting and messaging. These developments indicate a slow but deliberate strengthening of the state's efforts to effectively govern via social media.

Nonetheless, the presence of socio-economic factors has more often hindered the ability of state actors to use social media to effectively reach a broader audience. Limited digital skills and resource constraints within some state institutions pose significant challenges. These issues were raised by Interviewee 3 and are reflected in the varying quality of content across observed institutions. Social media accounts managed by larger, well-resourced institutions such as the National Executive generally produced more polished and structured content. In contrast, accounts operated by smaller, under-resourced institutions—such as County Executives—published less frequently and relied on more basic formats. These disparities underline the advantage held by institutions that can invest in tools, infrastructure, and staff training. Simultaneously, the digital divide within society constrains the reach of state-generated content. Interviewee 3 noted that the primary audience tends to consist of urban, formally educated, and better-resourced citizens. Blue-collar workers, by contrast, often lack both the time and digital skills necessary for meaningful social media engagement. This is supported by observation data, which show that citizens with limited English proficiency face substantial barriers. Almost all content posted by the observed state institutions was in English.

4.1.2.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

The steps taken by state actors to mitigate socio-economic barriers contribute to increased legitimacy by demonstrating urgency and responsiveness in addressing structural challenges. Socio-economic conditions often hinder the ability of state actors to use social

media effectively to inform the public. Infrastructure upgrades and device provision initiatives, as referenced by Interviewee 4, reinforce the image of a state committed to inclusivity. Rigorous training efforts—highlighted by all interviewees—further strengthen perceptions of the state’s competence and responsiveness by improving the capacity of state actors to engage the public within the limits of prevailing circumstances. Collectively, these measures support the perception of professionalism and help reinforce the state’s overall credibility. In particular, training in social media use enhances the quality of institutional messaging and reduces the risk of unintended digital missteps—such as accidental disclosures that could harm the nation, as noted by Interviewee 1. This increased competence further enhances the credibility of official accounts. For example, a fake page mimicking the Urban County Executive account under observation on Facebook revealed itself through inconsistencies in tone, such as the use of overly casual language.

However, when state actors fail to address socio-economic barriers effectively, they risk diminishing their legitimacy by appearing exclusionary. This concern is particularly evident in the continued reliance on English as the primary language for official social media posts. Interviewee 3, along with structured observations of multiple state institution accounts such as the Judiciary, indicated that the use of English creates barriers for segments of the population. Nevertheless, the government has not adapted its language practices to reflect this reality. This disconnect may foster the perception that the state is indifferent to inclusivity concerns. Additionally, younger audiences are increasingly reliant on social media, as noted by Interviewees 3 and 4. If state actors are unable to match the level of digital fluency expected by this demographic, there is a heightened risk of alienating younger citizens from government institutions.

4.1.3 Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities

All interviewees referenced the use of structured training within their organisations to build familiarity with social media as an e-participation tool. Interviewees 1 and 2 also described the development of internal guidelines intended to clarify the boundaries of institutional social media use. However, Interviewees 1 and 3 noted that these guidelines may be limited in scope. In addition to formal training, Interviewee 5 highlighted the use of knowledge-sharing mechanisms to support ongoing learning among staff, citing peer-to-peer workshops as one such initiative. Structured observation data support these insights, showing that state institutions have improved their messaging practices over time. In particular, many—such as the Large State Corporation—have become more attuned to leveraging social media affordances, including videos and live streams, to enhance content delivery. Collectively, these capacity-building efforts strengthen the

ability of public authorities to uphold democratic principles and mobilise citizens for participatory governance. They also enhance institutional capacity to counter misinformation, disinformation, and hate; promote security; and harness data analytics in policymaking.

4.1.3.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

Normatively, public authorities are expected to possess sufficient competence and strategic awareness to realise the full governance potential of social media. The competence and strategies deployed in social media e-participation shape the ability of state actors to uphold the four normative ideals of *professionalism*, *efficiency*, *service*, and *engagement*. Professionalism is reinforced when state actors develop the digital skills necessary to communicate public information responsibly. This expectation was reflected across all interviews and supported by observation data, which showed that all institutions appeared to at least attempt to develop a coherent communication style. Competence likewise underpins both efficiency and service delivery, as well-trained staff are better equipped to respond to public concerns in a timely, clear, and consistent manner, as highlighted by Interviewees 2, 3, 4, and 5. In relation to engagement, Interviewee 5 emphasised the importance of establishing two-way communication with citizens. Structured training programmes and the internal guidelines referenced by all interviewees could play a crucial role in supporting this objective.

4.1.3.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

The upskilling of state actors plays a crucial role in strengthening operational security, as highlighted by Interviewee 1. With increased competence in social media use, state officials are better equipped to safeguard sensitive information while conducting e-participation. Interviewee 2 also emphasised that digital competence is essential for managing crises that may arise through social media. This is particularly relevant in incidents triggered by misleading information, which can undermine institutional integrity. Structured training—especially when aligned with an institution’s mandate—enables state actors to respond strategically to such threats. Observation data suggest that crisis management training may have contributed to the ability of established institutions, such as the National Security Organ, to issue rapid and authoritative responses during critical incidents.

Beyond crisis management, Interviewees 1, 2, and 3 also emphasised the importance of well-developed social media guidelines. The limited scope of existing guidelines—as noted by Interviewees 1 and 3—may help explain why the dialogical communication described by Interviewee 5 remains underdeveloped. While state actors frequently face

abuse on social media—as suggested across almost all interviews and observations—clear engagement protocols could help guide them in managing such situations constructively. At present, observation data suggest that dialogical engagement remains limited. Across all observed accounts, institutional communication is largely framed as one-directional announcements.

4.1.3.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

When state actors possess strong social media skills, they are better positioned to assert their legitimacy and communicate authority through their digital presence. Crisis management competence, in particular, plays a key role in protecting institutional reputation. This was evident in the observation data, where larger institutions—such as the Judiciary—more consistently responded promptly to controversies involving them. Additionally, Interviewee 2 highlighted the importance of digital competence for the effective management of official social media pages. This was reflected in the more polished online presence of national-level institutions, such as the National Executive accounts, many of which maintain sleek, professional profiles and verification badges. The visual and structural quality of these accounts contributes to a perception of credibility and institutional authority—standing in contrast to resource-constrained counterparts such as the County Executive accounts.

Conversely, when state actors lack sufficient social media skills, their actions may inadvertently undermine both their legitimacy and institutional reputation. One significant risk is the accidental leakage of sensitive information on social media, as previously discussed. Such incidents have the potential to undermine the government's interests and public credibility. Observations of what appeared to be exposed personal information about state actors in the comment sections of official pages—such as those belonging to the National Executive—underscore this concern. These incidents place state actors in a vulnerable position, compromising their ability to carry out duties with authority due to heightened security risks. Moreover, as inferred from Interviewee 2, limited digital competence may hinder state actors' ability to steer online dialogue. This may help explain why many institutions—except a few such as the Judiciary—were observed to avoid engaging in their comment sections. Their absence may have contributed to increased negativity, allowing the discourse to deteriorate unchecked.

4.1.4 Citizen Mobilisation

All interviewees emphasised the importance of cultivating citizen support as an essential pillar of effective governance, highlighting the need to actively engage citizens in governance processes. This perspective is firmly grounded in Kenya's constitutional

framework, which mandates public participation in governance—a point raised by Interviewee 3 (The Republic of Kenya, 2010). Observation data reinforces these insights, showing that many institutions—such as the County Legislature accounts—regularly posted announcements inviting citizens to participate in public forums. Institutions like the National Security Organ also demonstrated responsiveness to widespread public outcry on key issues, particularly where collective citizen concerns were voiced. Overall, social media-driven mobilisation has the potential to strengthen democratic participation and inform data-driven policymaking. However, it also carries significant risks by amplifying misinformation, disinformation, and hate-related content, which can, in turn, exacerbate security vulnerabilities.

4.1.4.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

From a normative perspective, state actors primarily sought to leverage citizen mobilisation on social media to enhance public engagement and promote governance initiatives more efficiently. These practices align closely with the normative ideals of *engagement* and *efficiency*. Regarding engagement, Interviewees 3 and 5 emphasised their intent to ensure that citizens perceived themselves as active participants in governance processes. This finding is corroborated by observation data, which showed that many state institutions—such as the Judiciary—often promoted public participation events through their social media channels. The Large State Corporation also used social media to engage directly with citizens and collect their views. Concerning efficiency, all interviewees consistently highlighted how social media facilitates the rapid and cost-effective dissemination of information. When combined with traditional media—as noted by Interviewee 5—it could be seen as a flexible and accessible mobilisation tool. Observation data supported this view, showing that platforms such as Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) were freely accessible for basic services.

4.1.4.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

State actors in Kenya have adopted social media as a tactical tool to mobilise citizens in support of various institutional objectives. Interviewee 1 noted its use in advertising public sector job openings. This strategy aligns with the high uptake of digital platforms among younger demographics, as observed by Interviewees 3 and 4. Social media has also been employed for state event mobilisation. During the visit of King Charles, for instance, it played a role in public outreach, as illustrated by Interviewee 1. Beyond event management, Interviewee 3 described the use of hashtags during participation campaigns to foster a sense of policy ownership. Observation data confirms that many institutions—such as the Large State Corporation—used hashtags, tagging, and reposting practices to

enhance visibility and extend reach. Moreover, most institutions—such as the County Legislatures—posted invitations to public participation forums, while others—such as the National Executive—provided live streams to facilitate public engagement. The Large State Corporation also interacted with high-follower Kenyan accounts to boost exposure. However, some of these affiliated accounts featured messaging that could be considered controversial.

Despite these strategic benefits, social media mobilisation can also expose state actors to the risk of coordinated uprisings. The Generation Z (Gen Z)-led protests referenced by Interviewee 4 demonstrated the capacity of social media to enable large-scale mobilisation against the government. Historical (2024) observation data from the National Executive accounts, for example, showed that the protests were driven by public perceptions of over-taxation linked to the Finance Bill, 2024. During this period, coordinated use of protest hashtags and AI-generated images and memes were recorded across Facebook and X (formerly Twitter), with most activity directed at the National Executive and National Security Organ accounts. There appeared to be a notable surge in negative—and at times hostile—comments under official state institution posts, particularly on X. The digital footprints of Gen Z were apparent, with their strategic grasp of social media dynamics clearly evident, as hinted at by Interviewee 3.

4.1.4.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

When citizen mobilisation proceeds as intended, state actors can enhance their legitimacy by fostering a sense of inclusion in governance. Interviewee 3 highlighted the strategic use of hashtags to encourage public ownership during participation campaigns. This approach aligns with the spirit of the Constitution of Kenya (CoK), which mandates public consultation in governance (The Republic of Kenya, 2010). Observation data further supports this insight, with many state institutions—such as the County Legislatures—actively promoted participatory initiatives through their social media channels. Activity around these posts indicated potentially meaningful citizen engagement and a positive reception of the opportunity to participate.

However, when state actors face collective backlash on social media, their reputation—and thus perceived legitimacy—can be significantly undermined. The previously discussed Gen Z-led protests against the Finance Bill, 2024, placed the government under intense public pressure. Observation data from comments under National Executive and National Security Organ posts suggested that the effects of the online campaign extended beyond national borders. This potentially placed the government in a difficult public relations position with respect to its international democratic image. Sustained online mobilisation during this period may have contributed to observable shifts in policy

positions that appeared to reflect a response to public pressure, based on data from the National Executive accounts. Moreover, Interviewee 2 highlighted concerns about the reputational harm caused by disinformation campaigns. For instance, Interviewee 4 recounted how legitimate development projects were falsely labelled as “white elephants” by segments of the population. Interviewees 2 and 3 also suggested that some disinformation efforts may have been orchestrated by groups with vested interests. These concerns were corroborated by observation data, which showed multiple instances of unsubstantiated allegations in the comment sections of high-engagement accounts such as the Judiciary. Certain segments of the online population appeared to portray state actors—particularly those within the National Executive, Judiciary, and National Security Organs—as corrupt or incompetent, often without presenting supporting evidence.

4.1.5 Data-Driven Policymaking

As noted by Interviewee 1, data-driven policymaking in Kenya remains in its early stages. Only Interviewee 2 referenced the use of advanced tools such as sentiment analysis. Others, such as Interviewee 4, indicated that their institutions rely on more basic methods—for instance, platform-provided dashboards. All interviewees also highlighted the need for further development in social media training for state actors, suggesting a broader institutional capacity gap in leveraging digital platforms effectively for governance. This skill gap is also reflected in the observation data. Many institutional accounts—such as those of the Judiciary—were unable to convert their large followings into sustained engagement, potentially limiting their ability to generate usable social media data. Most engagement occurred in short bursts during contentious periods such as the Gen Z protests. Nevertheless, the long-term implementation of data-driven policymaking holds the potential to uphold democratic principles by aligning public policy more closely with citizen expectations.

4.1.5.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

Public authorities aiming to expand their use of social media-supported data-driven policymaking could benefit from foresight. This practice aligns with both the *efficiency* and *service* normative ideals. In relation to efficiency, proactively aligning institutional goals with public needs helps reduce resource wastage. Interviewee 2, whose institution had adopted sentiment analysis tools, explained that these tools enabled them to identify and address stakeholder concerns before they escalated. This may have helped avoid the need to deploy more expensive public relations operations later. Observation data further underscored the value of timely responsiveness. It showed that when institutions such as the National Security Organ were slow to react to public concerns, they were met with

increasing backlash in comment sections. Regarding the service ideal, data-driven policymaking helps ensure that institutional decisions are more closely aligned with the public good. Interviewees 3 and 5 suggested that social media insights were increasingly used to inform decision-making processes on key matters such as budgeting. Such processes directly impact the quality and availability of public services.

4.1.5.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

When state actors in Kenya have access to advanced data analytics tools, they are better positioned to proactively manage crises. As noted earlier, Interviewee 2's institution actively monitored public perceptions of its brand and initiatives using sentiment analysis, enabling it to respond to emerging challenges before they escalated. Interviewees 3, 4, and 5 also acknowledged the benefits of monitoring social media activity. While they lacked access to advanced tools, they reported being able to remain attuned to public expectations during governance processes. Notably, Interviewee 3 mentioned that social media data introduced new perspectives into some institutional decision-making. These insights align with observation data, which showed that state institutions—such as the Judiciary—were responsive to substantial public outcry on social media. When public demands were persistent, state actors generally took visible steps to address concerns and mitigate tensions. This suggests that even in the absence of advanced analytics, state actors are actively monitoring social media using the tools available to them.

However, state actors' use of data-driven policymaking must be carefully managed to remain compliant with legal frameworks. As noted by all interviewees, Kenya has laws that must be strictly followed when processing social media data. The most significant law in this regard is the Data Protection Act, 2019, which safeguards personal data, as emphasised by Interviewee 3. This regulatory context may explain why Interviewee 1 highlighted the significant bureaucratic hurdles involved in acquiring AI-powered analytics tools. Institutions may be cautious about investing in expensive technologies that could inadvertently expose them to legal challenges or public controversy. Furthermore, all interviewees expressed concerns about the prevalence of misleading information circulating on social media. They acknowledged that inadvertently incorporating such information into policymaking could lead to serious consequences. The need for further social media training—highlighted by all interviewees—also raises the risk that state actors may struggle to distinguish credible evidence from unsupported claims. This concern was substantiated by observation data, which showed frequent instances of unverified allegations about governance practices appearing in comment sections of institutional accounts, such as the Judiciary. Determining which claims

warrant investigation is often challenging; yet attempting to respond to every claim could result in an inefficient use of limited institutional resources.

4.1.5.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

When state actors have the capacity to utilise social media-supported data-driven policymaking, they are better positioned to respond to citizen needs with greater urgency. This, in turn, contributes to their perceived legitimacy. Advanced data analytics tools—such as sentiment analysis software—facilitate the early detection of emerging trends and public concerns, enabling proactive institutional responses. Such responsiveness strengthens perceptions of attentiveness and accountability. More broadly, Interviewees 3, 4, and 5 emphasised the importance of aligning governance practices with public expectations. When citizens feel that their interests are acknowledged, they may be more likely to support state-led initiatives. These insights align with observation data, which showed that public discontent on accounts such as the National Executive tended to decline when institutions addressed previously raised concerns. In such instances, visible alignment between institutional responses and citizen expectations appeared to pacify tensions and reinforce state credibility.

Conversely, when state actors lack the capacity to effectively utilise data-driven policymaking, they risk undermining their institutional reputation. This can occur through mistakenly relying on misleading information, which may damage their perceived competence and, by extension, their legitimacy. As previously noted, all interviewees expressed concerns about the prevalence of misleading content circulating on social media. Additionally, the training gaps highlighted by the same interviewees place state actors at a disadvantage when attempting to assess the credibility of social media data. The convergence of these two challenges increases the risk that unreliable information could be incorporated into governance processes, potentially leading to public outcry. Observation data provided clear evidence of unverifiable claims circulating within the comment sections of institutional pages such as the Judiciary's. It is therefore reasonable to infer that state actors without up-to-date training may inadvertently base decisions on inaccurate data. Moreover, if state actors fail to comply with the relevant legal frameworks—such as those referenced by Interviewee 3—they may face legal challenges. Implementing social media analytics without adherence to data protection obligations increases the risk of litigation and reputational harm. Observation data from accounts such as the National Executive indicated that state actors are regularly subjected to unsubstantiated accusations on social media. Failure to exercise due caution could inadvertently reinforce such narratives, further damaging institutional credibility.

4.1.6 Upholding Democratic Principles

Upholding democratic principles—particularly transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making—emerged as a key motivation behind the use of social media for e-participation. This pattern was apparent across all interview responses and observations. These principles are constitutionally grounded, as noted by Interviewee 3, and widely regarded by public officers as essential to legitimising governance, as confirmed by Interviewees 3 and 5. Observation data suggested that institutions such as the National and County Legislatures use social media to foster openness and encourage public engagement. This was reflected in the announcements, official updates, and procedural transparency on display. Beyond guiding ethical conduct, democratic principles also function as a practical force shaping institutional behaviour as inferred from Interviewee 3. They compel state actors to address socio-economic barriers and respond to threats such as misinformation, disinformation, hate speech, and emerging security risks. Concurrently, these principles drive improvements in citizen mobilisation, institutional competence, and the strategic use of social media data for governance.

4.1.6.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

From a normative perspective, social media e-participation offers public authorities a useful avenue for upholding democratic principles. It encourages inclusive citizen engagement, more efficient communication processes, and greater transparency and accountability. This aligns with the normative ideals of *professionalism*, *efficiency*, and *engagement* that guide public service delivery. In terms of professionalism, state actors are expected to operate with transparency and accountability. The Constitution of Kenya—partially referenced by Interviewee 3—affirms the expectation of a reasonably open and accountable government (The Republic of Kenya, 2010). This expectation was reflected in the observation data, which showed that institutions such as the Judiciary regularly used social media to provide updates on institutional activities. Efficiency relates to the timely and cost-effective delivery of government communication. All interviewees highlighted that social media enables real-time communication and swift responses to public concerns. This was supported by observation data showing that some institutions such as the Judiciary replied to public queries on social media platforms. Engagement, as a normative ideal, requires the active inclusion of citizens in governance. Interviewee 3 explicitly referenced this principle in relation to constitutional obligations (CoK Article 10). Observation data suggests that social media was used to invite citizens to engagement activities with state institutions—particularly, by the County Legislatures.

4.1.6.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

Social media usage by state actors contributes significantly to institutional transparency and accountability. This is achieved by increasing public visibility and enabling the routine dissemination of information. Interviewee 1 highlighted the traceability of social media posts. They noted that citizens can screenshot and archive institutional communications for future reference, enhancing institutional credibility. It reinforces the public's ability to verify claims and hold institutions to account. Interviewee 2 also explained that their institution publishes board meeting decisions on social media. This ensures that all relevant stakeholders remain informed and helps counter false narratives. More broadly, all interviewees emphasised that social media allows institutions to communicate key information that the public is entitled to receive. This supports procedural integrity and reduces informational asymmetries. These perspectives are supported by observation data. State institutions such as the Judiciary regularly posted updates about their initiatives. However, the frequency of such updates varied across institutions. Those with greater operational capacity such as the National Executive tended to maintain more consistent communication routines. This reflects Interviewee 3's suggestion that institutional transparency may be shaped by internal resource availability.

Despite the institutional benefits of increased transparency, the use of social media to uphold democratic principles presents several risks for state actors. All interviewees raised concerns about the distortion of official narratives, warning that institutional messaging can be misinterpreted or manipulated online. Interviewee 2, for example, noted that institutional information may be taken out of context and rapidly disseminated. This can amplify the impact of even minor miscommunication. These concerns were supported by observation data, which documented instances of commenters under the posts of the National Security Organ disputing official statements without citing credible sources. This probably created confusion and made it more difficult for institutions to maintain narrative control. Additionally, Interviewee 1 warned that poorly managed transparency can lead to the unintended disclosure of sensitive or restricted information. The absence of sufficient internal protocols and guidelines, as referenced by interviewees 1 and 3, makes this risk credible. Observation data from National Executive accounts indicated that personal information of state actors may have been exposed through probable leaks. This could have created direct security and operational risks for the individuals concerned and the state institutions they represent.

4.1.6.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

When state actors display accountability and transparency through social media, they can strengthen their perceived legitimacy. All interviewees emphasised the importance of

maintaining a positive public image by appearing open and communicative. They acknowledged that citizens expect to be informed about what their government is doing. Observation data—such as from the County Legislature accounts—also revealed that citizens frequently demanded transparency from state institutions, for instance requesting live-streamed legislative sessions. When such transparency was provided, citizens tended to respond positively in the comment sections, particularly when they agreed with the policy direction taken.

However, when state actors do not actively strive to uphold accountability and transparency through social media, room is left for the public to question their legitimacy. Interviewee 2 emphasised the importance of making sure their side of the story is always available. Yet, all interviewees also noted that misinformation and disinformation can undermine such efforts. As Interviewee 5 suggested, false information can build distrust that escalates into hostile behaviour from citizens. This dynamic was reflected in the observation data, which showed that institutions—such as the Judiciary—that responded quickly to criticism were sometimes more successful in mitigating backlash. Their efforts were, however, not always sufficient to reverse entrenched negative sentiment stemming from the unsubstantiated narratives that flooded their comment sections.

At the same time, active disclosure by state authorities may still harm their perceived legitimacy. In some cases, users on X (formerly Twitter) utilised Community Notes on the National Security Organ’s press releases to discredit them. These annotations may not reflect objective assessments, but rather those that resonated with public sentiment. This scenario presents a uniquely difficult situation for state actors. It is further complicated by the rise of citizens using AI tools such as Grok to critique government communications as seen, for example, on the National Executive accounts. These AI tools tend to operate as black boxes, running on data and algorithms that may be only accessible to the private companies that develop them. As a result, their outputs may reflect embedded assumptions or optimisation goals that do not necessarily align with public sector values. This lack of transparency can further complicate the credibility of institutions that are subjected to AI-based scrutiny that may wrongly delegitimise their efforts.

4.2 Inhibitors

4.2.1 Disinformation and Misinformation

All interviewees highlighted the widespread presence of disinformation and misinformation on social media. It appeared to be the most serious challenge regarding social media e-participation. This concern was substantiated by almost all the observation data. The logs revealed instances—such as unverified claims, misleading narratives, and

potentially fake AI-generated content—on pages like those belonging to the Judiciary. Disinformation and misinformation weaken the state’s ability to uphold democratic principles. They disrupt citizen mobilisation and undermine the integrity of data-driven policymaking. In addition, the circulation of falsehoods contributes to the proliferation of hate content, which in turn escalates insecurity.

4.2.1.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

The proliferation of disinformation and misinformation on social media undermines all four normative ideals: *professionalism*, *efficiency*, *service*, and *engagement*. For professionalism, Interviewee 2 noted that misleading information can discredit official disclosures. This erodes public confidence in the state’s transparency and its ability to carry out its mandate. In terms of efficiency, Interviewee 5 suggested that false information can distort perceptions of citizen demand. This can result in resource misallocation when institutions attempt to anticipate citizens’ needs based on inaccurate data. This links directly to the service ideal, which expects the delivery of services that respond to genuine public needs. With respect to engagement, misinformation and disinformation contribute to polarisation and fuel hostility against state actors. This damages constructive dialogue between the public and the state. All interviewees described how false content has the potential to spread animosity toward public officials, undermining respectful civic exchange. Observation data supports these concerns. In several cases such as on the National Executive accounts, users posted unfounded claims questioning the professionalism of government institutions. These accusations were often used to harass officials in the comment sections. The anonymity of platforms like X (formerly Twitter) further enables this behaviour. It allows users to spread unverified claims without accountability which may erode decorum.

4.2.1.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

All interviewees suggest that disinformation may sometimes be strategically used by individuals with vested interests to undermine state institutions. Interviewee 1 cautioned that such misleading claims disseminated through social media may contribute to hostility toward officers and damage to government property. This concern is echoed in the observation of accounts such as the National Executive, where users were found calling for violence against state officials based on unsubstantiated allegations of misconduct. Interviewee 2 cautioned that disinformation can additionally cause financial harm, especially to state corporations that depend on self-generated revenue. In their account, false claims about institutional failure or mismanagement eroded public trust in the institution’s operational integrity. Observation data appears to confirm this trend, with

comment threads such as those of the Constitutionally Independent Office featuring repeated accusations portraying state actors as incompetent or corrupt. These incidents suggest that disinformation could be used deliberately to obstruct the outcomes of e-participation by eroding public confidence and redirecting discourse away from constructive engagement. This reflects a deeper risk—the potential for *networked irrationality* to be weaponised. In such cases, individuals with vested interests may exploit social media’s capacity to induce networked irrationality to advance personal agendas that conflict with public value and values.

Interviewees 2, 4, and 5 expressed concern that disinformation is not only directed at state actors but may also be strategically used by some of them. They suggested that certain state actors manipulate public opinion for political gain. For example, Interviewee 2 raised the concern that narratives about their institution’s assets and operations were being manipulated by potentially opportunistic opposition-aligned state actors. While these perspectives may be subjective, they align with patterns observed across several institutional pages. In cases such as those observed on the National Executive accounts, some content appeared to privilege political narratives that reflected the unverifiable opinions of certain opposition-aligned state actors. These instances may reflect attempts by opportunistic state actors to trigger politically favourable forms of networked irrationality.

4.2.1.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

Interview and observation data suggest that the spread of misleading information about government institutions on social media has undermined them. It has damaged both their perceived legitimacy and their digital authority. Interviewee 2 suggested that countering disinformation is a dynamic challenge even though they have access to sentiment analysis tools that allow them to be proactive. Digital literacy gaps among key stakeholder groups, as noted by Interviewees 2 and 3, further complicate these efforts. This is because the individuals caught in the networked irrationality loop may not be fully aware of the forces at play. The false narratives that captured their attention appeared to have led them to mistrust state institutions attempting to correct inaccuracies circulating on social media. For example, Interviewee 4 suggested that their attempts to correct the record about their lawful and well-executed projects were challenging. These perceptions are reinforced by observation data on accounts such as the Judiciary, where misleading content often triggers waves of public hostility in the comment sections of official pages. Such narratives appear to portray institutions as ineffective and untrustworthy. As a result, they limit the ability of state actors on social media to set the record straight.

While most interviewees emphasised the reputational harm caused by disinformation, a few noted that it could also raise the influence of certain state actors who employ it. Interviewees 2, 4, and 5 suggested that their institutions were at times targeted by politically aligned figures advancing false narratives intended to discredit them. For example, Interviewee 4 described how their project was publicly discredited without evidence, while Interviewee 2 reported that lawful directives were portrayed as procedurally improper. In these accounts, opposition-aligned state actors appeared to attempt to weaponise networked irrationality against these institutions as a means to sway public opinion in their favour. These dynamics are supported by observation data such as from the National Executive, which suggest that certain opposition state actors tended to be mentioned alongside unverified narratives they appeared to endorse. Commenters often used these narratives to counter the official messaging of state institutions. These patterns suggest that disinformation may have been strategically weaponised to enhance the digital visibility and political credibility of certain opportunistic state actors.

4.2.2 Hate Content/Activities

All interviewees highlighted the growing presence of hate on social media and its use to harass and intimidate members of state institutions. Interviewees 2, 3, 4, and 5 specifically noted the use of ethnic-based hate which is particularly challenging given Kenya's sensitivity to ethnic tensions. All interviewees also suggested that hate is frequently amplified through the spread of misleading information. These patterns were reflected in the observation data. Hate content on the pages of state institutions such as the Judiciary appeared to be aimed at state actors' ethnicity. However, observations on the Judiciary's accounts also suggested the presence of gender-based hate. In both cases, the hate appeared to be fuelled by misleading information. Ultimately, the presence of hate undermines democratic principles, impedes constructive citizen mobilisation, distorts data-driven policymaking, and promotes insecurity.

4.2.2.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

The proliferation of hate content on social media undermines all four normative ideals expected of state actors: *professionalism*, *efficiency*, *service*, and *engagement*. All interviewees explained that personal attacks undermine the professionalism of public officers by damaging their public image and institutional credibility. Hate also obstructs efficiency by creating an environment of hostility that may require additional resources to safeguard state actors on duty, as suggested by Interviewee 1. This may also undermine service delivery by making it more difficult for state actors to operate effectively in a hostile environment. Hate also weakens engagement by replacing respectful civic

dialogue with abuse, making it difficult for state actors to facilitate inclusive participation. These concerns are corroborated by observation data, such as from the Judiciary. The hate demeaned state officers in ways that potentially compromised their dignity and hindered their ability to serve.

4.2.2.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

The proliferation of hate, especially when fuelled by misleading information, directly undermines the operational capacity of state actors. Interviewee 4 explained that staff members may become demoralised as a result of attacks aimed at them for simply fulfilling their institutional duties. Interviewees 2 and 5 further suggested that hostility may damage the integrity of governance processes. State actors may feel pressured to appease public sentiment even when it may not be the best course of action. Interviewee 5 also noted that such patterns may eventually erode trust in state institutions. Institutions—and by extension, state actors—may become associated with derogatory commentary. Observation data corroborate these concerns. Officials tasked with challenging mandates, such as Judicial Officers, were frequently targeted with unverified allegations of misconduct that appeared laden with gender- and ethnic-based hate. Some of this hate appeared to be framed as threats against their safety. Their institutions, in turn, also faced accusations of unfairness and claims of procedurally improper or illegal decision-making.

While hate content often harms state actors, Interviewees 1, 2, and 5 suggest that it may also be used strategically by certain individuals within the state. Interviewee 1, for example, described how actors affiliated with some public institutions appear to leak internal information on social media to discredit their institutional rivals. Interviewee 2 also described alleged attempts by certain opposition-aligned state actors to incite hate against the state institution through disinformation portraying them as unlawful. Observation data support these concerns. On the pages of state institutions such as the National Executive, there were apparent hateful comments that appeared to rely on disinformation which may have generated networked irrationality. The disinformation appeared to originate from the unverified narratives pushed by opposition-aligned state actors who may have seen an opportunity to gain political advantage.

4.2.2.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

As a result, the presence of hate leads to significant reputational and legitimacy damage for state actors, as suggested by all interviews. When the public is misled into interpreting the actions of state actors as criminal or illegal and becomes polarised against them, the perceived authority of these actors declines. This erosion of authority can pressure them

into making decisions that may not be best aligned with public value and values, as suggested by Interviewees 2 and 5. In doing so, they may unintentionally reinforce the false accusations utilised to fuel hate against them. Interviewee 5 also observed that hate-driven polarisation contributes to a breakdown of trust between citizens and public institutions. This lack of trust may erode the perceived legitimacy and authority of state actors and institutions. Observation data from institutions such as the National Security Organ further corroborate these concerns. Periods marked by heightened hate in comment sections, especially when fuelled by apparent false narratives, coincided with increased scepticism toward official communications. Press statements were frequently discredited—sometimes through community notes, and at other times countered by AI-generated content that amplified hostility toward the institutions involved. Taken together, these dynamics contributed to a perceived loss of digital authority for the state actors and institutions under scrutiny.

However, individuals who utilise hate on social media may increase their perceived legitimacy by discrediting their rivals. The anonymous leaks described by Interviewee 1 illustrate how such tactics may be used to discredit professional peers competing for promotions within the same public institutions. Similarly, the use of misleading information, as described by Interviewee 2, can be used to undermine state institutions and position the perpetrators as more credible in the eyes of the public than the officials they target. Observation data from institutions such as the National Executive support these insights. Commenters often praised the individuals believed to be responsible for spreading hostile narratives, framing them as more authentic than the state actors they attacked. In such cases, hate content may function as a means of redistributing legitimacy away from certain state actors and toward their perceived institutional or political rivals.

4.2.3 Security

Security represents an additional inhibitor associated with social media e-participation, as identified by Interviewees 1 and 5. Unlike the other inhibitors in this chapter, which were derived from the literature, security emerged directly from the interview data as a practical concern. The interviewees described two main types of security threats: physical security threats and cybersecurity threats. Physical security threats refer to real-world risks to state actors or state property, including harassment, violence, or sabotage triggered by online exposure. Cybersecurity concerns involve the risk of compromised accounts, hacking, data breaches, or device theft. The presence of security as an inhibitor—especially in relation to physical threats—is supported by observation data from high-engagement institutions such as the Judiciary. Observations showed instances in which state actors appeared to be threatened or intimidated while carrying out their

duties. Ultimately, the presence of insecurity undermines democratic principles, impedes constructive citizen mobilisation, and distorts data-driven policymaking.

4.2.3.1 Normative Dimension Analysis

The breakdown of security for state actors on social media undermines the normative ideals of *professionalism, efficiency, service, and engagement*. When physical safety is at risk, as highlighted by Interviewee 1, it may be difficult for state actors to maintain professional conduct in a perceived hostile environment. Cybersecurity threats may further complicate this by damaging perceptions of professionalism when malicious actors may gain control of official accounts and post inappropriate or misleading content. Service delivery is also affected, as state actors may limit engagement with the public due to safety concerns. In addition, cybersecurity breaches can cut off digital platforms that would otherwise serve as key channels for public service. The ideal of efficiency is challenged when resources may be redirected to provide physical protection for state actors under threat. Such expenditures would not typically be necessary under safer conditions. Lastly, meaningful engagement is compromised when state actors are expected to interact with audiences they perceive as hostile or threatening. This is compounded in cases where compromised accounts potentially lock them out of participation entirely. Observation data from high-engagement institutions such as the Judiciary support these concerns. Threats of violence and intimidation against state actors appeared to intensify in comment sections during periods of heightened hostility. These spikes seemed to coincide with the presence of potentially false narratives designed to provoke public outrage against certain state actors and institutions. In such cases, the public may have been misled into viewing lawful actions as harmful or illegitimate.

4.2.3.2 Instrumental Dimension Analysis

Insecurity related to social media participation could lead state actors to perform their duties under conditions of fear, which may hinder effective governance. Interviewee 1 emphasised that such threats must be taken seriously, as they may ultimately escalate to life-threatening situations. Observation data from high-engagement institutions such as the National Executive reinforce these concerns. Apparent threats against state actors, potentially fuelled by misleading information, appeared with some frequency in comment sections. The tone of discourse also seemed to intensify during periods of heightened public agitation such as during the Gen Z protests. Certain state actors appeared particularly exposed, facing repeated targeting that included references to their personal safety. In parallel, cybersecurity breaches may compromise institutional integrity while also exacerbating physical risk. As noted by Interviewee 1, if a device is stolen or

compromised, the information it contains could be used to locate, expose, or endanger state actors. Overall, physical insecurity—potentially exacerbated by digital insecurity—may lead state actors to minimise their public profile to protect their safety. This, in turn, can undermine their ability to effectively carry out their institutional mandates.

4.2.3.3 Descriptive Dimension Analysis

Insecurity weakens the perceived legitimacy of state actors in exercising their governance authority. Interviewee 1 described how the leakage of state secrets from compromised devices damages the integrity of state institutions and reduces their operational readiness. Cybersecurity incidents were also said to harm reputations by enabling the spread of unauthorised or misleading content attributed to public officials. In parallel, threats to physical security may lead state actors to be reluctant to fully carry out their mandates. This is especially so when public officials fear that visible enforcement or leadership could expose them to harm. Observation data from high-engagement accounts such as the National Executive support these concerns. Apparent threatening messages directed at state actors often framed them as enemies of the people or criminals. This may undermine public trust and cast doubt on the legitimacy of their roles and mandates.

4.3 Overall Conceptual Model

The interplay between the system attributes underpinning the enablers and inhibitors of social media e-participation, based on the empirical data analysis, is summarised below and illustrated in [Appendix M](#) (Figure M.1).

4.3.1 Enablers

Social media affordances act as the primary system attributes that influence all other attributes which enable and inhibit social media e-participation for state actors. They represent all the design and functionality decisions that make up social media platforms.

Socio-economic factors influence the ability of state actors to uphold democratic principles, develop effective social media strategies, mobilise citizens, and conduct data-driven policymaking. Socio-economic conditions—particularly in areas such as education and financial resources—directly shape state actors’ capacity to understand and use social media and its data for governance. These factors also determine the extent to which citizens can access and participate in digital spaces, thereby influencing the effectiveness of public engagement, data representativeness, and democratic outreach.

The competence and strategy of public authorities directly shapes the capacity of state actors to mobilise citizens, apply data-driven policymaking, counter misinformation,

disinformation, and hate, and uphold democratic principles. The digital skill level and strategic approach adopted by public officials often determines whether social media is used to foster inclusion and evidence-based governance—or misapplied in ways that hinder participation and policy responsiveness. Moreover, the ability of state actors to effectively counter harmful and threatening content is contingent upon their level of digital literacy.

Data-driven policymaking enhances the ability of state actors to uphold democratic principles. When effectively deployed, AI techniques applied to social media data allow governments to proactively identify public needs and formulate policies that are timely, targeted, and grounded in citizen input.

Citizen mobilisation bolsters democratic participation and contributes to richer datasets for data-driven policymaking, but can also facilitate the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and hate. While mobilisation strengthens civic engagement and provides state actors with more data to inform evidence-based policymaking, it also creates openings for malicious or misinformed actors to hijack public discourse, erode institutional trust, and polarise society. Moreover, large-scale mobilisation can be used by citizens to collectively challenge or rise up against the government which can lead to insecurity.

The imperative to **uphold democratic principles** compels state actors to address socio-economic barriers to participation and mitigate hate in order to ensure adequate representation. Additionally, transparency—a core value of democratic governance—requires state actors to actively combat misinformation and disinformation to preserve the integrity of the information they provide. Upholding these principles also demands improvements in institutional competencies, enabling state actors to better mobilise citizens and effectively leverage data-driven policymaking.

4.3.2 Inhibitors

Disinformation and misinformation can fuel hate against state actors which leads to insecurity, diminish their ability to mobilise citizens, compromise data-driven policymaking, and ultimately erode democratic governance. When such content infiltrates datasets used by AI systems, it distorts the evidence base and leads to misaligned or misguided policy interventions. Moreover, misleading content can heighten societal tensions and incite hostility toward public institutions, further weakening the foundations of democratic society.

Hate content/activities impede citizen mobilisation, distort policymaking processes, and diminish the state's ability to uphold democratic values and maintain security. By encouraging threats against state actors and discouraging genuine digital engagement, hate ultimately compromises the effectiveness of governance efforts.

Insecurity hinders citizen mobilisation, distorts policymaking processes, and diminishes the state's ability to uphold democratic values. It creates a wedge between citizens and the state and distorts digital engagement. Resultantly, this compromises the effectiveness of governance efforts.

4.4 Theoretical Saturation Assessment

The data collected through interviews and structured observations were analysed jointly to construct a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, as demonstrated in the preceding analysis. The interview data provided contextual depth that enabled more accurate interpretation of the observational findings. Across the thematic categories, interview responses consistently converged. Where divergences emerged between the interview and observation data, they could be reasonably explained by contextual nuances articulated by interview participants. Overall, the final conceptual framework presents a coherent and empirically grounded structure, indicating that theoretical saturation was achieved. That is, the collection of additional empirical data was unlikely to yield further conceptual insights.

5 Discussion

This chapter explores the convergences and divergences between the findings from the literature review ([Chapter 3](#)) and the empirical data ([Chapter 4](#)). These are analysed across each system attribute that enables or inhibits social media e-participation for state actors. The analysis also draws on the overarching conceptual models that illustrate how system attributes interact across these themes. Together, these analyses aim to explain why such patterns arise and to support the validation of the theoretical saturation claim made in [Chapter 4](#). This chapter also revisits the working hypotheses developed in the literature review and provides key governance takeaways for Kenyan state actors to consider.

5.1 Enablers

5.1.1 Social Media Platform Affordances

5.1.1.1 Convergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

Social media platform affordances are the foundational enabling system attributes that support all other enabling and inhibiting attributes. Both the literature and empirical data confirm that these affordances facilitate the expression of the normative ideals that underpin participation. They also influence the instrumental outcomes of e-participation and shape the descriptive salience of state actors. The ambivalent nature of these affordances explains why the instrumental and descriptive dimensions of all other enabling and inhibiting system attributes appear to manifest in both positive and negative ways from the perspective of state actors. This argument aligns with Feenberg's (1990) view that technology is embedded in social struggle (i.e. citizens versus state actors), and that its use is defined by those involved in that struggle. Perceptions with regards to social media e-participation are therefore either enabling or inhibiting depending on one's position and motives within the digital participatory environment.

5.1.1.2 Divergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

A key divergence between the literature and the empirical data on social media affordances concerns the rapid evolution of platform features. Since much of the literature was produced, social media platforms, particularly X (formerly Twitter), have undergone significant transformation. This reflects the Red Queen Effect in platform competition. Social media companies face constant pressure to introduce new affordances in order to maintain user engagement and protect their market position (Voelpel et al., 2005). This pressure has led to the rapid integration of features that are redefining how users interact on the platform.

Observations show that X has embedded Grok, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) large language model (LLM) (X, 2025a). Other third-party LLMs, such as Perplexity, were also observed running within X. These models were seen performing functions such as post summarisation and fact-checking. In effect, they appeared to support the interpretation of posts by state actors. However, this raises a conundrum. First, the reliability of LLMs in fact-checking can be inconsistent, particularly when dealing with ambiguous or multilingual content (Quelle & Bovet, 2024). Second, the jurisdictions in which AI chatbots are developed may influence the normative ethos they embed (Xu, 2018). Third, the incentive structures of AI developers can create sycophantic LLMs, wherein user-driven optimisation loops reinforce pre-existing user biases (OpenAI, 2025).

X was also observed to have added the Community Notes feature, thereby shifting fact-checking from an expert-led model to a crowd-sourced process (X, 2025b). While this enables broader participation, Draws et al. (2022) show that crowd-based models remain vulnerable to cognitive biases and the individual rationality of contributors. This shift provides an additional dilemma for state actors using social media for e-participation.

Beyond platform design, behavioural patterns on X and Facebook also diverge in ways that may not have been fully addressed in the literature reviewed in this study. Facebook content is typically more moderated, as users engage under real names and identifiable profiles. By contrast, X fosters more anonymous and volatile interactions. This distinction aligns with Theocharis et al. (2023), who observe that Facebook is structured around personal relationships, whereas Twitter (now X) promotes engagement through shared interests. These structural differences may encourage users on Facebook to moderate their tone around known peers, while on X, users may prioritise content virality over social restraint.

5.1.2 Socio-economic Factors

5.1.2.1 Convergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

The literature and empirical findings converge on the view that socio-economic alignment is essential for effective social media e-participation. When state actors adopt platforms that reflect the access levels and digital capabilities of their target audience, participation rates tend to improve. Adaptable participation mechanisms that accommodate the needs of diverse social groups are critical for fostering inclusive engagement.

However, when this alignment is lacking, participation is often constrained. Both the literature and empirical data show that age significantly influences digital competence

and, by extension, digital participation. Younger citizens and state actors are generally seen as more adept at navigating platform affordances, while older users often struggle to adapt. This pattern aligns with Heponiemi et al. (2022), who find that older adults remain vulnerable to digital exclusion, even when they possess basic digital skills.

Economic inequality further complicates the inclusiveness of social media e-participation, as wealth disparities are linked to digital divides in society (Francis & Weller, 2022). Both the literature and empirical data highlight that platform access requires a minimum level of economic security. Users need access to mobile devices and consistent access to electricity and telecom services, among other essentials. These costs may pose structural barriers for lower-income users, reinforcing concerns about their exclusion. However, affordability-related exclusion is not solely a citizen issue; it may also affect resource-constrained state institutions.

5.1.2.2 Divergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

The first divergence between the literature and the empirical data concerns the rural–urban divide in social media use. Some authors present social media as a tool that may empower semi-literate rural populations to engage in public discourse. In contrast, the empirical data paints a bleaker picture. Both rural citizens and state institutions appear disadvantaged in their ability to access and utilise social media. This gap is primarily attributed to underlying socio-economic disparities between rural and urban areas in Kenya, an issue also highlighted by Chisika and Yeom (2025). These disparities limit access to devices, internet connectivity, and digital literacy training, among other factors.

A further divergence between the literature and the empirical data concerns language comprehension. Piper et al. (2016) found that while many Kenyan children could decode English words, their comprehension was lower than in Swahili. This finding gains further context when considered alongside the work of Beatrice and Muchimuti (2022). They documented regional disparities in educational outcomes that correlate with income levels. Children from rural areas and female-headed households were among the most affected (Beatrice & Muchimuti, 2022). Taken together, these findings help explain the empirical observation that limited English comprehension is closely tied to broader socio-economic inequalities. As English dominates social media (Sun et al., 2021), disadvantaged Kenyans may be excluded from meaningful participation.

Another divergence between the literature and the empirical data concerns the role of infrastructure development in addressing the digital divide. Empirical findings place strong emphasis on the need for the state to expand public infrastructure to improve digital access for underserved populations. These findings align with the stated priorities of the

current Ruto administration (Communications Authority of Kenya, 2023). This reflects the broader view that the public sector must create public value by balancing efficiency with fairness (Rutgers & Overeem, 2014). In contrast, literature reviewed for this study gives limited attention to the role of the state in mitigating digital divides.

5.1.3 Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities

5.1.3.1 Convergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

Literature and empirical data converge on the importance of state actors understanding and strategically using social media platform affordances for governance. The capability of state actors is directly tied to the outcomes of the participation process and their resulting salience. Indeed, their competence is central to managing all the enabling and inhibiting social media e-participation system attributes.

A related convergence concerns how social media is currently utilised in governance, highlighting the need for greater training. State actors have been shown to treat social media primarily as a one-way communication tool rather than making use of its dialogical affordances. This may be due to deterrents such as cyberbullying directed at state actors, as documented in both the literature and empirical data. However, the reviewed literature also indicates that such disruptive activity can be effectively managed. Some state actors studied in literature were found to have developed countermeasures that help protect the decorum of social media dialogue with citizens.

5.1.4 Citizen Mobilisation

5.1.4.1 Convergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

Literature and empirical evidence converge on the view that citizen mobilisation through social media can both advance and hinder state objectives. When public and institutional interests are aligned, social media can amplify support for government initiatives. However, when citizens perceive state actions as contrary to their interests, social media may become a platform for amplifying dissent. These outcomes are further shaped by the presence of misleading information on social media platforms. False content can create the conditions under which dissent escalates into hate or broader security threats.

5.1.4.2 Divergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

A key divergence in the empirical data from Kenya is that citizen mobilisation is framed not only as a democratic principle, but also as a constitutional obligation. Article 10 of

the Constitution of Kenya (CoK) mandates inclusive public participation in all governance processes (The Republic of Kenya, 2010). As a result, state actors are legally required to mobilise citizens to solicit their views on proposed initiatives. This legal framing is largely absent from the literature, likely because constitutional provisions on public participation vary significantly across democratic contexts.

5.1.5 Data-Driven Policymaking

5.1.5.1 Convergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

Both the literature and empirical data converge on the value of social media analytics in enabling more responsive and evidence-informed policymaking. Social media insights offer real-time understanding of citizen sentiment, making them a potentially powerful tool for public decision-making. However, despite this potential, adoption remains limited in both sources. Commonly cited barriers include high implementation costs, technical capacity gaps, and complex legal and ethical requirements. Technical capacity is particularly significant, as it mediates the ability of state actors to meet ethical and legal standards. Specifically, state actors must be equipped to distinguish credible evidence from noise in social media data or risk being misled by inaccurate content.

5.1.5.2 Divergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

A key divergence between the literature and the empirical data concerns the maturity of discourse around AI in policymaking. The literature has progressed further in exploring the ethical dimensions of using AI tools in governance. In contrast, empirical data from Kenya remains focused on the legal and economic constraints of implementing data-driven systems. Among the institutions covered, only one was identified as using advanced social media analytics tools. This divergence reflects broader socio-economic disparities between Kenya and the high-income countries that dominate e-government research (Ramzy & Ibrahim, 2024). It reinforces Sabani et al.'s (2019) argument that digital government disparities between developed and developing countries must not be overlooked when using scientific research to inform public policy development.

5.1.6 Upholding Democratic Principles

5.1.6.1 Convergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

Literature and empirical data converge on the view that social media can support core democratic principles, particularly transparency and accountability. It has emerged as a

key tool for state actors to inform the public about governance initiatives. Both sources identify this communicative function as an essential component of democratic practice.

5.1.6.2 Divergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

A notable divergence between the literature and the empirical data concerns the foundations of democratic principles. Article 1 of the CoK affirms that sovereign power belongs to the people (The Republic of Kenya, 2010). This provision supports many of the democratic obligations placed on state actors across the Constitution. However, the upholding of democratic ideals through social media may require careful qualification. As Sent (2018) argues, rationality is always bounded, which implies that the constitutional text may contain exploitable gaps. This suggests that provisions for democratic participation must be interpreted within real-world constraints that prioritise overall public value and values. Philosophical critiques dating back to Plato caution against the risks of unrestrained democracy, including the elevation of all opinions as equally valid regardless of truth, consequence, or deliberation (Plato, 2002). This concern is echoed by contemporary authors such as Lafont (2017), who warns against equating the views of mini-publics with the voice of the people. In such scenarios, the Constitution may fail in its duty to prevent the over-concentration of power, which—as Murkens (2021) argues—is the purpose of the framework, the *telos*. This risk is substantiated by both the literature and empirical data, which suggest that some state actors strategically deploy inhibitors to distort democratic processes for disproportionate gain. Feenberg's (1990) concept of technological ambivalence reinforces the enduring relevance of such democratic caution. Social media, in this light, emerges as a contemporary civic theatre in the broader socio-technical struggle to uphold the spirit of democracy against attempts to co-opt it through e-participation. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Building on the previous divergence, a further divergence between the literature and the empirical data concerns the impact of newly introduced social media affordances on the digital democratic space. Tools such as Grok and Community Notes are used by citizens to interpret and challenge narratives presented by state actors. However, as discussed earlier, these tools are not neutral and may significantly shape the dynamics of participation. If constitutional provisions for public engagement are not interpreted with these emerging realities in mind, the participatory intent of the CoK may be inadvertently compromised.

5.2 Inhibitors

5.2.1 Disinformation and Misinformation

5.2.1.1 Convergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

Literature and empirical data converge on the view that both misinformation and disinformation significantly undermine the ability of state actors to effectively utilise social media for governance. This typically occurs through the spread of misleading content, which erodes institutional credibility, may provoke hostility, and distorts social media data used as input in AI-supported policymaking processes. In more extreme cases, this dynamic may give rise to *networked irrationality*, a concept introduced in the [literature review](#) and further developed in the empirical findings. As detailed in [Appendix O](#), networked irrationality diverges from related concepts by uniquely integrating three core components as follows:

Social Media Echo Chamber + Misinformation/Disinformation + Resistance to Correction = Networked Irrationality.

Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton once said, “You can kill the revolutionary, but you can’t kill the revolution.” His words—delivered during a time when the state used disinformation to suppress dissent and entrench social inequality—carry both rhetorical and analytical significance (Williams, 2019). They illustrate how emotionally resonant narratives can overcome resistance, survive the loss of their originators, and continue to shape public consciousness. While Deputy Chairman Hampton’s invocation of this idea was grounded in a truth-aligned struggle for justice, the underlying dynamic is equally central to understanding the potential dangers of networked irrationality. Once false or misleading narratives—particularly those framed around emotionally charged ideas—take hold online, they may be extremely difficult to reverse. Even in the absence of social media, posts that trigger networked irrationality may persist offline in the minds of like-minded users, who may lean on epistemic trust to validate such content (E. Li et al., 2023). The concern, however, is that unlike Deputy Chairman Hampton’s message—which assumed truth and sought liberation—these narratives may entrench falsehoods that erode public reason and potentially result in lasting societal harm. Networked irrationality may therefore be understood as the social media antithesis of Deputy Chairman Hampton’s intended position.

X (formerly Twitter) operates through algorithmic amplification of shared interests, as discussed earlier. This design appears to make it particularly susceptible to networked irrationality, as observed in the empirical data. Notably, both the literature and empirical

findings suggest that certain state actors may be exploiting this vulnerability for strategic gain. For example, Hayes (2021) highlights how President Donald Trump’s rhetoric exemplified the persistence of emotionally charged falsehoods sustained through networked irrationality. These narratives extended beyond social media and began to shape offline behaviours and perceptions. However, the historical endurance of truth-based counter-narratives that dislodged harmful disinformation from state actors—such as those advanced by figures like Deputy Chairman Hampton—suggests that falsehoods, though powerful, may not be beyond contestation. Identifying and amplifying truth-aligned narratives may be essential to restoring public reason and mitigating the long-term consequences of digitally sustained falsehoods. State actors operating within the framework of the CoK are duty bound to lead efforts to counter such damaging falsehoods. In doing so, they are required to help restore a public sphere grounded in values such as public reason and accountability (The Republic of Kenya, 2010).

5.2.1.2 Divergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

A key divergence concerns how security is treated in relation to misinformation and disinformation. The literature does not frame security as a standalone inhibitor. However, it does imply security’s relevance as a secondary consequence of false content, which may or may not be inflammatory. For example, Svirak et al. (2023) describe an incident where individuals spread fake news about a fire, prompting an unnecessary law enforcement response. Though treated as an isolated case, such incidents suggest broader governance risks. False alarms may divert life-saving resources, potentially delaying responses to actual emergencies elsewhere. Moreover, an example of insecurity caused by inflammatory disinformation is documented by Hayes (2021). The author shows how President Donald Trump weaponised disinformation in an attempt to overturn the 2020 United States of America (U.S.A.) elections—an effort that culminated in the Capitol riots (Hayes, 2021).

Another divergence, emerging from the empirical data this time, concerns the role of newly introduced social media affordances on X. Crowdsourced fact-checking and LLMs may amplify networked irrationality rather than mitigate it. Community Notes, which allow users to vote on contextual explanations for potentially misleading posts, are intended as a decentralised fact-checking tool (X, 2025b). However, this affordance may inadvertently be overtaken by networked irrationality if dominant voting blocs promote misleading interpretations aligned with their preferred narratives. Similarly, Grok is designed to learn from real-time user interactions on X (ServerWala InfraNet FZ-LLC, 2025). This feedback loop risks causing the model to absorb and reproduce prevailing inaccuracies, thereby entrenching networked irrationality at scale. These design choices

reflect the competitive adaptation pressures of the Red Queen effect. However, X's possible optimisation for screen time rather than accuracy introduces significant risks to the integrity of the online civic space (Corsi et al., 2024).

5.2.2 Hate Content/Activities

5.2.2.1 Convergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

Both the literature and empirical data support the view that hate on social media disrupts digital governance. It encourages destabilising behaviour and, in some cases, poses physical security threats. These effects may be intensified by misleading content that entrenches networked irrationality. While the presence of hate raises the possibility of insecurity, the literature generally frames security as a downstream consequence of hate rather than as an independent inhibitor. The earlier example involving President Donald Trump, as discussed by Hayes (2021), illustrates a direct causal link between inflammatory disinformation and insecurity. This aligns with empirical findings, which also identified hate on social media as a potential precursor to real-world security risks.

Moreover, both sources suggest that hate may be strategically weaponised by state actors for personal or institutional gain. In the literature, President Trump's rhetoric was understood as a tactic to boost his electoral prospects. In the empirical data, hate was likewise perceived as a tool employed by certain state actors to advance institutional promotion or consolidate political influence.

The mechanism through which hate manifests on social media can be understood through Bandura et al. (1996), who examined processes of moral disengagement. They describe how individuals justify harmful behaviour by portraying it as righteous, deflecting personal responsibility, downplaying the harm caused, and blaming victims—sometimes through dehumanisation (Bandura et al., 1996). Both the literature and empirical data suggest that such mechanisms may be at play when users propagate hate online.

5.2.2.2 Divergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

A key divergence in the empirical data concerns the strong emergence of ethnic-based hate as a sub-theme. Unlike the reviewed literature, which tends to frame hate in broader ideological terms, the empirical findings from this study indicate that hate in Kenya is more frequently directed along ethnic lines. According to Mati (2019), ethnic divisions have long been instrumentalised by political elites in Kenya. Though initially a byproduct of Britain's colonial divide-and-rule policy, these divisions persisted after independence due to their continued utility in the political economy (Mati, 2019). It is therefore

unsurprising that the empirical data identify ethnic-based hate as a significant inhibitor of social media e-participation by state actors. This pattern echoes Mark Twain's message that while history may not repeat itself exactly, it often rhymes (Lagarde, 2018).

In parallel, gender-based hate also emerged as a prominent sub-theme in the empirical data. Pair et al. (2021) report that female state actors face disproportionately negative media coverage in Kenya. This is particularly significant given that the newspapers examined in their study also maintain active social media presences on Facebook and X. Such negativity may help explain why the structured observation data revealed repeated instances of gender-based abuse directed at high-ranking female state actors.

5.2.3 Security

5.2.3.1 Divergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

As discussed earlier, misinformation, disinformation, and hate are causally linked to various security challenges. However, the empirical data go further by identifying security as a standalone inhibiting social media e-participation system attribute. In this context, security was understood in two dimensions: physical security and cybersecurity. The emergence of security as a distinct theme is significant because it meets the definitional threshold for inhibiting system attributes. Cenfetelli (2004) defines enablers and inhibitors as “perceptions held by a user about a system's attributes with consequent effects on a decision to use a system”. Inhibiting system attributes, however, are defined as those attributes that “act solely to discourage use” (Cenfetelli, 2004, p. 475). This distinction is critical: for a concept to function as an inhibiting system attribute, it must exert an active, discouraging influence on system use. The mere existence of a phenomenon that passively discourages use is not sufficient for it to be classified as an inhibiting system attribute. In the empirical findings, security was not simply a byproduct of misinformation, disinformation, or hate. It exerted its own independent effect by shaping decisions about whether and how to engage with social media platforms. This active role explains why security emerged as a standalone theme in the empirical analysis.

While one could argue that all enabling and inhibiting system attributes are downstream effects of social media affordances, this study includes only those that show a direct and observable relationship to those affordances. Social media affordances are treated as foundational because they are where all other system attributes emerge from. Within this logic, security was initially excluded because the literature typically frames it as a secondary consequence of system attributes other than social media affordances as a whole. It was only added as a standalone system attribute after the empirical data showed that specific platform design choices and functionalities could expose users and

institutions to physical and cybersecurity risks. These included observations such as leaked personal information and the amplification of threatening content. Security therefore met the threshold for inclusion as an inhibiting system attribute.

The emergence of security as a standalone inhibiting system attribute raises broader reflections on the nature of governance-related research. According to Scheppele (2010), national security concerns vary across states and are typically treated as highly sensitive matters because they relate to what a state defines as “threats to its government, its values, and its very existence.” It is therefore unsurprising that security-related phenomena are often underdeveloped in the literature, given that primary information sources may be scarce or deliberately withheld. However, critical realism, as presented by Sayer (1997), offers a methodological lens for making sense of such gaps. Critical realism holds that reality is not limited to what is observable; unobservable structures may still produce observable effects (Sayer, 1997). From this perspective, the absence of overt evidence on security as a standalone system attribute within social media e-participation does not imply nonexistence—it may simply reflect its strategic concealment. This reading aligns with Feenberg's (1990) theory of technological ambivalence, which suggests that the role of social media affordances is shaped by social struggles. It is therefore plausible to infer that state actors may use social media for security objectives, even if these uses are rarely acknowledged. The Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA), for instance, has publicly confirmed the use of social media for surveillance to improve tax compliance (Kenya Revenue Authority, 2021). Such admissions remain exceptional because disclosing security-related or adjacent practices may compromise their operational value. Notably, this reinforces the decision to include only system attributes with a direct causal link to social media affordances. This causal link is what makes it possible to identify potentially concealed strategic uses of inhibiting system attributes, such as security.

5.3 Overall Conceptual Model

5.3.1.1 Convergence Between Literature and Empirical Data

Both the literature and the empirical data converge on the idea that enablers and inhibitors may follow a critical path of force amplification. This path can maximise the positive valence of enablers or intensify the discouraging effects of inhibitors. In the case of enablers, social media affordances provide the foundational layer. Socio-economic factors influence access to social media affordances and support the development of essential digital skills and tools. State actor competence determines the strategic deployment of these affordances. Citizen mobilisation then builds upon these strategies, encouraging public engagement. As citizens participate, data becomes available to the

state, which can then be processed using tools and capacities shaped by socio-economic conditions. This cumulative process ultimately helps uphold democratic principles.

In the case of inhibitors, social media affordances again provide the foundation. These affordances can be exploited to trigger potentially inflammatory networked irrationality. This may provoke or amplify hate, particularly when framed to target the innate characteristics of individuals or groups. As hate spreads, it may escalate into online hostility, which can in turn produce real-world security risks.

5.3.1.2 Divergences Between Literature and Empirical Data

A key divergence between the conceptual models derived from the literature and those informed by the empirical data is the addition of security and its causal effects within the system. That a single additional social media system attribute can significantly alter the structure and dynamics of the conceptual framework classifies social media e-participation as a wicked problem. Wicked problems are characterised by their “complex, uncertain, and evaluative nature” (Gras et al., 2020, p. 2). Social media e-participation fits this definition precisely, as it demands the simultaneous management of multiple enabling and inhibiting social media system attributes—each exerting pressures across the system. Notably, the only system attribute that projects influence without itself being influenced is the set of social media affordances. This is because they serve as the foundational ambivalent layer from which all other system attributes emerge.

5.4 Theoretical Saturation Assessment Validity

The preceding discussion of the convergences and divergences within the social media e-participation system attributes, as well as the overall conceptual model, supports the claim of theoretical saturation made in [Chapter 4](#). It was argued that theoretical saturation had been reached because the collection of additional empirical data would not have yielded substantially new insights. This position is reinforced by the observation that all identified patterns in the empirical data are explainable through established historical and contemporary knowledge. The explanatory coherence between the empirical findings and the literature thus validates the methodological judgement regarding saturation.

5.5 Literature Review Hypotheses Validity

5.5.1 Hypothesis 1

This working hypothesis posited that the system attributes enabling social media e-participation in Kenya would align with those identified in the literature. However, their

perceived enabling effects could be shaped by the Kenyan context. This proposition fully aligned with the findings. While the enabling effects of the system attributes identified in both the literature and the empirical data were consistent, the nature of their perceived influence varied according to contextual and temporal realities. Specifically, state actors' interpretations of these system attributes were shaped by their technical knowledge, environment, governance priorities, and institutional resource constraints.

The hypothesis further proposed that the way in which social media affordances exert influence may evolve over time due to the Red Queen Effect. This proposition is likewise supported by the findings. On X (formerly Twitter), affordances have significantly evolved with the introduction of LLMs and crowd-based fact-checking. These developments have altered the way in which social media affordances function as enablers of participation.

5.5.2 Hypothesis 2

This working hypothesis posited that the system attributes inhibiting social media e-participation in Kenya would align with those identified in the literature. However, their perceived inhibiting effects could be shaped by the Kenyan context. This proposition partially aligned with the findings. While the inhibiting nature of the system attributes identified in the literature was also present in the empirical data, the data revealed an additional inhibiting system attribute—security—which did not appear as a standalone theme in the reviewed literature. Its absence is theorised to reflect the sensitive nature of security concerns within governance, which may contribute to their strategic omission or underrepresentation in academic discourse. Moreover, the contextual factors that shaped the operationalisation of these inhibiting system attributes were also found to vary in the Kenyan context. For example, in the Kenyan context, hate speech was more frequently directed at personal characteristics such as ethnicity and gender, in contrast to the literature, which predominantly focused on ideological divisions.

5.5.3 Hypothesis 3

This working hypothesis posited that the interactions of the system attributes underpinning enabling and inhibiting perceptions would resemble those observed in the literature. However, these interactions could be shaped by the Kenyan context and the temporal effects on social media affordances. This proposition partially aligned with the findings. While the interactions between system attributes underlying enablers and inhibitors were generally consistent across the literature and empirical data, the empirical data revealed additional interaction effects associated with the security attribute.

Moreover, the nature of these interactions was influenced by temporal shifts in social media affordances and by contextual factors affecting all other system attributes.

For example, the introduction of new platform affordances on X, such as Grok, appeared to trigger cascading effects throughout the interaction pathways defined in the conceptual model. Although the feedback loops appeared structurally unchanged, the system was affected at a deeper level. This was evident, for instance, in the potential of LLMs to reinforce or entrench false information. In addition, the budgeting priorities of Kenyan state institutions appeared to influence their capacity to provide the necessary environment for state actors to learn and effectively utilise social media for e-participation. This, in turn, triggered cascading effects across other enabling and inhibiting system attributes influenced by state actors' levels of competence with social media affordances.

5.6 Key Governance Related Takeaways for Kenya

Social media governance requires adaptive approaches that avoid reductive responses to complex participation dynamics (Gras et al., 2020). Platform-specific knowledge can enhance institutional responsiveness, and evidence suggests that state actors who understand these affordances use them more effectively. Socio-economic measures and capacity building—when grounded in democratic principles—remain central to long-term success. Tools like fuzzy logic may also aid consensus-building in diverse governance settings by aggregating conflicting stakeholder views (Herrera-Viedma et al., 2017). However, caution is essential to ensure that the public value purpose of social media e-participation is not sacrificed on the altar of constitutional puritanism.

While treated as potential risks, some inhibiting system attributes may also serve strategic functions. Disinformation, for example, has been justifiably used for law enforcement purposes (Konieczny, 2022). Acknowledging these possibilities could strengthen governance frameworks, so long as any utilisation remains constitutional and ethical. As noted in the interviews, existing laws may also warrant review to ensure they remain responsive to emerging risks posed by social media platforms. It may be wise to consider all risks, even those that cannot be sufficiently verified but are observable (Sayer, 1997). Overall, a katechontic approach that emphasises legal restraint and deliberative delay may help prevent overreach in this process (Drechsler & Kostakis, 2014).

[Appendix N](#) outlines a potential, constitutionally compliant next step for operationalising these insights. This involves evolving the structure of the proposed Office of the Registrar of Public Participation (ORPP) to fit the fluid dynamics of social media e-participation, which represents a new frontier for achieving Article 10 compliance.

6 Conclusion

This study examined the system attributes that enable and inhibit social media e-participation for Kenyan state actors. It also explored how these enabling and inhibiting attributes interact. The analysis revealed both convergence and divergence between global theoretical expectations and empirical realities, underscoring the significance of context and time in e-government research. Six enabling system attributes were identified across literature and empirical data: social media platform affordances, socio-economic factors, competence and strategies of public authorities, citizen mobilisation, data-driven policymaking, and the capability to uphold democratic principles. Two inhibiting system attributes—disinformation and misinformation, and hate—were also discovered. In particular, the analysis of disinformation and misinformation led to the introduction of a novel term—*networked irrationality*—to characterise a phenomenon exemplified within this system attribute. A third inhibiting system attribute—security—emerged solely from the empirical data. Its absence in the literature does not imply irrelevance but rather reflects broader systemic challenges in researching sensitive domains. While temporal shifts were most evident in the evolution of social media affordances, contextual factors more strongly shaped the other enabling and inhibiting system attributes.

The feedback loops identified between the system attributes underlying the enablers and inhibitors form the basis of both conceptual models. They illustrate how digital governance is conditioned by the interaction of enabling and inhibiting system attributes that may amplify or discourage participation. Social media platform affordances emerged as the foundational system attribute, shaping how all other attributes manifest across normative, instrumental, and descriptive dimensions. These affordances were ambivalent—capable of producing both enabling and inhibiting effects—and consequently imparted this ambivalence to all attributes dependent on them. Socio-economic factors conditioned access and digital capacity. The competence and strategies of public authorities shaped how affordances were deployed. Citizen mobilisation amplified civic engagement but also introduced vulnerability. Data-driven policymaking offered potential for responsive governance, contingent on clean data, technical skill, and adequate resourcing. Upholding democratic principles remained central, but increasingly depended on the governance of platform dynamics.

On the inhibitor side, disinformation and misinformation distorted policy processes, undermined trust, and compromised data integrity. Hate discouraged genuine participation and incited hostility. Security—both physical and cyber—exposed state actors to risks that undermined their ability to fulfil institutional mandates.

Taken together, these findings reinforce the argument by Sabani et al. (2019). They contend that the outcomes of ICT-supported governance depend on a state's governance structure, ICT infrastructure, and human resource capabilities (Sabani et al., 2019).

6.1 Limitations

6.1.1 Conceptual Frameworks

6.1.1.1 Enabler–Inhibitor Framework

Cenfetelli's (2004) framework was developed prior to the widespread adoption of modern social media tools for e-participation. Substantial governmental uptake of these tools occurred between 2010 and 2014 (Ramzy & Ibrahim, 2024). This temporal disconnect may help explain the divergence between Cenfetelli's (2004) original assumptions and the findings of this study.

The framework argues that enabling and inhibiting perceptions arise from distinct causal sources: features that promote use are fundamentally separate from those that discourage it (Cenfetelli, 2004). However, this distinction becomes less stable in the context of social media e-participation, where both enabling and inhibiting perceptions may emerge from the same causal factor. This is because all system attributes ultimately derive from social media affordances, which function as the system's foundational ambivalent element. For instance, the networked nature of social media can facilitate citizen engagement in state initiatives while simultaneously enabling the rapid spread of false narratives targeting public institutions. This reflects the wicked nature of social media e-participation.

6.1.1.2 Stakeholder Theory for E-Government

This thesis applies Stakeholder Theory (ST) as presented by Rose et al. (2018), under the assumption that Kenyan state actors operate within a shared constitutional framework. The assumption streamlines the research process by providing a common normative foundation—viewing all state actors through Article 10 and Chapter 6 of the Constitution of Kenya (CoK). These provisions respectively mandate public participation as a national value and set out principles of leadership and integrity (The Republic of Kenya, 2010).

However, while these provisions apply universally, their interpretation and application may vary across state institutions due to their distinct constitutional mandates. Kenya's separation of powers assigns different responsibilities to each arm of government, which may result in competing interests and institutional priorities. The **Legislative** arm, composed of Parliament at the national level and county assemblies at the devolved level,

is tasked with law-making and oversight. **Executive** branches, encompassing both national and county executives, are responsible for policy formulation, implementation, and administration. The **Judiciary**, consisting of courts, tribunals, and related institutions, is mandated to interpret and enforce the law (The Republic of Kenya, 2010).

6.1.2 Literature Review Process

The exclusive reliance on peer-reviewed journal articles in the literature review may have excluded useful grey literature from independent government agencies. While Klimentová and Tomanová (2024) caution that such sources may carry partisan influence, their selective inclusion—particularly from large oversight institutions with lower political exposure—could have provided relevant contextual grounding for the review.

Second, the influence of COVID-19 on included literature was approximated using publication metadata. However, this approach may have resulted in the inclusion of articles based entirely on pre-pandemic data.

Third, the thematic analysis was conducted on 30 of the 98 accepted publications retrieved during the literature review search phase ([Appendix F](#)). While these texts were analysed iteratively using a concept matrix until theoretical saturation was reached, relevant fringe themes may have been present in the remaining 68 publications.

6.1.3 Empirical Data Collection and Analysis

There was a lack of gender balance among interview participants. This thesis has already addressed the disproportionate challenges faced by women in public service. Their reluctance to participate may therefore reflect broader systemic barriers that place them under heightened pressure to manage personal risks, as illustrated by Pair et al. (2021).

6.1.4 Systemic Methodological Limitation

This thesis recognises the presence of researcher bias in the form of cognitive biases as an inherent limitation within a single-author qualitative study. Drawing from Chatfield (2023), three specific biases are particularly relevant, alongside steps taken to mitigate them.

First, **confirmation bias** refers to the tendency to prioritise information that affirms preexisting beliefs (Chatfield, 2023). This may have influenced interpretation, particularly in the absence of intercoder reliability (ICR) checks. According to O'Connor and Joffe (2020), ICR strengthens qualitative research by introducing multiple perspectives and reducing individual bias. In this case, intracoder checks were conducted

instead, with the same coder revisiting data to ensure internal consistency (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

Second, **availability bias** refers to the tendency to treat readily available information as sufficient (Chatfield, 2023). This may have contributed to the development of the concept *Networked Irrationality*. However, as shown in [Appendix O](#) (Table O.1), a structured effort was made to assess conceptual alternatives. No existing term adequately described the observed phenomenon. This bias may also have influenced theoretical framework selection. However, the frameworks chosen were appropriate to the problem statement.

Third, the **illusion of understanding** refers to the mistaken belief that a simplified model captures a system's full complexity (Chatfield, 2023). This bias may have shaped the conceptual models presented. However, the thematic convergences and divergences between literature and empirical data were interpreted through established scholarly concepts. This supported the analytical validity of the models produced.

6.2 Potential Future Research Directions

Firstly, as this study focused primarily on Kenyan state actors as a whole, future research could examine the different branches of government to generate more tailored insights. The recommendations offered here may not fully capture the internal nuances across various state organs involved in e-participation. This could be complemented by separate studies examining the perspectives of citizens who engage with these institutions on social media. Such work would capture the demand side of the e-participation landscape and deepen understanding of participatory dynamics (Randma-Liiv, 2022).

Secondly, this study applied Cenfetelli's (2004) conceptualisation of enablers and inhibitors. However, the findings suggest that this framework may no longer fully capture the dynamics of social media e-participation. Enablers and inhibitors may emerge from similar causal factors (system attributes). Future research could explore this functional ambivalence by identifying the conditions under which these dual effects occur.

Thirdly, future research could explore methods for more effectively studying phenomena that are difficult to empirically isolate. This study demonstrated that while security is a system attribute of social media e-participation, its influence often appears indirectly. It tends to emerge as a secondary consequence of more visible attributes, even when it may also result directly from social media affordances. Such dynamics may result in key phenomena being perceived as less impactful than they truly are, as their effects may be misattributed to attributes that are more easily captured through empirical analysis. This, in turn, may lead to suboptimal policy responses and unintended consequences.

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Appendix

A Literature Review Search Phrase Results

Table A.0.1: Search phrase results from the Katholieke University Leuven (KUL) Limo database.

Date of Search	Search Phrase	Total Results from KUL Limo	Filtered Results on KUL Limo	Retrieved Reports from KUL Limo
15.11.2024	Facebook e-participation	3	1	1
	Facebook citizen participation	2	0	0
	Facebook public participation	1	0	0
	Social media citizen participation	65	26	24
	Social media e-participation	59	14	13
	Social media public participation	47	10	10
	Twitter citizen participation	6	2	2
	Twitter e-participation	1	1	1
	Twitter public participation	3	1	1

	X citizen participation	4	2	2
	X e-participation	5	1	1
	X public participation	33	6	6
	WhatsApp citizen participation	0	0	0
	WhatsApp e-participation	0	0	0
	WhatsApp public participation	0	0	0
01.02.2025	Social Media citizen engagement	155	62	60
	Facebook citizen engagement	3	0	0
	Twitter citizen engagement	4	3	3
	X citizen engagement	4	4	4
	WhatsApp citizen engagement	0	0	0
03.02.2025	Social Media citizen empowerment	4	4	0

	Facebook citizen empowerment	0	0	0
	Twitter citizen empowerment	0	0	0
	X citizen empowerment	1	0	0
	WhatsApp citizen empowerment	0	0	0
	Social Media citizen involvement	8	3	3
	Facebook citizen involvement	0	0	0
	Twitter citizen involvement	0	0	0
	X citizen involvement	2	0	0
	WhatsApp citizen involvement	0	0	0
04.02.2025	Social Media public engagement	131	60	53
	Facebook public engagement	11	6	6
	Twitter public engagement	36	18	18

	X public engagement	6	2	2
	WhatsApp public engagement	0	0	0
	Total	594	226	210

Twitter public participation	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
X citizen participation	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
X e-participation	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
X public participation	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	0	0
WhatsApp citizen participation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
WhatsApp e-participation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
WhatsApp public participation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Social Media citizen engagement	31	1	0	0	0	1	12	7	0	8
Facebook citizen engagement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Twitter citizen engagement	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
X citizen engagement	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0

X citizen involvement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
WhatsApp citizen involvement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Social Media public engagement	23	0	0	1	0	0	18	9	0	2
Facebook public engagement	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	2
Twitter public engagement	10	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	2
X public engagement	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
WhatsApp public engagement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	98	3	0	3	1	8	58	22	0	17

Note:**Reason 1** – Duplicate**Reason 2** – Not in English**Reason 3** – Not a peer-reviewed journal article**Reason 4** – Published before 2020**Reason 5** – Made available online before 2020**Reason 6** – No relevant themes

Reason 7 – Received before April 2020

Reason 8 – Accepted before October 2020

Reason 9 – Published before June 2021 (or 2022 if no month provided)

C Literature Review Thematic Analysis Concept Matrix

Table C.1: Concept matrix resulting from the thematic analysis process of the select subsection of accepted reports.

References	Concepts							
	Social Media Platforms Affordances	Socio – economic Factors	Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities	Data – Driven Policymaking	Citizen Mobilisation	Upholding Democratic Principles	Disinformation and Misinformation	Hate Content/Activities
(Shane, 2023)	X							
(Amores et al., 2023)	X		X			X		
(Y. Guo et al., 2023)	X		X	X			X	
(Yue et al., 2022)	X		X	X				
(Alcaide Muñoz & Rodríguez Bolívar, 2021)	X			X		X		
(Santoveña-Casal et al., 2021)	X			X	X	X	X	X
(Yao & Xu, 2022)	X	X	X				X	
(Senior et al., 2023)		X	X			X		
(Ben Lazreg & M’Salle, 2023)	X			X	X	X		X
(Oh, 2022)	X				X		X	
(Wang et al., 2023)	X	X			X			
(Chmel et al., 2024)	X				X	X	X	X
(Rauchfleisch et al., 2023)	X		X					
(Vespa et al., 2022)	X			X	X			
(Svirak et al., 2023)	X	X	X			X	X	X
(Arora, 2022)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
(Hariguna et al., 2021)			X			X		
(Yang & Su, 2020)	X			X		X		
(Valenzuela-Aguilera et al., 2024)			X	X		X	X	
(Arayankalam & Krishnan, 2022)	X		X			X		
(M. Li, 2023)	X					X		
(Ramzy & Ibrahim, 2024)						X		
(Abdulkareem et al., 2022)	X	X	X			X		
(L. Guo & Chen, 2022)	X				X	X	X	
(Anyanwu et al., 2024)	X	X		X		X	X	X
(Hayes, 2021)	X						X	X

(Akerele-Popoola et al., 2022)	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
(Alarabiat & Wahbeh, 2021)	X	X	X		X	X		
(Labafi et al., 2022)	X		X	X	X	X	X	
(Lin & Kant, 2021)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

D Search Phrase Generation BPMN

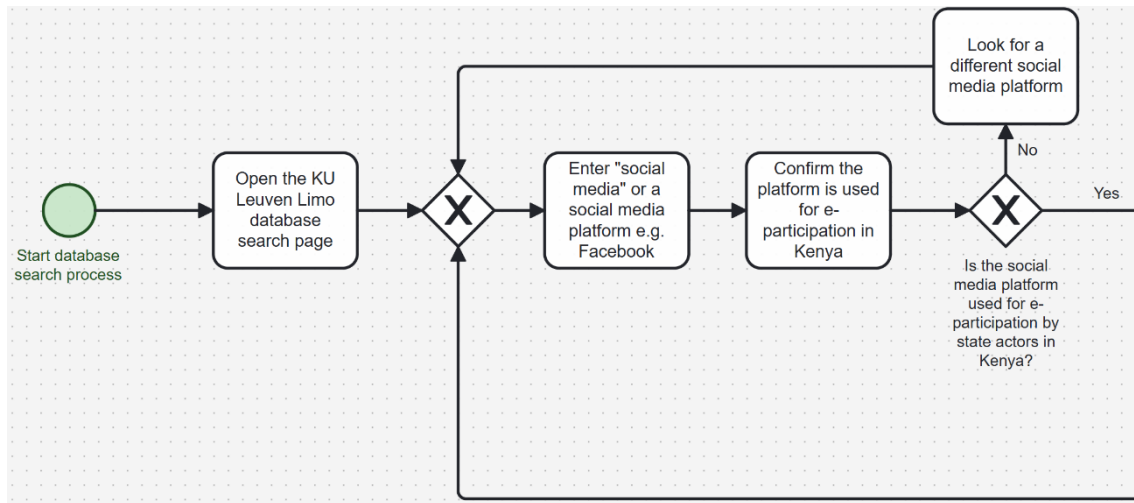


Figure D.1: BPMN process representing the search term generation process (Part 1).

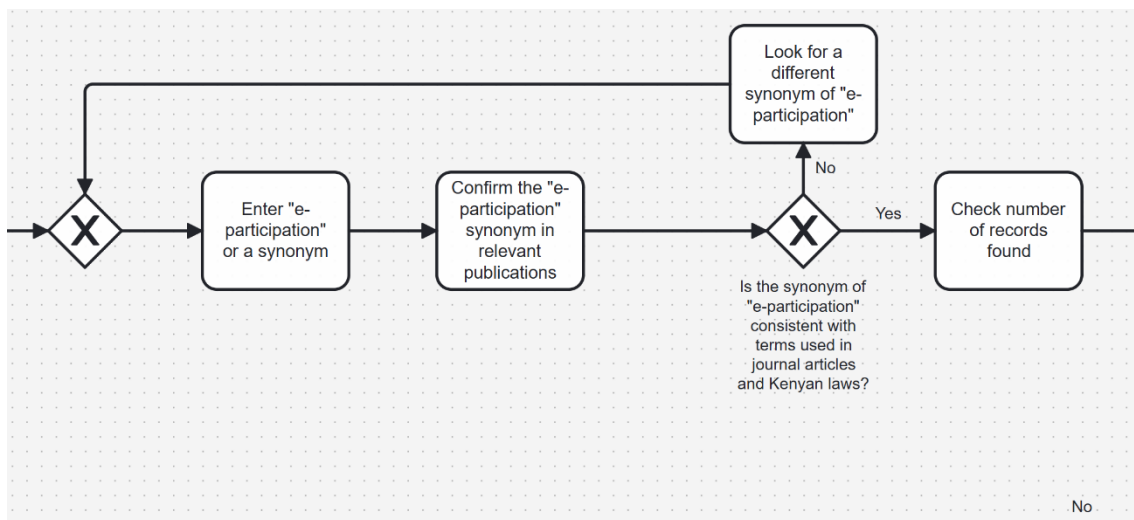


Figure D.2: BPMN process representing the search term generation process (Part 2).

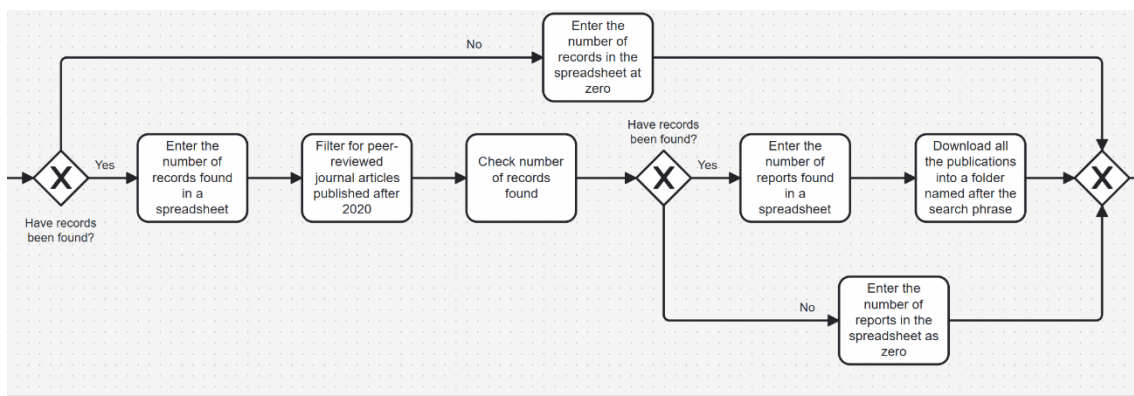


Figure D.3: BPMN process representing the search term generation process (Part 3).

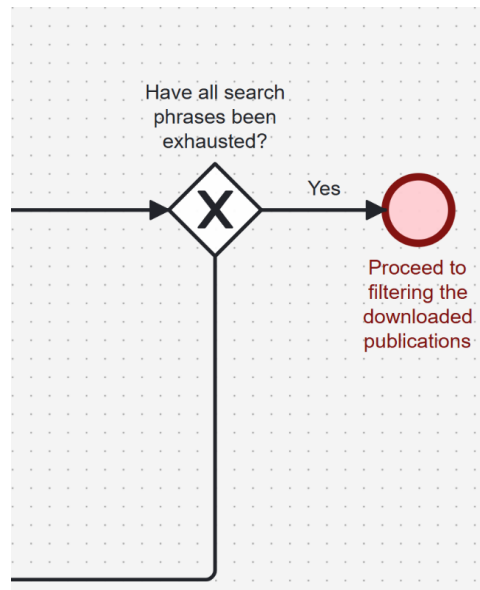


Figure D.4: BPMN process representing the search term generation process (Part 4).

E Report Filtration BPMN

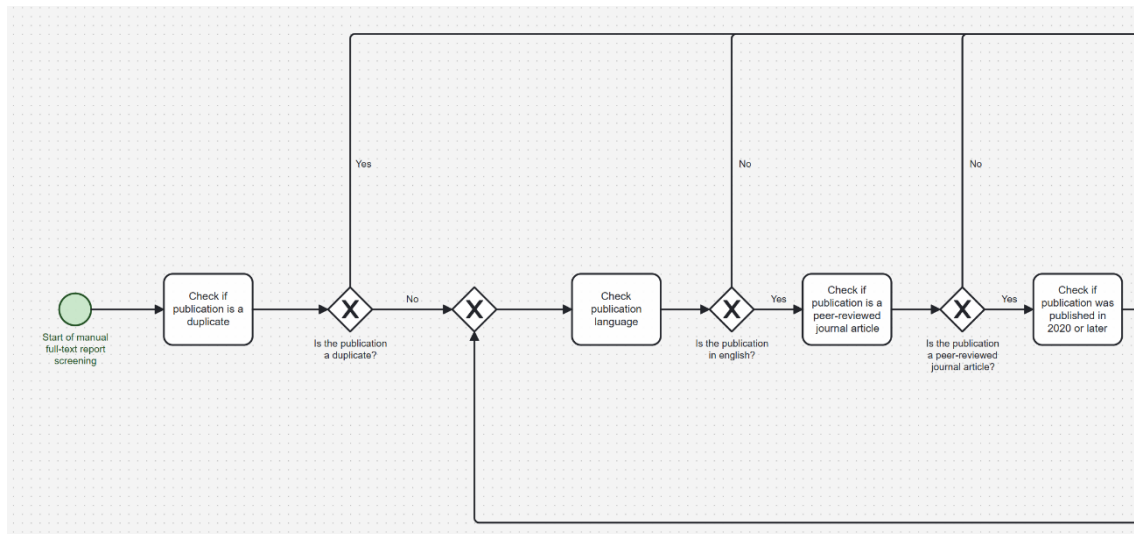


Figure E.1: BPMN process representing the report filtering process (Part 1).

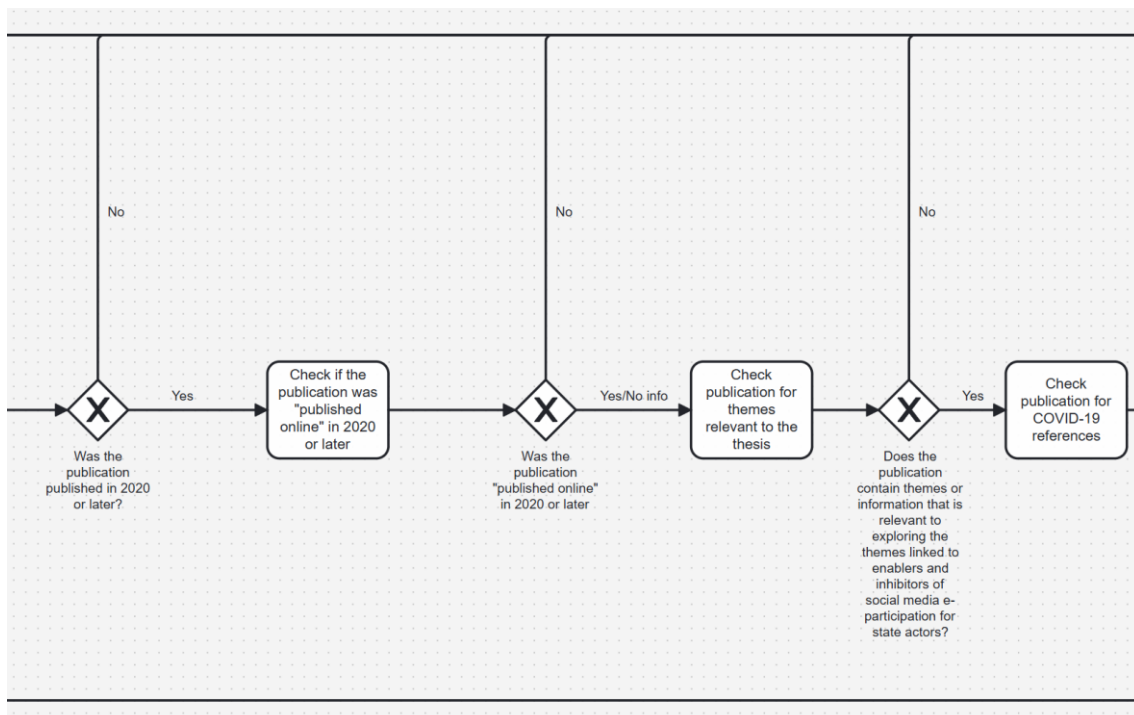


Figure E.2: BPMN process representing the report filtering process (Part 2).

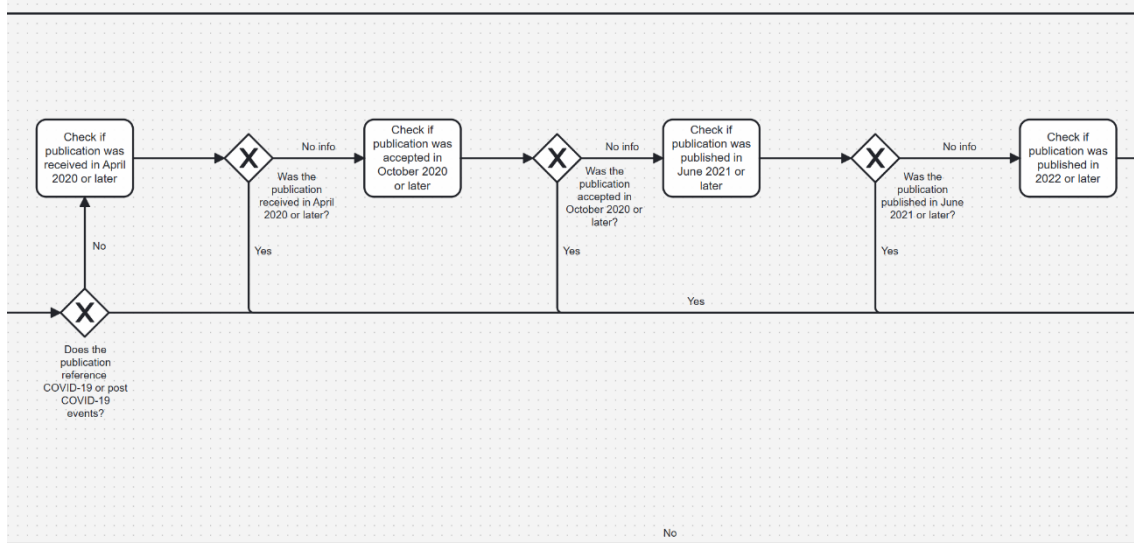


Figure E.3: BPMN process representing the report filtering process (Part 3).

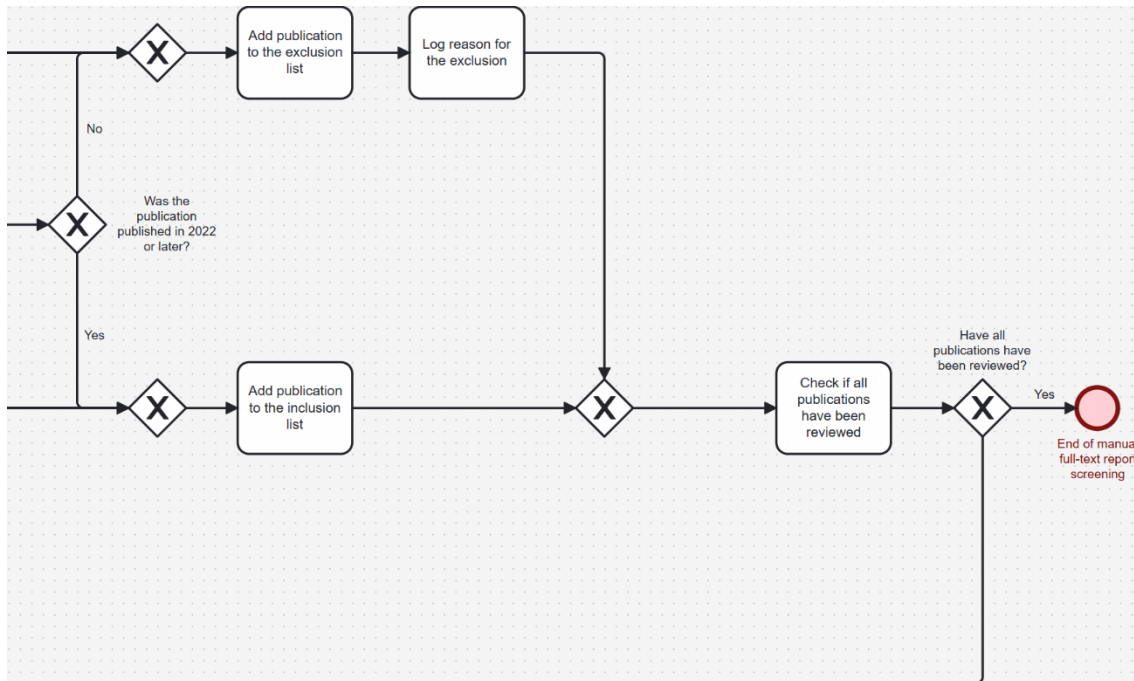


Figure E.4: BPMN process representing the report filtering process (Part 4).

F Report Filtration Process

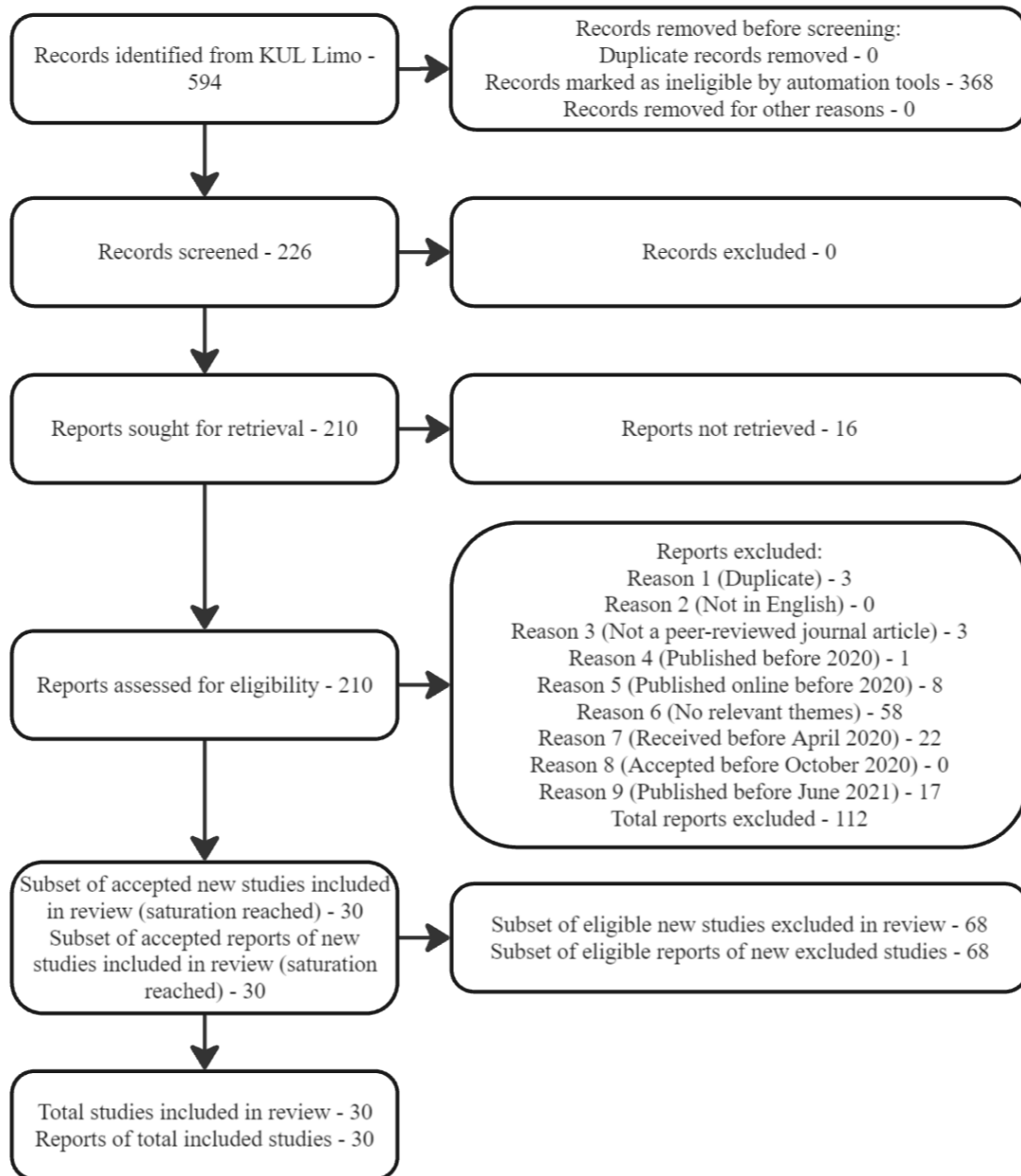


Figure F.1: Modified PRISMA 2020 flow diagram adopted from Page et al. (2021).

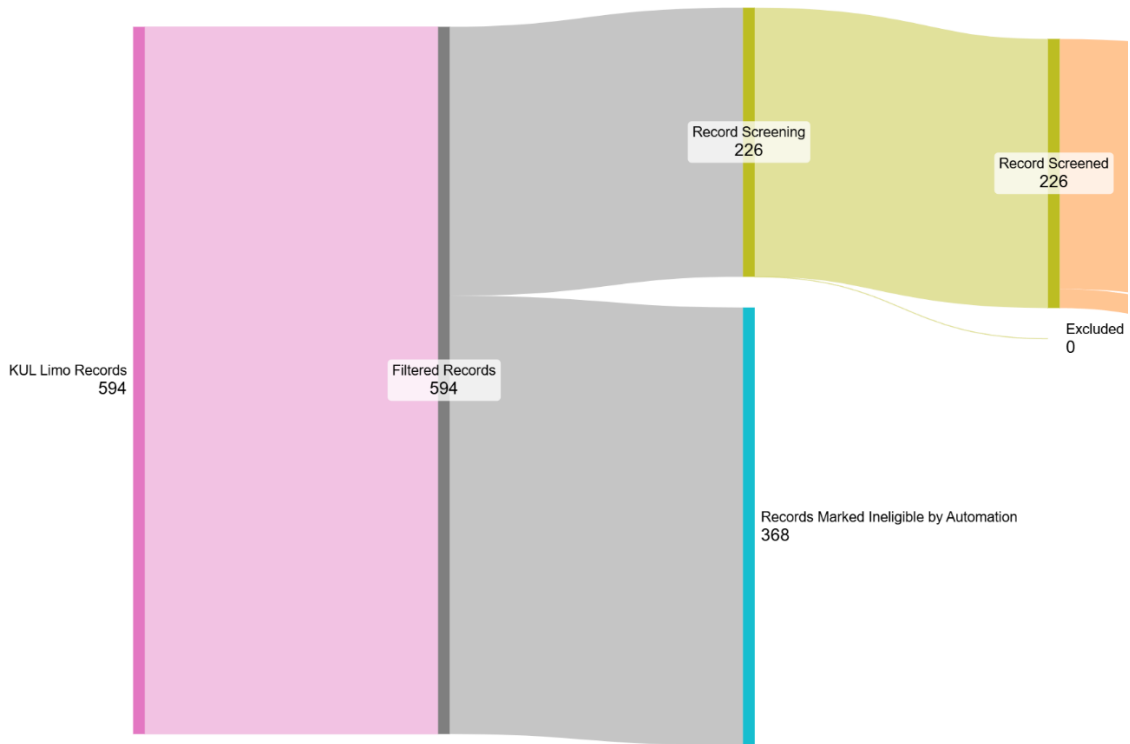


Figure F.2: Sankey diagram of the filtration process (Part 1).

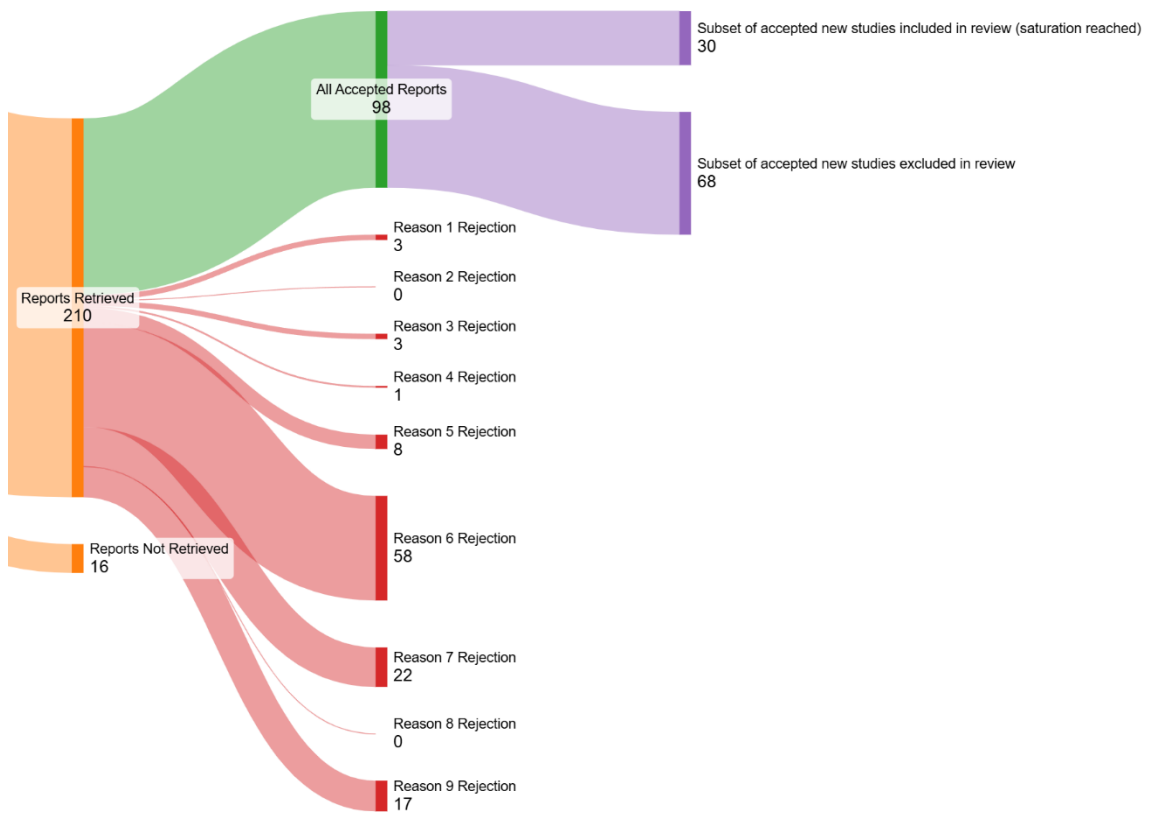


Figure F.3: Sankey diagram of the filtration process (Part 2).

G Social Media Structured Observation Institution Sample

Table G.1: General descriptions (based on the contents of the Constitution of Kenya (CoK)) and rationales for institutions chosen for the social media structured observation process (The Republic of Kenya, 2010).

Institution Label	Governance Level	Branch of Government	General Functional	Rational for Inclusion
National Executive	National	Executive	Executes national laws and represents state power as per executive authority	Sample to represent the engagement patterns of the national executive
Judiciary	National	Judiciary	Interprets the law and ensures access to justice under judicial independence	Sample to represent the engagement patterns of the judiciary
National Legislature	National	Legislature	Enacts national laws, provides oversight, and represents citizens	Sample to represent the engagement patterns of the senate
Independent Commission/Regulator	National	Independent	Promotes constitutional values, accountability, or regulatory oversight	Sample to represent the engagement patterns of independent offices

National Security Organ	National	Independent	Ensures national security and public safety as per constitutional mandate	Sample to represent the engagement patterns of security agencies
State Corporation – Large	National	Executive	Implements policy and delivers services under executive authority	Sample to represent the engagement patterns of large state corporations
State Corporation – Small	National	Executive	Implements policy and delivers services under executive authority	Sample to represent the engagement patterns of small state corporations
County Executive (Urban County)	County	Executive	Manages devolved functions and executes county legislation	Sample to represent the engagement patterns of urban county executives
County Executive (Rural County)	County	Executive	Manages devolved functions and executes county legislation	Sample to represent the engagement patterns of

				rural county executives
County Legislature (Urban County)	County	Legislature	Enacts county laws and oversees county executive	Sample to represent the engagement patterns of urban county legislatures
County Legislature (Rural County)	County	Legislature	Enacts county laws and oversees county executive	Sample to represent the engagement patterns of rural county legislatures

H Literature Review Enabler–Inhibitor Relationship Map

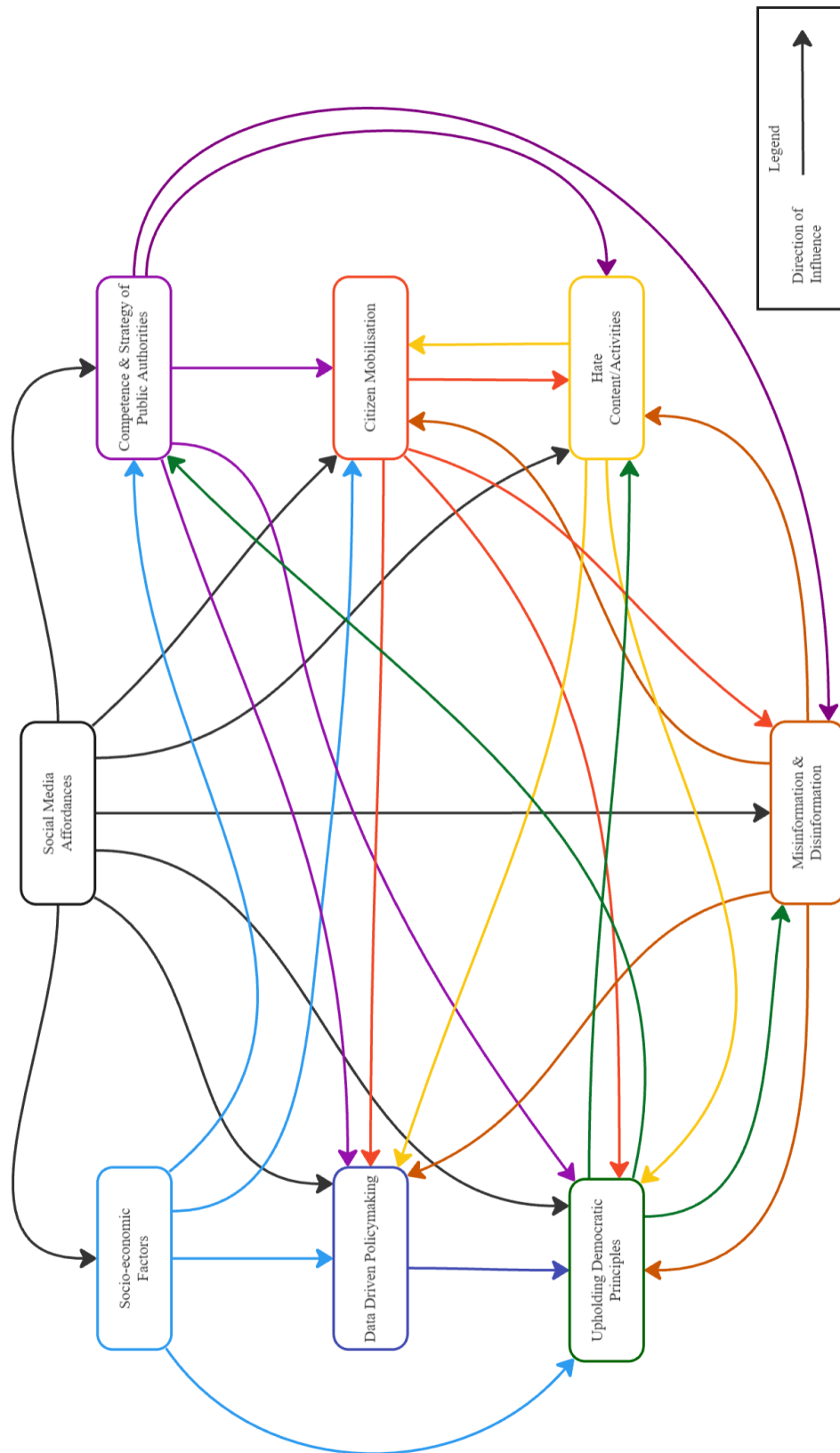


Figure H.1: Enabler and inhibitor relationships in literature (Arrows indicate the direction of influence, e.g., $A \rightarrow B$ means A influences B).

I Interview Guide/Questionnaire

1. How does your institution leverage social media affordances (e.g., interactivity, reach, immediacy) to engage the public in governance? What challenges do you encounter in maximising these features for meaningful public participation?
2. How do socio-economic factors (e.g., digital literacy, internet access, resource availability) impact the public and your institution's use of social media for e-participation? What measures, if any, has your institution taken to address socio-economic barriers within state institutions and the public?
3. What measures does your institution take to ensure public officials are equipped with both technical and strategic skills for managing social media in governance? Are there structured training programs, internal guidelines, or knowledge-sharing mechanisms in place to optimise social media use?
4. To what extent does your institution use social media data (e.g., sentiment analysis, public feedback) to inform policy decisions? What are the primary challenges—technical, legal, or ethical—that you encounter or anticipate in integrating social media data into policymaking?
5. How has social media influenced public mobilisation around government initiatives or policy discussions? What challenges does your institution encounter while mobilising citizens through social media?
6. How does your institution use social media to promote democratic principles as outlined in the CoK (transparency, accountability, inclusive decision-making)? What risks (e.g. institutional reputational damage) does social media pose to democratic governance?
7. What types of misinformation and disinformation have you observed targeting your institution or affiliated individuals on social media? How has this misinformation affected public trust in your institution and its ability to carry out its constitutional mandate? Have you identified any actors (citizens, political groups, foreign adversaries) deliberately spreading misinformation for strategic or political advantage?
8. What types of hate content (e.g., ethnic, political, gender-based) have you observed on social media aimed at your institution or individuals affiliated with it? How does hate content affect your ability to carry out your constitutional mandate? Have you identified any actors (citizens, state actors, foreign

adversaries) who deliberately use hate content against state bodies for personal or political gain?

9. Are there any other factors that influence your institution's use of social media for e-participation that we have not covered?
10. Do current laws, regulations, and institutions in Kenya effectively regulate social media e-participation to ensure its positive impact? If not, what policy reforms or institutional measures would you propose to strengthen social media governance?

J Structured Observation Template

Table J.1: Structured observation template (Part 1).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Social Media Platform Affordances	Socio-economic Factors	Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities

Table J.2: Structured observation template (Part 2).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Citizen Mobilisation	Data-Driven Policymaking	Democratic Principles

Table J.3: Structured observation template (Part 3).

Date	Platform	Inhibitors		
		Misinformation and Disinformation	Hate Content/Activities	Security

K Interview Notes

K.a Interview/Interviewee 1

1. How does your institution leverage social media affordances (e.g., interactivity, reach, immediacy) to engage the public in governance? What challenges do you encounter in maximising these features for meaningful public participation?

Social media has essentially replaced tools like fax in government communication. It is now our general and fast communication tool. Platforms like WhatsApp are much easier to use—personnel send internal messages, updates, and even learning material through them.

The institution also uses social media to share both historical and current information—things like public notes, archived material, and official reading resources. But the institutions conduct a controlled release of information, especially regulated information.

Social media is now an integral part of the communication apparatus, but there are risks. Cybersecurity and document integrity are a big concern. Platforms and devices are vulnerable—they can be compromised or even physically stolen if officials are careless.

2. How do socio-economic factors (e.g., digital literacy, internet access, resource availability) impact the public and your institution's use of social media for e-participation? What measures, if any, has your institution taken to address socio-economic barriers within state institutions and the public?

User knowledge may not be very high. State actors can be compromised by a lack of proper social media use knowledge. Information leaks can cause injury to the state.

User understanding is expanded through mandatory training of recruits. But there is a need to establish clear lines of communication, rules of engagement, and levels of clearance for access and dissemination of information. Currently, the state does not have clear social media guidelines or rules of engagement.

Training and rules must cover all forms of government communication. Standards need to be established and well-articulated across all levels of engagement—the

'who, what, where, when, and why' are all critical. 'Why' is especially important and often overlooked.

Additional measures could include centralising clearance processes so that there is greater transparency around who holds which information. When there is too much discretion, it may lead to abuse. Centralised knowledge will also help weed out imposters.

3. What measures does your institution take to ensure public officials are equipped with both technical and strategic skills for managing social media in governance? Are there structured training programs, internal guidelines, or knowledge-sharing mechanisms in place to optimise social media use?

Training depends on the cohort being recruited. Basic training lasts around 90 to 120 days and includes areas like etiquette, relevant historical information, and the state's strategic positions. It also covers the operational space and what is expected of an officer.

There is protocol training for officers, including how senior government officials should engage with foreign nationals. For example, newly appointed ambassadors undergo 90 days of induction training covering foreign affairs operations, etiquette, briefings, and so on.

Social media training is provided to all actors. A lot of the social media discourse is tied to operational security.

4. To what extent does your institution use social media data (e.g., sentiment analysis, public feedback) to inform policy decisions? What are the primary challenges—technical, legal, or ethical—that you encounter or anticipate in integrating social media data into policymaking?

The institution is starting to incorporate AI techniques for social media data processing. It is currently a work in progress.

Government red tape makes AI acquisition very slow. The institution must comply with all relevant rules and regulations related to procurement, as well as laws such as data protection.

5. How has social media influenced public mobilisation around government initiatives or policy discussions? What challenges does your institution encounter while mobilising citizens through social media?

The institution conducts advertisements for job applications through social media. It is also used to reach out to people for events.

Mobilisation for the visit of foreign dignitaries can be done through social media. This has in fact occurred recently during the state visit of King Charles to Kenya.

Social media is now used for formal communication—it is not just for informal messaging anymore.

6. How does your institution use social media to promote democratic principles as outlined in the Constitution of Kenya (transparency, accountability, inclusive decision-making)? What risks (e.g. institutional reputational damage) does social media pose to democratic governance?

Social media is used to promote transparency in governance because it provides for traceability. It maintains a record beyond easy manipulation, since the public can simply take screenshots of messages that have been posted.

Social media also allows the rapid and extensive sharing of important information. However, the integrity of information can be damaged through manipulation on social media, which leads to disinformation.

Additionally, important information not meant for distribution can be errantly shared, which may lead to abuse of that knowledge.

7. What types of misinformation and disinformation have you observed targeting your institution or affiliated individuals on social media? How has this misinformation affected public trust in your institution and its ability to carry out its constitutional mandate? Have you identified any actors (citizens, political groups, foreign adversaries) deliberately spreading misinformation for strategic or political advantage?

The institution is no stranger to disinformation operations targeting it because of the role it plays within the state. Such information can lead to real-world consequences, such as attacks on property and officers.

Moreover, misinformation can cause reputational damage to the institution. In the field of this institution, disinformation is a weapon that has to be kept in sharp focus at all times.

8. What types of hate content (e.g., ethnic, political, gender-based) have you observed on social media aimed at your institution or individuals affiliated with

it? How does hate content affect your ability to carry out your constitutional mandate? Have you identified any actors (citizens, state actors, foreign adversaries) who deliberately use hate content against state bodies for personal or political gain?

Internal competition within the institution can lead to the use of unscrupulous means for officers to gain an advantage over each other. Competition is very strong within the institution, and the situation can be very difficult to navigate.

This competition can also spill over onto social media—for example, through anonymous letters that are strategically used to gain an advantage by harming the reputation of other state actors.

9. Are there any other factors that influence your institution's use of social media for e-participation that we have not covered?

The security aspect is very critical for this institution. You have to look at the institution as part of the national security apparatus.

It works in collaboration with all the security sectors. The institution and its communication methods are very sacred.

10. Do current laws, regulations, and institutions in Kenya effectively regulate social media e-participation to ensure its positive impact? If not, what policy reforms or institutional measures would you propose to strengthen social media governance?

The laws are currently insufficient to deal with the fast advancements of technology. The competent institutions have enacted various laws to govern technology, but they are still very much behind.

No country can claim to have a fully sufficient social media regulatory structure. The institution is also not as advanced as other institutions and nations that have interacted with technology for longer.

K.b Interview/Interviewee 2

1. How does your institution leverage social media affordances (e.g., interactivity, reach, immediacy) to engage the public in governance? What challenges do you encounter in maximising these features for meaningful public participation?

Social media plays a crucial role in real-time engagement and communication across multiple digital platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and LinkedIn. It enables direct interaction with stakeholders through Q&A sessions on product quality and sustainability, as well as surveys and feedback mechanisms to gather insights from customers, suppliers, and industry players.

Additionally, social media facilitates key corporate governance discussions and announcements, ensuring that both local and international stakeholders—including minority shareholders—remain informed about corporate strategies.

Beyond communication, social media serves as an educational tool, offering live sessions with experts and content that enhances public knowledge about product usage. This benefits the institution's stakeholders directly. It is also a powerful marketing platform for announcing product pricing, distribution, and availability, while providing industry-related updates in a manner that is significantly faster than traditional media.

Furthermore, social media plays a critical role in crisis management by enabling instant communication, swift responses to customer queries, and proactive clarification of misinformation, which helps mitigate reputational risks.

However, despite these advantages, social media also presents challenges. Misinformation and disinformation—particularly concerning product pricing and corporate activities—can spread rapidly, requiring the deployment of analytics to monitor and counter false claims. Limited digital literacy among some stakeholders within the value chain further exacerbates the risk of misinterpretation. Additionally, negative sentiment and online backlash during crises can escalate quickly, making damage control challenging. Once a narrative gains traction on social media, it can be difficult to reverse, highlighting the need for proactive communication strategies and digital resilience.

2. How do socio-economic factors (e.g., digital literacy, internet access, resource availability) impact the public and your institution's use of social media for e-

participation? What measures, if any, has your institution taken to address socio-economic barriers within state institutions and the public?

A significant challenge in leveraging social media for engagement is the digital literacy gap among some underprivileged stakeholders. Many lack the ability to access real-time information, making it difficult to counter misinformation effectively. With low awareness of how to verify information, misinformation can persist, posing a risk to business reputation. To address this, offline seminars have proven to be the most effective method for educating less privileged stakeholders, with quarterly seminars playing a key role. Additionally, WhatsApp Business support provides an alternative digital communication channel for those who may struggle with more complex platforms.

Beyond literacy challenges, internet access remains a barrier in rural areas, where high data costs and inconsistent network coverage limit social media accessibility. Many key stakeholders lack access to smartphones and affordable data plans, restricting their ability to stay informed through digital channels. To bridge this gap, the institution implements bulk SMS campaigns and conducts community-based forums to ensure that essential information reaches all stakeholders. Furthermore, partnerships with retailers can facilitate business operations and localised marketing efforts, making it easier for stakeholders to engage despite technological limitations. These combined efforts help bridge the digital divide, ensuring that all players remain informed and connected.

3. What measures does your institution take to ensure public officials are equipped with both technical and strategic skills for managing social media in governance? Are there structured training programs, internal guidelines, or knowledge-sharing mechanisms in place to optimise social media use?

Structured training programmes for social media and AI are currently in use, recognising the global shift towards social media and AI dominance and the need for proactive adaptation. Employees receive targeted training in digital communication and crisis management, enabling them to respond swiftly and effectively to emerging challenges. Additionally, specialised social media communication training tailored to the institution's mandate further equips staff to strategically manage digital interactions. Regular workshops on content creation and stakeholder engagement help enhance the team's ability to produce compelling and relevant messages. The organisation also maintains clear internal guidelines and policies to ensure consistent, responsible digital interactions,

supported by strict crisis protocols designed to safeguard the corporate reputation and ensure effective management during any incidents or crises.

4. To what extent does your institution use social media data (e.g., sentiment analysis, public feedback) to inform policy decisions? What are the primary challenges—technical, legal, or ethical—that you encounter or anticipate in integrating social media data into policymaking?

The institution acquired sentiment analysis tools in the recent years. Sentiment analysis is actively employed as a strategic tool for brand management, allowing the institution to monitor public perceptions and evaluate feedback from stakeholders in real-time. Customer complaints and discussions on social media platforms are systematically analysed to inform product improvements and address emerging issues promptly. Additionally, the organisation leverages active stakeholder engagement and crisis management strategies to maintain positive brand perception and swiftly manage any reputational threats. These approaches also help support the institution's social responsibilities by ensuring responsiveness to stakeholder concerns and aligning the institution's practices with stakeholder expectations.

5. How has social media influenced public mobilisation around government initiatives or policy discussions? What challenges does your institution encounter while mobilising citizens through social media?

Social media supplements public mobilisation initiatives by serving as an integral component of the organisation's mobilisation platform. It is actively used to amplify government initiatives, such as affordable housing programmes, which the organisation supports. Additionally, social media facilitates communication with stakeholders by providing real-time product updates and other key announcements from the institution. It also supports the dissemination of information about social responsibility efforts from the institution. Through these platforms, stakeholders receive immediate responses to inquiries, enabling effective engagement and swift clarification of issues. This allows the organisation to quickly address stakeholder queries, respond to public concerns, and share information on initiatives, thereby reducing misinformation and enhancing overall transparency.

6. How does your institution use social media to promote democratic principles as outlined in the Constitution of Kenya (transparency, accountability, inclusive

decision-making)? What risks (e.g. institutional reputational damage) does social media pose to democratic governance?

Institutional governance decisions are guided by policy, with board meetings conducted transparently and board members held accountable. Regular updates on institutional decisions and performance are actively shared via social media platforms, primarily LinkedIn, X, and Facebook. Information about procurement processes is also disseminated through social media channels, enhancing transparency. Furthermore, social media is used to support corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, promote accountability, and ensure stakeholders remain informed about organisational activities.

7. What types of misinformation and disinformation have you observed targeting your institution or affiliated individuals on social media? How has this misinformation affected public trust in your institution and its ability to carry out its constitutional mandate? Have you identified any actors (citizens, political groups, foreign adversaries) deliberately spreading misinformation for strategic or political advantage?

Institutional governance practices are often challenged by misinformation and disinformation campaigns, particularly those disseminated via social media. The organisation actively utilises social media and traditional media channels to manage and mitigate these risks, including misinformation related to product quality and counterfeit or manipulated pricing such as fake discounts, which can erode stakeholder trust. Challenges also include the dissemination of false narratives around sensitive corporate assets, which could potentially harm the institution's reputation. To counter these threats, the organisation regularly sends updates through bulk SMS, WhatsApp channels, and social media platforms, providing factual and timely corrections. Additionally, it shares official press releases addressing critical issues such as false claims concerning company assets and product price manipulation. These proactive measures aim to protect the institution's reputation and stakeholder trust, despite challenges like limited digital literacy among key stakeholders and rapid misinformation spread. The organisation remains committed to maintaining a neutral, fact-based communication strategy to manage crises effectively and reduce reputational risk.

8. What types of hate content (e.g., ethnic, political, gender-based) have you observed on social media aimed at your institution or individuals affiliated with it? How does hate content affect your ability to carry out your constitutional mandate? Have you identified any actors (citizens, state actors, foreign

adversaries) who deliberately use hate content against state bodies for personal or political gain?

The institution has also faced significant challenges arising from politically motivated misinformation and hate content spread through social media. The primary source of this negative content stems from politically driven actors who attempt to portray the institution negatively, often to influence or obstruct it from lawfully fulfilling its mandate. For instance, during the implementation of lawful decisions regarding the institution's assets, false narratives and politically driven hate content emerged, seeking to misrepresent the institution's intentions and actions. These efforts aimed to arm-twist the institution, deterring it from effectively carrying out its responsibilities. Despite these pressures, the organisation maintained a neutral, transparent stance, countering false narratives through clear communication, factual updates, and ongoing engagement across social media and traditional channels.

9. Are there any other factors that influence your institution's use of social media for e-participation that we have not covered?

It is important to consider regulatory compliance, particularly regarding data protection and privacy laws. All institutions must adhere strictly to requirements such as Kenya's Data Protection Act to ensure responsible handling of personal information collected through social media. In addition, compliance with broader privacy regulations is essential to maintain trust among stakeholders and avoid legal repercussions. Furthermore, effective management of social media communication necessitates structured internal guidelines and crisis protocols aligned with these regulations. Given Kenya's cultural and linguistic diversity, organisations must also consider language and cultural sensitivities in their communication strategies. This involves crafting messages that are inclusive, respectful, and clear across various ethnic and cultural groups. Moreover, managing social media effectively requires structured training programmes, taking into account the need for capacity building in digital communication and the technical skills necessary for platforms such as sentiment analysis tools.

10. Do current laws, regulations, and institutions in Kenya effectively regulate social media e-participation to ensure its positive impact? If not, what policy reforms or institutional measures would you propose to strengthen social media governance?

Several existing laws in Kenya guide social media use, including the Data Protection Act (2019), the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act (2018), the

Kenya Information and Communications Act (KICA, 1998), and the National Cohesion and Integration Act (2008), which specifically addresses hate speech and ethnic discrimination. However, despite the presence of these regulatory frameworks, challenges remain due to weak enforcement. Effective implementation and stronger enforcement mechanisms are crucial to reduce the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and politically motivated hate speech. Strengthening enforcement can significantly improve the management of reputational risks, protect institutions from harmful narratives, and promote responsible digital communication across Kenya's culturally diverse and multilingual context.

K.c Interview/Interviewee 3

1. How does your institution leverage social media affordances (e.g., interactivity, reach, immediacy) to engage the public in governance? What challenges do you encounter in maximising these features for meaningful public participation?

The institution actively uses social media platforms to facilitate public engagement. For example, it has established a dedicated online space where citizens can post complaints about substandard public service delivery. Additionally, legislative and policy change processes include a social media component, allowing the public to participate and provide feedback. Social media also enhances institutional transparency by enabling real-time information sharing on various issues. Furthermore, it serves as a tool for raising awareness about whistleblower protections, encouraging the safe reporting of corrupt practices.

2. How do socio-economic factors (e.g., digital literacy, internet access, resource availability) impact the public and your institution's use of social media for e-participation? What measures, if any, has your institution taken to address socio-economic barriers within state institutions and the public?

In terms of the public:

- *The lack of digital literacy or skills limits the ability of some segments of society to navigate social media platforms, understand posted information, or discern credible sources. This creates barriers to meaningful online participation, leading to gaps in engagement. As a result, individuals with lower levels of education or limited exposure to technology—who may be the intended beneficiaries of certain policy interventions, such as fishermen in the maritime sector—are often excluded from the digital participation process.*
- *Unequal access to reliable and affordable internet, especially in rural or low-income areas, directly limits the ability of a significant portion of the population to participate online. This digital divide often results in the exclusion of marginalised communities from social media-based engagement platforms.*
- *The cost of devices such as smartphones and computers, along with data plans and even electricity, can be prohibitive for individuals with lower*

incomes. This lack of material resources presents a fundamental barrier to accessing and using social media for e-participation.

- *Individuals engaged in precarious work, such as casual day-to-day labourers, may lack the time to actively participate in online discussions or monitor social media channels for civic engagement.*
- *Social media platforms and e-participation initiatives are often designed primarily in international languages, such as English in Kenya. This excludes individuals who are not proficient in those languages, limiting their ability to engage meaningfully.*
- *Individuals from marginalised communities may have lower levels of trust in government institutions and online platforms due to past negative experiences or concerns about privacy, security, surveillance, or harassment.*

For the institution:

- *Institutional branch offices in regions with poor infrastructure often lack reliable internet access, appropriate hardware and software, and the technical expertise needed to effectively manage social media for e-participation.*
- *Austerity measures driven by limited budgets often restrict institutions' ability to invest in efficient tools, staff training, and resources for content creation and community management on social media. It becomes a matter of competing priorities.*
- *With a predominantly ageing public workforce in government bodies, many officials lack the digital literacy skills needed to strategically use social media for engagement, understand online communication norms, and effectively respond to citizen input.*
- *Concerns about data privacy, security, and the potential misuse of citizens' information collected through social media often hinder the willingness to fully embrace these platforms for e-participation.*

Potential solutions include:

- *There is a need to prioritise the expansion of affordable and reliable internet access, particularly in underserved areas, through investments in broadband infrastructure and community-based internet solutions.*
 - *Clear guidelines and protocols should be established for the use of social media in e-participation, including moderation policies, feedback mechanisms, and data privacy safeguards.*
 - *Investing in training and professional development helps build internal capacity by enhancing digital literacy, online communication skills, and understanding of social media engagement strategies.*
 - *Allocating sufficient financial resources for digital inclusion initiatives is essential. This includes investments in infrastructure development, training programmes, and the procurement of accessible technology.*
 - *Implementing robust data protection measures and ensuring transparency about how citizens' data is collected and used helps to build public trust and confidence.*
 - *Actively addressing misinformation is essential for building trust in online platforms.*
3. What measures does your institution take to ensure public officials are equipped with both technical and strategic skills for managing social media in governance? Are there structured training programs, internal guidelines, or knowledge-sharing mechanisms in place to optimise social media use?

The institution builds internal capacity by investing in training and professional development to enhance digital literacy, online communication skills, and understanding of social media engagement strategies.

However, there remains a need to establish clear guidelines and protocols for using social media in e-participation, including moderation policies, feedback mechanisms, and data privacy safeguards.

4. To what extent does your institution use social media data (e.g., sentiment analysis, public feedback) to inform policy decisions? What are the primary challenges—technical, legal, or ethical—that you encounter or anticipate in integrating social media data into policymaking?

By actively engaging the public through social media, the institution receives feedback through reactions such as likes, shares, comments, and online debates. These interactions offer invaluable real-time insights into public sentiment, concerns, and emerging issues. Social media metrics also serve as indicators of public approval or disapproval, helping institutions formulate timely and appropriate mitigating strategies. In some cases, public engagement on social media has introduced new perspectives that have influenced governance processes.

Analysing social media data enables the institution to understand public opinion by examining the overall emotional tone—whether positive, negative, or neutral—towards specific policies, events, or the government itself. This analysis has also helped identify influential individuals or groups shaping public discourse in particular policy areas. Such insights support more targeted stakeholder engagement and the development of effective communication strategies to secure buy-in.

Moreover, by assessing how proposed policies are perceived online, institutions can identify areas of likely public support or resistance and adjust their approaches accordingly.

5. How has social media influenced public mobilisation around government initiatives or policy discussions? What challenges does your institution encounter while mobilising citizens through social media?

The institution promotes citizen contributions by encouraging the use of specific hashtags or participation in campaigns, fostering a sense of ownership and inclusion in governance processes.

6. How does your institution use social media to promote democratic principles as outlined in the Constitution of Kenya (transparency, accountability, inclusive decision-making)? What risks (e.g. institutional reputational damage) does social media pose to democratic governance?

The institution uses social media to engage in direct conversations with the public through comments, direct messages, and live Q&A sessions. These interactions help answer public questions, gather feedback on policies, and facilitate dialogue to better understand citizen perspectives. The institution also shares visually engaging content—such as videos—to simplify complex information and encourage interaction. Social media further enables rapid and widespread

dissemination of information, reaching a more diverse audience, including those who may not follow traditional media channels.

7. What types of misinformation and disinformation have you observed targeting your institution or affiliated individuals on social media? How has this misinformation affected public trust in your institution and its ability to carry out its constitutional mandate? Have you identified any actors (citizens, political groups, foreign adversaries) deliberately spreading misinformation for strategic or political advantage?

Social media platforms have been used to distort public understanding and undermine trust in the institution. In some cases, individuals have manipulated public opinion for personal or financial gain.

8. What types of hate content (e.g., ethnic, political, gender-based) have you observed on social media aimed at your institution or individuals affiliated with it? How does hate content affect your ability to carry out your constitutional mandate? Have you identified any actors (citizens, state actors, foreign adversaries) who deliberately use hate content against state bodies for personal or political gain?

Tribal profiling has been used by certain segments of society to distort public opinion and undermine trust in public institutions. Effectively moderating online discussions, addressing inappropriate content, and managing the high volume of interactions requires significant resources and clearly defined protocols. Furthermore, maintaining transparency, being responsive, and demonstrating accountability in social media interactions are essential for building and sustaining public trust. In contrast, inconsistent engagement can erode credibility and weaken institutional legitimacy.

9. Are there any other factors that influence your institution's use of social media for e-participation that we have not covered?

Social media enables rapid feedback, allowing institutions to quickly collect and analyse public reactions to announcements or initiatives. This speed supports timely adaptation of approaches where necessary. It also facilitates prompt responses to public queries and concerns, which helps build trust and demonstrates institutional responsiveness.

Moreover, social media allows for immediate, real-time updates—especially during critical events or policy changes—ensuring that the public is kept informed

in a timely manner. It also overcomes geographic barriers by transcending physical boundaries, enabling institutions to engage with citizens regardless of their location. Lastly, social media is particularly effective in reaching younger demographics, for whom these platforms serve as a primary source of information and communication.

10. Do current laws, regulations, and institutions in Kenya effectively regulate social media e-participation to ensure its positive impact? If not, what policy reforms or institutional measures would you propose to strengthen social media governance?

While Kenya has made progress in recognising the importance of public participation and has established a legal framework that includes digital spaces, the effectiveness of existing laws, regulations, and institutions in comprehensively regulating social media e-participation remains debatable and faces significant challenges.

The existing legal and regulatory frameworks include:

- *Constitution of Kenya, 2010: Article 10 lists public participation as a national value and principle of governance, implying the need for accessible platforms, which can include social media.*
- *Public Participation Act, 2018: Provides guidelines for involving citizens in decision-making processes at all levels of government, suggesting the integration of digital platforms.*
- *Kenya Information and Communications Act (KICA) and Amendments: Governs the telecommunications sector and has been amended to address cybercrime and misuse of the internet.*
- *Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act, 2018: - Criminalises various online activities, including the publication of false information and offensive communication. It can be relevant to regulating harmful content during social media e-participation.*
- *National Cohesion and Integration Act, 2008: Penalises hate speech, which is a significant concern in online public discourse. The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) has worked with the Communications Authority (CA) on guidelines to combat online abuse.*

- *Data Protection Act, 2019: Aims to safeguard personal data, which is crucial in the context of online interactions and potential data collection during social media e-participation.*
- *Proposed Kenya Information and Communication (Amendment) Bill, 2019 (The "Social Media Bill"): This Bill proposed more stringent regulations on social media use, including licensing for social media bloggers (the fifth estate), but its current status and potential impact are still subjects of discussion.*
- *Media Council of Kenya Act, 2013: While primarily focused on traditional media, its ethical guidelines extend to journalists' online activities and the verification of online information.*

The key institutions involved in regulating social media e-participation include:

- *The Communications Authority (CA): The regulatory authority for the communications sector, including telecommunications, cybersecurity, and multimedia. They are involved in developing guidelines and enforcing regulations related to online content.*
- *The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC): Works to reduce inter-ethnic conflict and has a mandate to address hate speech, including on online forms.*
- *The Judiciary: Plays a role in interpreting and applying relevant laws in cases related to online conduct.*
- *The Ministry of ICT and the Digital Economy: Oversees the development and implementation of digital strategies and policies.*
- *Office of the Data Protection Commissioner: Responsible for enforcing the Data Protection Act, relevant to the collection and use of personal data during social media e-participation.*

While these laws and institutions provide a foundation, their effectiveness in ensuring the positive impact of social media e-participation is limited by several factors:

- *Fragmented and Disjointed Approach: Multiple laws address different aspects of online content, but a comprehensive framework specifically for regulating social media e-participation is still lacking.*

- *Enforcement Challenges: The borderless nature of the internet and the sheer volume of social media content make enforcement of existing laws difficult. Identifying and prosecuting offenders can be complex and resource intensive.*
- *Balancing Freedom of Expression and Regulation: Striking a balance between regulating harmful content and upholding constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression is a delicate and ongoing challenge. Overly broad regulations could stifle legitimate public discourse.*
- *Digital Divide and Inclusivity: A significant portion of the Kenyan population still lacks reliable internet access and digital literacy, hindering their ability to participate effectively through social media. Relying heavily on online platforms can exacerbate existing inequalities.*
- *Misinformation and Disinformation: The rapid spread of false information on social media can undermine trust in government initiatives and distort public discourse during e-participation. Current laws and institutions struggle to effectively combat this.*
- *Lack of Specific Guidelines for E-Participation: While public participation is enshrined in law, there are no specific regulations or guidelines on how social media should be used by government institutions to facilitate meaningful and inclusive e-participation.*
- *Capacity and Resources: Institutions may lack the technical expertise and resources needed to effectively monitor social media, engage with citizens, and analyse online feedback for policy decisions.*
- *Platform Accountability: The role and responsibility of social media platforms themselves in moderating content and ensuring a positive environment for e-participation are not clearly defined or enforced.*
- *Evolving Nature of Technology: Social media platforms and online communication methods are constantly evolving, making it challenging for laws and regulations to keep pace.*

Proposals to improve the situation that Kenya may need to consider:

- *Developing more specific legislation or guidelines for social media use in public participation.*

- *Strengthening the capacity of relevant institutions to monitor and engage on social media effectively.*
- *Investing in digital literacy programs to bridge the digital divide.*
- *Developing strategies to combat misinformation and promote media literacy.*
- *Fostering collaboration between government, social media platforms, civil society, and citizens to create a more positive and productive online environment for civic engagement.*
- *Ensuring that any regulatory measures are carefully balanced with the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms.*

To strengthen social media governance for positive e-participation, a multi-pronged approach involving policy reforms and institutional measures may be necessary. Some key policy areas to consider include:

- *Comprehensive Legal Framework: Develop specific legislation that addresses social media's role in governance, going beyond general cybercrime or communication laws. This framework should:*
 - *Define E-Participation Guidelines: Outline clear rules and standards for how government institutions should utilize social media for public engagement, including accessibility, responsiveness, and data handling.*
 - *Balance Freedom of Expression with Responsibility: Establish clear boundaries for acceptable online conduct during e-participation, addressing hate speech, incitement to violence, and disinformation without unduly infringing on freedom of expression.*
 - *Ensure Platform Accountability: Explore mechanisms to hold social media platforms accountable for fostering a healthy environment for civic discourse, including content moderation and transparency in algorithms.*
 - *Data Protection in E-Participation: Strengthen data protection laws and guidelines specifically for data collected during online public consultations and engagement processes.*

- *Promote Digital Inclusion: Enact policies that aim to bridge the digital divide by promoting affordable internet access, digital literacy programs, and accessible technology for all citizens.*
- *Clear Government Social Media Policies: Mandate that all government institutions develop and publicly share clear social media policies that outline:*
 - *Purpose of Engagement: Clearly state the objectives of using social media for specific initiatives.*
 - *Engagement Guidelines: Define how the institution will interact with the public.*
 - *Transparency Standards: Specify how institutions will ensure transparency in their online interactions and the use of public feedback.*
 - *Media and Information Literacy Policies: Implement national policies and programs to enhance media and information literacy among citizens, empowering them to critically evaluate online content, identify misinformation, and engage responsibly in online discussions.*
 - *Policy on Countering Disinformation: Develop a national strategy to identify, track, and counter disinformation campaigns that target government institutions or public trust in governance processes. This should involve collaboration between government agencies, media organizations, and civil society.*
 - *Regular Review and Adaptation: Establish mechanisms for the regular review and adaptation of social media governance policies to keep pace with technological advancements and evolving online dynamics.*
 - *Establish Dedicated Social Media Governance Units: Create specialised units within government institutions or as independent bodies with the mandate to develop and oversee the implementation of social media strategies for public engagement.*

K.d Interview/Interviewee 4

1. How does your institution leverage social media affordances (e.g., interactivity, reach, immediacy) to engage the public in governance? What challenges do you encounter in maximising these features for meaningful public participation?

The institution uses social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram to actively engage the public online. It hosts real-time hackathons, conducts live audio discussions, and provides regular updates on its initiatives and core mandates. Issues that concern the common Mwananchi (ordinary citizen) are normally prioritised.

However, maintaining consistent engagement and cutting through information disruption remains a challenge. This is especially evident when it comes to translating online interactions into meaningful public participation.

2. How do socio-economic factors (e.g., digital literacy, internet access, resource availability) impact the public and your institution's use of social media for e-participation? What measures, if any, has your institution taken to address socio-economic barriers within state institutions and the public?

A digital divide still exists in our society, for example limited internet access, inadequate digital infrastructure, and low levels of digital literacy. These factors continue to constrain the effectiveness of public participation conducted by the institution on online platforms.

To address this, the institution is actively working to bridge the gap through digital awareness campaigns, the provision of digital devices—such as Digital Labs/Hubs, and the deployment of Cloud services to support startups. We are also collaborating with partners to enhance connectivity as part of the Digital Superhighway Programme.

3. What measures does your institution take to ensure public officials are equipped with both technical and strategic skills for managing social media in governance? Are there structured training programs, internal guidelines, or knowledge-sharing mechanisms in place to optimise social media use?

The institution has established internal guidelines and holds periodic training workshops for its staff. However, there is still room for improvement.

Developing a more structured and strategic training programme—with regular refresher sessions—would strengthen staff capacity to manage social media more effectively. It will enable them to be both strategic and responsive in their engagement efforts.

4. To what extent does your institution use social media data (e.g., sentiment analysis, public feedback) to inform policy decisions? What are the primary challenges—technical, legal, or ethical—that you encounter or anticipate in integrating social media data into policymaking?

The institution collects and analyses social media data across all platforms it uses such as Twitter. The analytical dashboards provided by the platforms help to support more informed decision-making based on emerging trends and public feedback.

While we monitor public sentiment and reactions, the systematic use of this data for policymaking is still evolving. Key challenges include data privacy concerns, limited access to advanced analytics tools, and the absence of clearly defined ethical guidelines.

5. How has social media influenced public mobilisation around government initiatives or policy discussions? What challenges does your institution encounter while mobilising citizens through social media?

In recent years, social media has played a key role in raising public awareness, facilitating participation in legislative processes, and supporting the implementation of government projects.

However, these efforts have faced growing challenges from online critics who spread misinformation, often aiming to dilute or counter official government messaging.

6. How does your institution use social media to promote democratic principles as outlined in the Constitution of Kenya (transparency, accountability, inclusive decision-making)? What risks (e.g. institutional reputational damage) does social media pose to democratic governance?

The institution uses social media to share updates and information with the public transparently across all stages of its work. It has invited public input during participation processes—particularly in relation to ICT bills. Moreover, the

institution has actively supported inclusivity by ensuring that information reaches all segments of the population.

Nonetheless, there remains a risk of misinterpretation, misinformation, and public backlash, which—if not managed proactively—can undermine our credibility.

7. What types of misinformation and disinformation have you observed targeting your institution or affiliated individuals on social media? How has this misinformation affected public trust in your institution and its ability to carry out its constitutional mandate? Have you identified any actors (citizens, political groups, foreign adversaries) deliberately spreading misinformation for strategic or political advantage?

The institution has encountered false claims labelling some of our projects as ‘white elephants’ or alleging that they have stalled. There has also been misinformation regarding the actual status of ongoing initiatives, and instances where the institution has been drawn into politically motivated narratives.

Such misinformation can erode public trust and slow down progress. Although we make efforts to counter it swiftly, identifying the individuals or groups deliberately spreading falsehoods remains a complex challenge.

8. What types of hate content (e.g., ethnic, political, gender-based) have you observed on social media aimed at your institution or individuals affiliated with it? How does hate content affect your ability to carry out your constitutional mandate? Have you identified any actors (citizens, state actors, foreign adversaries) who deliberately use hate content against state bodies for personal or political gain?

Although relatively minimal, hate speech—particularly when politically or ethnically charged—has occasionally targeted individuals or institutions. This creates a hostile digital environment, which can demoralise staff and disrupt ongoing initiatives.

Addressing this challenge requires coordinated efforts across institutions and the development of more effective reporting and response mechanisms.

9. Are there any other factors that influence your institution’s use of social media for e-participation that we have not covered?

Rapid technological advancements—such as algorithm changes on platforms like Twitter—and evolving patterns of digital conduct have continually influenced how public institutions engage on social media. For example, the social media powered uprising of Generation Z demonstrates the challenge faced by public institutions on social media.

10. Do current laws, regulations, and institutions in Kenya effectively regulate social media e-participation to ensure its positive impact? If not, what policy reforms or institutional measures would you propose to strengthen social media governance?

Current legislation—such as the Data Protection Act 2019 and the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act—addresses aspects of digital safety. However, these laws do not go far enough in guiding constructive e-participation.

There is a need for policy reforms that provide clearer guidance on misinformation, digital civility, and institutional accountability. Additionally, stronger collaboration between technology companies and government institutions is essential to promote a healthier digital public sphere.

K.e Interview/Interviewee 5

1. How does your institution leverage social media affordances (e.g., interactivity, reach, immediacy) to engage the public in governance? What challenges do you encounter in maximising these features for meaningful public participation?

The institution utilises social media platforms to enhance public engagement during policy formulation, planning, budgeting, and performance monitoring and evaluation. This facilitates inclusiveness, ownership, and consensus. By leveraging the interactivity of platforms like Twitter and Facebook, it engages in two-way communication, enabling citizens to provide feedback on policies, budgets, and other financial matters. The reach of social media allows the institution to disseminate information widely and quickly, including updates on public participation opportunities such as budget consultations and press releases.

However, a significant challenge remains: a large portion of the population—especially in rural areas—remains unreachable through social media due to limited access to devices and infrastructure. Additionally, the spread of misinformation often necessitates clarifications, which can create confusion among the public.

2. How do socio-economic factors (e.g., digital literacy, internet access, resource availability) impact the public and your institution's use of social media for e-participation? What measures, if any, has your institution taken to address socio-economic barriers within state institutions and the public?

Socio-economic challenges such as limited digital literacy and unequal internet access create barriers to meaningful engagement—particularly in rural and marginalised areas. The high cost of internet-enabled devices and data bundles further disadvantages marginalised users, especially in the context of a challenging cost of living.

These challenges are addressed through digital literacy programmes run by the competent authorities, efforts to improve internet infrastructure in underserved areas, and the combined use of traditional media and social platforms to enhance outreach. Offline feedback mechanisms are also provided to ensure inclusive public participation. Additionally, the Cabinet Secretary engages in public barazas across various regions of the country to strengthen direct citizen engagement.

3. What measures does your institution take to ensure public officials are equipped with both technical and strategic skills for managing social media in governance? Are there structured training programs, internal guidelines, or knowledge-sharing mechanisms in place to optimise social media use?

Staff are equipped with the necessary skills for managing social media in governance through structured training programmes. A yearly training needs assessment is conducted, focusing on both technical and strategic aspects of social media use. This ensures that officials can effectively engage with the public and disseminate information.

The Kenya School of Government provides both tailor-made and general training sessions related to governance and digital literacy. In addition, knowledge-sharing mechanisms—such as workshops and collaborative platforms—support continuous learning and adaptation to emerging trends in digital communication. The annual Performance Contract also includes components on knowledge management and staff sensitisation, enabling the transfer of expertise from experienced personnel.

4. To what extent does your institution use social media data (e.g., sentiment analysis, public feedback) to inform policy decisions? What are the primary challenges—technical, legal, or ethical—that you encounter or anticipate in integrating social media data into policymaking?

The institution frequently uses public feedback and sentiment analysis, especially during public participation processes for the annual budget, proposed bills, regulations, and policy development. This data helps gauge public opinion and identify pressing concerns.

However, several challenges arise when integrating this data into policymaking. Technical challenges include the lack of advanced tools and expertise to analyse large volumes of social media data. Legal challenges involve ensuring compliance with data protection regulations—such as Kenya’s Data Protection Act—when collecting and using social media data. Ethical challenges include navigating the impact of misinformation.

5. How has social media influenced public mobilisation around government initiatives or policy discussions? What challenges does your institution encounter while mobilising citizens through social media?

The institution uses platforms like Twitter and Facebook to share updates on financial policies, budget consultations, and public participation opportunities, enabling citizens to stay informed and involved.

However, challenges arise, including combating misinformation, ensuring inclusivity in the face of the digital divide, and addressing resource constraints that affect effective social media management.

6. How does your institution use social media to promote democratic principles as outlined in the Constitution of Kenya (transparency, accountability, inclusive decision-making)? What risks (e.g. institutional reputational damage) does social media pose to democratic governance?

Social media platforms enable real-time communication, allowing citizens to access information and provide feedback—instilling a sense of inclusion in governance processes.

However, these platforms also pose risks to democratic governance, including the potential for institutional reputational damage caused by misinformation, hate speech, or the mismanagement of online interactions—such as cyberbullying directed at staff.

7. What types of misinformation and disinformation have you observed targeting your institution or affiliated individuals on social media? How has this misinformation affected public trust in your institution and its ability to carry out its constitutional mandate? Have you identified any actors (citizens, political groups, foreign adversaries) deliberately spreading misinformation for strategic or political advantage?

The institution has faced numerous instances of misinformation and disinformation targeting our policies, financial decisions, and officials on social media. Common forms include misrepresentation of budgets or allocations, false claims of fund misappropriation, and distorted interpretations of financial policies. These narratives erode public trust, fostering scepticism about our transparency and our ability to fulfil our constitutional mandate.

In some cases, such campaigns appear to be coordinated by political groups or individuals seeking to advance specific agendas or discredit the ministry. The institution addresses these challenges through timely fact clarification, public awareness campaigns, and partnerships with fact-checking organisations to maintain credibility and uphold public trust.

8. What types of hate content (e.g., ethnic, political, gender-based) have you observed on social media aimed at your institution or individuals affiliated with it? How does hate content affect your ability to carry out your constitutional mandate? Have you identified any actors (citizens, state actors, foreign adversaries) who deliberately use hate content against state bodies for personal or political gain?

The institution encounters various forms of hate content on social media, including ethnic-based attacks and political propaganda targeting officials. Such content often seeks to undermine the institution's credibility and distract from its constitutional mandate. These attacks can erode public trust, complicate policy implementation, and create a hostile environment for public officials.

While some of this content appears to arise from individual frustrations, there are indications of coordinated efforts by political groups or other actors seeking to discredit the institution for strategic or political gain.

9. Are there any other factors that influence your institution's use of social media for e-participation that we have not covered?

Additional factors worth noting include cybersecurity concerns, as the risk of hacking or data breaches can deter open engagement. The creation of unofficial accounts can also lead to the dissemination of misleading information. Additionally, cultural attitudes toward digital platforms may influence how citizens perceive and interact with social media initiatives.

10. Do current laws, regulations, and institutions in Kenya effectively regulate social media e-participation to ensure its positive impact? If not, what policy reforms or institutional measures would you propose to strengthen social media governance?

Current laws and regulations—such as the Kenya Information and Communications Act and the Data Protection Act—provide a foundation for regulating social media. However, they struggle to address emerging challenges such as misinformation, hate speech, and data privacy in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Potential policy reforms could include enacting specific legislation targeting these issues, enhancing public officials' skills in social media governance, promoting digital literacy among citizens, and collaborating with social media platforms to strengthen content moderation.

L Structured Observation Notes

L.a Institution 1 – Large State Corporation

Table L.a.1: Institution 1 observation data (Part 1).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Social Media Platform Affordances	Socio-economic Factors	Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities
18.03.2025	X	The institution uses hashtags often in their posts	The institution mostly creates content in English.	The institution has high quality content
		The institution tags other relevant state institutions/actors in their posts		The institution's posts their original content multiple times per week
		The institution posts a lot of images on their content		The institution's content combines digital media
		The institution reposts a lot of relevant content		The institution creates content to mark key public events such as Christmas and

				Valentine's Day
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam or potentially harmful		The institution occasionally promotes itself in the comment section of Kenyan influencers (some may be potentially contentious)
		Changes to the filter settings (most relevant, most recent, most liked) still keeps some comments hidden		The institution creates helpful content on their product's multiple times a week
		Users are utilising likes and retweets to voice their opinions on the content posted by the institution		The institution incorporates urban slang into their posts to good effect
		The social media platform generally has aggressive content		The institution's account is not verified on X
		Users frequently use pseudonyms		The institution appears to have similar content

				on Facebook and X
				The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
				The queries in the institution's comment section appear to generally be answered privately. However, the institution sometimes answers in the comments section.
				The institution posts about important safety information to help the public stay prepared
				The institution issues press statements about information they deem as inaccurate that

				is circulating about them
				The institution has a humorous approach in fighting fake news
				The institution posts important public information such as open tenders
	Facebook	The institution cross posts their TikTok content here	The institution mostly creates content in English	The institution has high quality content but low engagement and followers
		The institution uses hashtags often in their posts		The institution seems to have had a previous account that it used before but did not delete. This old account though is not verified.
		The institution posts a lot of images on their content		The institution's posts their original content

				multiple times per week
		The institution has a verification badge		The queries in the institution's comment section appear to generally be answered privately. However, the institution sometimes answers in the comments section.
		Users are utilising reactions to voice their opinions on the institution's content		The institution's content combines digital media
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam.		The institution creates content to mark key public events such as Christmas and Valentine's Day
		The algorithm hides some comments regardless of the filter settings (most relevant,		The institution's content creation playbook is diverse and

		newest, all comments)		uses various engagement tools such as riddles
		The social media platform generally has less aggressive content		The institution appears to have similar content on Facebook and X
				The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
				The institution issues press statements about information they deem as inaccurate that is circulating about them
				The institution flags fake profiles and their content
				The institution takes public feedback on how to improve the fight against

				misleading content
				The institution posts important public information such as open tenders
				The institution appears to take the constructive criticism seriously
25.03.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
03.04.2025	X			The institution has highlighted a big achievement they had made
	Facebook			The institution has highlighted a big achievement they had made
10.04.2025	X			The institution has highlighted positive news coverage about their achievements

	Facebook			The institution has highlighted positive news coverage about their achievements
16.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			

Table L.a.2: Institution 1 observation data (Part 2).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Citizen Mobilisation	Data-Driven Policymaking	Democratic Principles
18.03.2025	X	The institution reposts accounts that talks positively about them	The institution sometimes seeks public opinions through online voting to help improve their products	Some people seem to be unhappy about their governance approaches.
		The institution posts about their social initiatives quite often	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	
		The institution posts alongside other government institutions in their social initiatives	The user anonymity might make it difficult to differentiate evidence and none-evidence for data-driven policymaking	
		The institution assists other	It is unclear whether the	

		government agencies to amplify important messages such as road safety	comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for data-driven policymaking	
		They generally have a mixture of positive and negative reactions in their posts. However, the reactions generally tend to tilt to the positive side.		
		The institution promotes their offline events on social media		
		The institution cross posts their TikTok content here		
		The institution appears to generally receive positive support but faces criticism		

		from time to time		
		The institution has low engagement and a moderately low number of followers		
	Facebook	The institution promotes their offline events on social media	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	Some people seem to be unhappy about their governance approaches
		The institution cross posts their TikTok content here	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for data-driven policymaking	Someone people seem to be concerned about the cooperate governance directions of the organisations
		The institution posts about their social initiatives quite often		Some people provide constructive criticism in a bid to help the

				institution get better results
		The institution assists other government agencies to amplify important messages such as road safety		
		The institution posts messages of encouragement to others such as student sitting exams		
		People appear to like the quality of their products in the comments		
		The institution appears to generally receive positive support but faces criticism from time to time		
		The institution's content is being shared		

		more often on Facebook		
		The institution has a much larger following on Facebook compared to X		
		The institution has low engagement and a moderately high number of followers		
25.03.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
03.04.2025	X	The engagement metrics on the post of the institution's achievements was low but positive		
	Facebook	The engagement metrics on the post of the institution's achievements was low but positive		

10.04.2025	X	The engagement metrics on the post of the institution's achievements was low but positive		
	Facebook	The engagement metrics on the post of the institution's achievements was low but positive		
16.04.2025	X	The institution's engagement levels on X are almost non-existent		
	Facebook	The institution's engagement levels continue to be higher on Facebook, and they are generally positive		

Table L.a.3: Institution 1 observation data (Part 3).

Date	Platform	Inhibitors		
		Misinformation and Disinformation	Hate Content/Activities	Security
18.03.2025	X	There are fake accounts with almost matching names that appear when searching for the organisation	Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
	Facebook		Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong.	
25.03.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
03.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			

L.b Institution 2 – Small State Corporation

Table L.b.1: Institution 2 observation data (Part 1).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Social Media Platform Affordances	Socio-economic Factors	Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities
25.03.2025	X	The institution tags other relevant state institutions/actors in their posts	The institution mostly creates content in English.	The institution posts very few times
		The institution posts a lot of images on their content		The institution has high quality content
		The institution reposts a lot of relevant content		There are some comments on the institution's posts seeking their assistance. It is unknown if the commenters were answered via private messaging.
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication

		comments as spam or potentially harmful		
		Changes to the filter settings (most relevant, most recent, most liked) still keeps some comments hidden		The institution reposts positive news coverage about themselves
		Users are utilising likes and retweets to voice their opinions on the content posted by the institution		The institution's account is not verified on X
		Users frequently use pseudonyms		
	Facebook	The institution posts a lot of images on their content	The institution mostly creates content in English	The institution has high quality content
		Users are utilising reactions to voice their opinions on the institution's content		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
				The institution posts very few

				times (6 posts in total)
				The institution posts news coverage of their activities
				They don't have a verification badge
03.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X			The institution has posted a news article which appears to be linked to a governance objective they want to achieve
	Facebook	No notable changes		
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			

Table L.b.2: Institution 2 observation data (Part 2).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Citizen Mobilisation	Data-Driven Policymaking	Democratic Principles
		The institution assists other government agencies to amplify important messages	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	
		The institution's engagement levels on X are almost non-existent	The user anonymity might make it difficult to differentiate evidence and none-evidence for data-driven policymaking	
		The institution has much more followers on X compared to Facebook	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for data-driven policymaking	

		The institution has low engagement and few followers		
	Facebook	The institution has low engagement and few followers	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	
03.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X	The institution's post on the governance issue covered by the news media has received very low but positive engagement		
	Facebook	No notable changes		
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			

Table L.b.3: Institution 2 observation data (Part 3).

Date	Platform	Inhibitors		
		Misinformation and Disinformation	Hate Content/Activities	Security
25.03.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook	The institution appears to have put the wrong contact information as pointed out by a commenter		
03.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			

L.c Institution 3 – National Executive

Table L.c.1: Institution 3 observation data (Part 1).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Social Media Platform Affordances	Socio-economic Factors	Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities
25.03.2025	X	The institution has a verification badge for government organisations	The institution mostly creates content in English	There are some comments on the institution's posts seeking their assistance. It is unknown if the commenters were answered via private messaging.
		The institution posts a lot of images and live streams	Some commenters seem to prefer using Swahili	The institution posts very regularly, even throughout a single day
		The institution tags other relevant state institutions/actors in their posts		The institution's posts focus on large scale announcements
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those		The institution has high quality original content

		comments as spam or potentially harmful		
		Users frequently use pseudonyms		The institution's content combines digital media
		Changes to the filter settings (most relevant, most recent, most liked) still keeps some comments hidden		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
		Users are utilising likes and retweets to voice their opinions on the content posted by the institution		The institution highlights its positive achievements
				The institution highlights the steps it has taken to respond to the public's demands
				The institution posts key information on public policy

				decisions and initiatives
				Some people have pointed out areas of improvement they would like to see. It is unclear whether their comments have been officially received.
				The institution honours significant state actors
	Facebook	The institution has a verification badge	The institution mostly creates content in English	The institution posts very regularly, even throughout a single day
		The institution posts a lot of images and live streams	Some commenters seem to prefer using Swahili	There are some comments on the institution's posts seeking their assistance. It is unknown if the commenters were answered via private messaging.
		The algorithm hides some comments on the		The institution's posts focus on

		default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam.		large scale announcements
		The algorithm hides some comments regardless of the filter settings (most relevant, newest, all comments)		The institution's content combines digital media
		Users are utilising reactions to voice their opinions on the institution's content		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
		The social media platform generally has less aggressive content		The institution's content on Facebook mirrors their content on X
				The institution highlights the steps it has taken to respond to the public's demands
				Some people have pointed

				out areas of improvement they would like to see. It is unclear whether their comments have been officially received.
				The institution highlights its positive achievements
				The institution honours significant state actors
				The institution posts key information on public policy decisions and initiatives
03.04.2025	X	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam.		The state institution posted a protest letter on what it has termed as false and malicious reporting by a news organisation in Kenya.
	Facebook		Some of the commenters	The state institution

			feel that the use of the English language makes it difficult for them to understand the content	posted a protest letter on what it has termed as false and malicious reporting by a news organisation in Kenya
10.04.2025	X	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam.		
	Facebook	No notable changes		
16.04.2025	X	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam.		
	Facebook	No notable changes		

Table L.c.2: Institution 3 observation data (Part 2).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Citizen Mobilisation	Data-Driven Policymaking	Democratic Principles
25.03.2025	X	The institution's public support tends to veer across the spectrum from high levels of support to high levels of discontent as well as some periods of mixed reactions	The user anonymity might make it difficult to differentiate evidence and none-evidence for data-driven policymaking	The public's outlook of the governance of the state institution shifts very widely depending on the current issues
		Some users utilise the comment section to promote their own initiatives	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for data-driven policymaking	The public are utilising memes (some AI generated) to portray their opinions on the state of governance in the institution
		Some users are tagging other accounts that are posting views about the state institution that		The people are using the comment section to draw attention to matters they find important

		align with them		and urgent for the state institution
		The state institution has moderately high engagement levels and a very high number of followers		Users are utilising Grok AI in the comments of the state institution's posts to fact check, summarise posts, and gather additional contextual information
		The public are using imagery (some AI generated) to mobilise support for or against the institution		Users seem to be directly tagging the accounts of state officers they want to address
		The public are using hashtags to mobilise support for or against the state institution		
	Facebook	The institution's public support tends to veer	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can	The public are utilising memes (some AI generated) to

		across the spectrum from high levels of support to high levels of discontent as well as some periods of mixed reactions	be accessed and filtered to be used for data-driven policymaking.	portray their opinions on the state of governance in the institution
		Some users utilise the comment section to promote their own initiatives		The public's outlook of the governance of the state institution shifts very widely depending on the current issues
		The institution has moderately high engagement and a high number of followers		
		The public are using imagery (some AI generated) to mobilise support for or against the institution		
03.04.2025	X	There are a lot of critical		People are coopting Grok

		remarks aimed at the state institution		as part of their critique on the state institution and its members
		People are using media content from other sources to criticise the state institution		Perplexity and Grok are increasingly being relied upon by citizens to fact check official press releases
		Some people are promoting the views of other state actors to criticise the state institution		
	Facebook	There is a split among the people in the comments about whether they support or do not support the state institution		The commentors have a split opinion on whether they support or do not support the governance decisions
10.04.2025	X	The support towards the state institution is		A contentious debate about a certain publicised occurrence is being put at the

		mostly negative		forefront of the comments in the posts
	Facebook	The support towards the state institution is mostly negative		A contentious debate about a certain publicised occurrence is being put at the forefront of the comments in the posts
16.04.2025	X	The support towards the state institution is mostly negative		Some users seem to think the state is not being transparent
				Grok is increasingly being used to counter narratives from the state by commenters
				Some people are not pleased with the manner the state institution is operating
	Facebook	The support towards the state institution is		Some users seem to think the state is not

		mostly negative		being transparent
				Some people are not pleased with the manner the state institution is operating
				Some people are using newspaper headlines that appear to be legitimate as a counternarrative to the state institution

Table L.c.3: Institution 3 observation data (Part 3).

Date	Platform	Inhibitors		
		Misinformation and Disinformation	Hate Content/Activities	Security
25.03.2025	X	Some people are posting manipulated media on the state institutions officers	Some users seem to be trolling the state institution	
		Some information from that appear to be from news organisations critical of the state institution are posted in the comments. It is unclear if these news organisations are credible or if information posted is legitimate.	Some users are utilising crude AI generated images to poke fun at the state institution	
		Some users are promoting various initiatives in the comments. It is unclear though about the		

		authenticity of these initiatives.		
	Facebook	Some information from that appear to be from news organisations critical of the state institution are posted in the comments. It is unclear if these news organisations are credible or if information posted is legitimate.	Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
		Some users are promoting various initiatives in the comments. It is unclear though about the authenticity of these initiatives.		
03.04.2025	X	Some people are posting testimonials in the comments about certain accounts which they claim provide financial advice,	A particular user is repeatedly commenting very derogatory remarks about a member of the institution on multiple comment sections	Some users are calling for violence against members of the state institution

		but the authenticity cannot be asserted		
		It is unclear whether the information contained in the media content used to criticise the state institution is factual	Some users are posting extremely derogatory imagery in the comments that veers into discrimination	Some people are using AI generated images that imply that they are wishing for harm against members of the state institution
		A particular TikTok video is being reposted in every comment section. It cannot be asserted whether the information it contains is factual. The language in the video is not one of the official languages of Kenya.		The public used the social media platform to seek to mobilise an invasion of the state institution's facilities
		Some citizens are posting official letters that purport to be from		Some members of the state institution have had

		legitimate sources as a rebuttal to the messaging of the state institution. It is unclear whether these letters are factual.		their private information leaked
	Facebook	Some users are promoting financial schemes in the comments sections. These financial schemes might not be truthful.		The tone in the criticism of the state institutions in some of the comments appears to be threatening
		Some people are making allegations in the comments about the state institution that cannot be substantiated		The public used the social media platform to seek to mobilise an invasion of the state institution's facilities
10.04.2025	X		The same account that posts highly negative comments is still reposting the same derogatory message	The message from that user's account ends with a call for violence against members of

				the state institution
	Facebook	No notable changes		
16.04.2025	X	Some people seem to be creating counter narratives against the state without evidence	The language used in the criticism of the state institution is very strong	Some people are branding members of the state officers as enemies of the nation
		Some people are making accusations of criminality in the state institution without evidence	Derogatory memes are being used to strongly criticise the members of the state institution	Some people are calling for violence against members of the state institution
		Unrelated news is posted in the comments, but the credibility of the content is questionable		
		Unrelated posts linked to events in other state institutions are being posted in the comments though the credibility of the content is questionable		

	Facebook	Some people seem to be creating counter narratives against the state without evidence	The language used in the criticism of the state institution is very strong	Some people are wishing for harm to occur against members of the state institution
		Some people are making various accusations against state officers without evidence	Derogatory memes are being used to strongly criticise the members of the state institution	

L.d Institution 4 – Rural County Executive

Table L.d.1: Institution 4 observation data (Part 1).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Social Media Platform Affordances	Socio-economic Factors	Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities
25.03.2025	X	The institution posts a lot of images on their content	The institution mostly creates content in English	The institution doesn't post a lot of original content. It mostly relies on reposting other affiliated accounts.
		The institution reposts a lot of relevant content		Some people seem to be unhappy with the quality of some of their posts
		Users frequently use pseudonyms		There are some comments on the institution's posts seeking their assistance. It is unknown if the commenters were answered via private messaging. Some of the comments

				though have been answered in the replies.
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam or potentially harmful		When people communicate in Swahili they reply in English
		Changes to the filter settings (most relevant, most recent, most liked) still keeps some comments hidden		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
		Users are utilising likes and retweets to voice their opinions on the content posted by the institution		The institution's posts are generally well thought out
				The institutions

				post their achievements
				The institution doesn't post very often
				The institution honours significant state actors
				The institution doesn't have a verification badge
	Facebook	The institution posts a lot of images on their content	The institution mostly creates content in English	The institution's content combines digital media
		Users are utilising reactions to voice their opinions on the institution's content		The institution doesn't post very often
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication

		comments as spam.		
		The algorithm hides some comments regardless of the filter settings (most relevant, newest, all comments)		The institution posts more original content on Facebook
		Generally, has more content moderation		The institution's posts are generally well thought out
				The institutions post their achievements
				Some people have given feedback on areas they want to see improvement. It is unknown if those views were considered.
				The institution doesn't have a verification badge

03.04.2025	X	No notable changes
	Facebook	
10.04.2025	X	
	Facebook	
16.04.2025	X	
	Facebook	

Table L.d.2: Institution 4 observation data (Part 2).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Citizen Mobilisation	Data-Driven Policymaking	Democratic Principles
25.03.2025	X	The institution's public support tends to veer across the spectrum from high levels of support to high levels of discontent as well as some periods of mixed reactions	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	The public's outlook of the governance of the state institution shifts very widely depending on the current issues
		The institution has low engagement and followers	The user anonymity might make it difficult to differentiate evidence and none-evidence for data-driven policymaking	
		The institution assists other government agencies to amplify important messages	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for	

			data-driven policymaking	
	Facebook	The institution's public support tends to veer across the spectrum from high levels of support to high levels of discontent as well as some periods of mixed reactions	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	The public's outlook of the governance of the state institution shifts very widely depending on the current issues
		The institution has low engagement and a moderately low number of followers	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for data-driven policymaking	
03.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			

Table L.d.3: Institution 4 observation data (Part 3).

Date	Platform	Inhibitors		
		Misinformation and Disinformation	Hate Content/Activities	Security
25.03.2025	X		Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
	Facebook	No notable changes		
03.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			

L.e Institution 5 – Rural County Legislature

Table L.e.1: Institution 5 observation data (Part 1).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Social Media Platform Affordances	Socio-economic Factors	Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities
25.03.2025	X	The institution posts a lot of images on their content	The institution mostly creates content in English	The institution doesn't post often
		The institution uses hashtags in their posts		The institution post about key events such as women's day
		The institution tags other relevant state institutions/actors in their posts		There are some comments on the institution's posts seeking their assistance. It is unknown if the commenters were answered via private messaging.
		Users frequently use pseudonyms		The institution honours their past members and other significant state actors

		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam or potentially harmful		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
		Changes to the filter settings (most relevant, most recent, most liked) still keeps some comments hidden		The institution doesn't have a verification badge
		Users are utilising likes and retweets to voice their opinions on the content posted by the institution		They post information about constitutional processes that needs the public's input
				The institutions post their achievements
	Facebook	The institution posts a lot of images on their content	The institution mostly creates content in English	The institution honours their past members and other significant state actors

		The institution live streams some of their sessions		The institution's posting patterns vary. Sometimes they post consistently and sometimes they can go some days without posting.
		The institution has used the calendar feature to set up some events		The institutions post their achievements
		Users are utilising reactions to voice their opinions on the institution's content		The institution posts about the life achievements of their members
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam.		There are some comments on the institution's posts seeking their assistance. It is unknown if the commenters were answered via private messaging. Some of the comments

				though have been answered in the replies.
		The algorithm hides some comments regardless of the filter settings (most relevant, newest, all comments)		The institution post about key events such as women's day
		Generally, has more content moderation		The institution's content combines digital media
				The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
				The institution doesn't have a verification badge
				The institution tags their followers and top fans in the comments
				They post more on Facebook

				Some citizens have given feedback on areas they want to see improvement. It is unknown if those views were considered.
				The institution posts about key public information such public participation forums
03.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			The institution is responding to people's questions in the comments
				It appears that a member of the institution has commented their concerns about the manner in which reforms are being

				<p>carried out. They alleged that other partner institutions are not playing their role in the implementation of the reforms. It is unclear if the comments have been officially logged.</p>
				<p>The institution has posted about participation forums taking place</p>
16.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			

Table L.e.2: Institution 5 observation data (Part 2).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Citizen Mobilisation	Data-Driven Policymaking	Democratic Principles
25.03.2025	X	The institution assists other government agencies to amplify important messages	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	The public's outlook of the governance of the state institution shifts very widely depending on the current issues
		The state institution's public support tends to veer across the spectrum from high levels of support to high levels of discontent as well as some periods of mixed reactions	The user anonymity might make it difficult to differentiate evidence and none-evidence for data-driven policymaking	
		The institution has low engagement and a low number of followers	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to	

			be used for data-driven policymaking	
Facebook		The public showed sympathy with a loss the institution had suffered among their ranks	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	The public's outlook of the governance of the state institution shifts very widely depending on the current issues
		The state institution's public support tends to veer across the spectrum from high levels of support to high levels of discontent as well as some periods of mixed reactions	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for data-driven policymaking	The institution has posted about key public policy issues but some of the public is sceptical about if they will follow through with meaningful action
		Some of the members of the institution seem to have avid fans but the messages of support seem generic		Some people believe that their input in public participation events is not utilised, so they wonder

				why it's taking place
		The institution assists other government agencies to amplify important messages		
03.04.2025	X			
	Facebook	The institution has a mixed level of support		Some people are requesting for live proceedings of legislative sessions
10.04.2025	X			
	Facebook	The institution has a mixed level of support		
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook	The institution has a mixed level of support		Some citizens seem to find the institution's actions to be disingenuous
		The institution posted media evidence of their public participation forums that they had mobilised citizens to through social media		

Table L.e.3: Institution 5 observation data (Part 3).

Date	Platform	Inhibitors		
		Misinformation and Disinformation	Hate Content/Activities	Security
25.03.2025	X		Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
	Facebook		Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
03.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			

L.f Institution 6 – Urban County Executive

Table L.f.1: Institution 6 observation data (Part 1).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Social Media Platform Affordances	Socio-economic Factors	Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities
25.03.2025	X	The institution posts a lot of images on their content	The institution mostly creates content in English	There are some comments on the institution's posts seeking their assistance. It is unknown if the commenters were answered via private messaging.
		The institution uses hashtags in their posts	Some people prefer to comment in Swahili	The institution doesn't post a lot of original content. It mostly relies on reposting other affiliated accounts.
		Users frequently use pseudonyms		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication

		The institution tags other relevant state institutions/actors in their posts		The institution doesn't have a verification badge
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam or potentially harmful		The institution posts about offline participation events for the public
		Changes to the filter settings (most relevant, most recent, most liked) still keeps some comments hidden		The institutions post their achievements
		Users are utilising likes and retweets to voice their opinions on the content posted by the institution		Some people have given feedback on areas they want to see improvement. It is unknown if those views were considered.
	Facebook	The institution posts a lot of	They write their posts in English which	The institution doesn't post a lot of original

		images on their content	might be challenging for some to understand	content. It mostly relies on reposting other affiliated accounts.
		Users are utilising reactions to voice their opinions on the institution's content	Some people prefer to comment in Swahili	The institution's content combines digital media
		The institution posts some videos		There are some comments on the institution's posts seeking their assistance. It is unknown if the commenters were answered via private messaging.
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam.		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
		The algorithm hides some comments regardless of the filter settings		The institution doesn't have a verification badge

		(most relevant, newest, all comments)		
		Generally, has more content moderation		The institutions post their achievements
				Some people have given feedback on areas they want to see improvement. It is unknown if those views were considered.
				The institution posts about offline participation events for the public
03.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option		
	Facebook			Some people had multiple serious inquires in the comments, but it is unclear if they were

				responded to privately
16.04.2025	X	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option		Some people raised concerns and had questions, but it is unclear if they were responded to privately
	Facebook			Some people raised concerns and had questions, but it is unclear if they were responded to privately

Table L.f.2: Institution 6 observation data (Part 2).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Citizen Mobilisation	Data-Driven Policymaking	Democratic Principles
25.03.2025	X	The institution assists other government agencies to amplify important messages	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	The public's outlook of the governance of the state institution shifts very widely depending on the current issues
		The state institution's public support tends to veer across the spectrum from high levels of support to high levels of discontent as well as some periods of mixed reactions	The user anonymity might make it difficult to differentiate evidence and none-evidence for data-driven policymaking	
		Some people are using the comment sections to drive traffic to	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to	

		other initiatives	be used for data-driven policymaking	
		They have low engagement but a moderately high number of followers		
	Facebook	The state institution's public support tends to veer across the spectrum from high levels of support to high levels of discontent as well as some periods of mixed reactions	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	The public's outlook of the governance of the state institution shifts very widely depending on the current issues
		Some people are using the comment sections to drive traffic to other initiatives	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for data-driven policymaking	
		The institution has low engagement		

		and a moderately low number of followers		
03.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X	There is a big split in the comment section among people regarding their support for a certain legislative initiative to reduce crime		People had a lot of different opinions about how a certain initiative should have been handled
	Facebook	No notable changes		
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			

Table L.f.3: Institution 6 observation data (Part 3).

Date	Platform	Inhibitors		
		Misinformation and Disinformation	Hate Content/Activities	Security
25.03.2025	X		Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
	Facebook		Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
03.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X	Some people are making serious allegations about criminal conduct of some members of the state institution	Very sharp language is being used to criticize a member of the state institution	
	Facebook	There was a fake profile with a sizable following that almost led to confusion		
16.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			

L.g Institution 7 – Urban County Legislature

Table L.g.1: Institution 7 observation data (Part 1).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Social Media Platform Affordances	Socio-economic Factors	Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities
25.03.2025	X	The institution posts a lot of images on their content	The institution mostly creates content in English	The institution doesn't post very often
		The institution posts some videos in their content	Some people prefer to comment in Swahili	The institution's content combines digital media
		Users frequently use pseudonyms		The institution has original posts of good quality
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam or potentially harmful		The institution links their social media pages on other platforms in their posts

		Changes to the filter settings (most relevant, most recent, most liked) still keeps some comments hidden		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
		Users are utilising likes and retweets to voice their opinions on the content posted by the institution		The institution post about other relevant public events such as Madaraka day
				The institution doesn't have a verification badge
				The institutions post their achievements
				The institution posts important information such as job vacancies in the institution
				Some people have provided feedback on changes they

				want to see. It's unclear if the feedback was officially logged.
				The institution posts about offline participation events for the public
	Facebook	The institution posts a lot of images on their content	The institution mostly creates content in English	The institution posts more frequently on Facebook
		Users are utilising reactions to voice their opinions on the institution's content	Some people prefer to comment in Swahili	Some people have posted questions in the comments. It is unclear if the comments were responded to privately.
		The institution has used the events feature		The institution post about other relevant public events such as Madaraka day
		The institution posts some videos		The institution has good quality original posts

		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam.		The institution's content combines digital media
		The algorithm hides some comments regardless of the filter settings (most relevant, newest, all comments)		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
				The institution doesn't have a verification badge
				The institution posts about offline participation events for the public
				The institution posts important information such as seeking the public's views on certain

				governance issues
				The institutions post their achievements
03.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			

Table L.g.2: Institution 7 observation data (Part 2).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Citizen Mobilisation	Data-Driven Policymaking	Democratic Principles
25.03.2025	X	The state institution's public support tends to veer across the spectrum from high levels of support to high levels of discontent as well as some periods of mixed reactions	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	The public's outlook of the governance of the state institution shifts very widely depending on the current issues
		The institution assists other government agencies to amplify important messages	The user anonymity might make it difficult to differentiate evidence and none-evidence for data-driven policymaking	
		The institution has low engagement and a low number of followers	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for	

			data-driven policymaking	
	Facebook	The state institution's public support tends to veer across the spectrum from high levels of support to high levels of discontent as well as some periods of mixed reactions	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	The public's outlook of the governance of the state institution shifts very widely depending on the current issues
		The institution has low engagement and a moderately low number of followers	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for data-driven policymaking	
03.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			

		getting mostly positive comments of support		
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Table L.g.3: Institution 7 observation data (Part 3).

Date	Platform	Inhibitors		
		Misinformation and Disinformation	Hate Content/Activities	Security
25.03.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook		Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
03.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			

L.h Institution 8 – Judiciary

Table L.h.1: Institution 8 observation data (Part 1).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Social Media Platform Affordances	Socio-economic Factors	Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities
25.03.2025	X	The institution posts a lot of images and videos on their content	The institution mostly creates content in English	The institution's content combines digital media
		The institution has a verification badge for governmental organisations		The institution has good quality original content
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam or potentially harmful		Some people have had questions in the comments, and the institution appears to provide help in the comments
		Changes to the filter settings (most relevant, most recent, most liked) still keeps		The institution posts very often. Sometimes

		some comments hidden		multiple times a day.
		Users are utilising likes and retweets to voice their opinions on the content posted by the institution		The institution posts about upcoming important events such as radio talk shows
		The institution uses hashtags		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
		Users frequently use pseudonyms		The institution posts about holidays
		The institution tags other relevant state institutions/actors in their posts		The institutions post their achievements
				The institution posts other important information such as judicial rulings
				Some people have provided constructive feedback. It is unknown whether the

				feedback was officially logged.
				The institution honoured their past member
				The institution posts similar content on Facebook and X
Facebook	The institution posts a lot of images and videos on their content	The institution mostly creates content in English		The institution has good quality original content
	The institution has used the events feature			The institution posts very often. Sometimes multiple times a day.
	Users are utilising reactions to voice their opinions on the institution's content			The institution posts about upcoming important events such as radio talk shows
	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option			The institution posts about holidays

		(most relevant). It defines those comments as spam.		
		The algorithm hides some comments regardless of the filter settings (most relevant, newest, all comments)		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
		Generally, has more content moderation		The institution posts similar content on Facebook and X
				Some people have provided constructive feedback. It is unknown whether the feedback was officially logged.
				They don't have a verification badge
				The institution honoured their past member

				The institution posts other important information such as judicial rulings
03.04.2025	X	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option		The institution has posted important information about branches within its jurisdiction
				Some people are unhappy with the skewed gender representation in the posts
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option		The comment section for the account a member of the state institution that was reposted has been locked. This may be a measure against harassment and intimidation.
				It appears that they keep a

				tradition of going on radio shows to educate the public about the institution. These radio shows are always advertised on their page.
				The institution advertises their in-person events
				A member of the institution published a press release on their take about an event that had occurred which touched on the institution
				The institution honoured their past member
	Facebook			It appears that they keep a tradition of going on radio shows to educate the public about the institution.

				These radio shows are always advertised on their page.
				The institution advertises their in-person events
				The institution honoured their past member
				A member of the institution published a press release on their take about an event that had occurred which touched on the institution
16.04.2025	X	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option.		It appears that the state institution is responsive to concerns raised in the comments.
	Facebook		People appreciate when content is made in	

			Swahili and respond in kind in the comments	
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Table L.h.2: Institution 8 observation data (Part 2).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Citizen Mobilisation	Data-Driven Policymaking	Democratic Principles
25.03.2025	X	The state institution generally receives a mixed level of public support with sometimes the support veering towards more of the extremes depending on the events taking place and the decisions they make	The user anonymity might make it difficult to differentiate evidence and none-evidence for data-driven policymaking	People's opinion on the governance of the institutions is generally mixed and it shifts depending on the decisions they make
		The institution assists other government agencies to amplify important messages	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for data-driven policymaking	Some people are using memes (some AI generated) to portray their views on the governance of the institution
		They have moderate engagement		

		levels and a high number of followers		
	Facebook	The state institution generally receives a mixed level of public support with sometimes the support veering towards more of the extremes depending on the events taking place and the decisions they make	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for data-driven policymaking	People's opinion on the governance of the institutions is generally mixed and it shifts depending on the decisions they make
		They have moderate engagement and a moderately high number of followers		
03.04.2025	X	Some people are displaying displeasure against state actors from other institutions		
	Facebook			

10.04.2025	X	People seem to be against the narrative being produced by the state institution		People are using Grok to factcheck the statements of the state institution
				People seem to be unhappy about the governance of the state institution
	Facebook	It appears some people are sympathetic with some of the state actors in the institution		People seem to be unhappy about the governance of the state institution
		People seem to be against the narrative being produced by the state institution		
16.04.2025	X	The institution has a lot of negative comments in their posts		People seem to be unhappy about the governance of the state institution
				Some people appear to still believe in the institution, but they would

				like to see changes
	Facebook	The institution has a lot of negative comments in their posts		People seem to be unhappy about the governance of the state institution

Table L.h.3: Institution 8 observation data (Part 3).

Date	Platform	Inhibitors		
		Misinformation and Disinformation	Hate Content/Activities	Security
25.03.2025	X	Some people are making certain claims about members of the institution without evidence	Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
		There is an account that is spamming comments about certain individuals being involved in alleged offences	Some of the comments are discriminatory	
	Facebook	Some people are making certain claims about members of the institution without evidence	Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
			Some of the comments are discriminatory	
03.04.2025	X	The account that is spamming comments about		Some of the comments accusing

		certain individuals being involved in alleged offences is still doing so relentlessly		others of criminal activities may endanger the accused individuals
				The nature of the strong criticism used against members of the institution could be taken as threatening
	Facebook	Someone is presenting serious allegations against a member of the institution. It is unclear whether these allegations are truthful.		The nature of the strong criticism used against members of the institution could be taken as threatening
10.04.2025	X	Some people are making accusatory claims about the integrity of certain members of the state institution without evidence	Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	The nature of the strong criticism used against members of the institution could be taken as threatening

		The account that is spamming comments about certain individuals being involved in alleged offences is still doing so relentlessly		Some of the comments accusing others of criminal activities may endanger the accused individuals
	Facebook	Some people are making accusatory claims about the integrity of certain members of the state institution without evidence	Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	The nature of the strong criticism used against members of the institution could be taken as threatening
16.04.2025	X	The account that is spamming comments about certain individuals being involved in alleged offences is still doing so relentlessly	Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	Some of the comments accusing others of criminal activities may endanger the accused individuals
	Facebook	No notable changes		

L.i Institution 9 – National Legislature

Table L.i.1: Institution 9 observation data (Part 1).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Social Media Platform Affordances	Socio-economic Factors	Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities
25.03.2025	X	The institution has a verification badge for governmental organisations	The institution mostly creates content in English	The institution's content combines digital media
		The institution posts a lot of images and videos on their content		The institution posts very regularly. Sometimes multiple times a day.
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam or potentially harmful		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
		Changes to the filter settings (most relevant, most recent, most liked) still keeps		The institution posts their inhouse newspaper to

		some comments hidden		highlight their work
		Users are utilising likes and retweets to voice their opinions on the content posted by the institution		The institution posts important information about the deliberations that are being made
		Users frequently use pseudonyms		The institution posts links to livestream sessions for the public to follow
		The institution tags other relevant state institutions/actors in their posts		Some people have provided constructive feedback. It is unknown whether the feedback was officially logged.
		The institution uses hashtags		The institution posts information about constitutional processes that needs the public's input
				The institution posts copies of the questions

				they ask to other state actors in the question period
				The institution posts sitting agendas, reports, and motions
	Facebook	They don't have a Facebook account		
03.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			

Table L.i.2: Institution 9 observation data (Part 2).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Citizen Mobilisation	Data-Driven Policymaking	Democratic Principles
25.03.2025	X	The state institution's public support tends to veer across the spectrum from high levels of support to high levels of discontent as well as some periods of mixed reactions	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	The public's outlook of the governance of the state institution shifts very widely depending on the current issues
		They have low engagement but a high number of followers	The user anonymity might make it difficult to differentiate evidence and none-evidence for data-driven policymaking	
			It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for	

			data-driven policymaking	
	Facebook	They don't have a Facebook account		
03.04.2025	X	No notable changes		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			

Table L.i.3: Institution 9 observation data (Part 3).

Date	Platform	Inhibitors		
		Misinformation and Disinformation	Hate Content/Activities	Security
25.03.2025	X	Some accounts in the comments are promoting initiatives that may be scams	Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
			Some of the comments are discriminatory	
	Facebook	There is an account that bears the name of the institution, but it does not look legitimate		
03.04.2025	X			The nature of the strong criticism used against members of the institution could be taken as threatening
	Facebook	No notable changes		
10.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			
16.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			

L.j Institution 10 – Constitutionally Independent Office

Table L.j.1: Institution 10 observation data (Part 1).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Social Media Platform Affordances	Socio-economic Factors	Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities
25.03.2025	X	The institution has a verification badge for governmental organisations	The institution mostly creates content in English	The institution has good quality original content
		The institution posts a lot of images on their content	Some people prefer to comment in Swahili	The institution posts almost daily
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam or potentially harmful		There are some comments on the institution's posts seeking their assistance. It is unknown if the commenters were answered via private messaging.
		Changes to the filter settings (most relevant, most recent, most liked)		The institution generally posts content related only to itself

		still keeps some comments hidden		
		Users are utilising likes and retweets to voice their opinions on the content posted by the institution		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
				The institution posts to make citizens aware of engagement activities
				The institution posts positive content about itself
				Some people have raised concerns that they want investigated. It is unclear if these issues were officially logged.
				Some people are unhappy that their private messages are

				going unanswered
				The institution posts similar content on Facebook and X
				The institution regularly posts important information for the public
	Facebook	The institution has a verification badge	The institution mostly creates content in English	The institution has good quality original content
		The institution posts a lot of images on their content	Some people prefer to comment in Swahili	The institution posts almost daily
		The institution has posted a lot of videos		There are some comments on the institution's posts seeking their assistance. It is unknown if the commenters were answered via private messaging.
		The institution has used the events feature		The institution generally posts

				content related only to itself
		There could be some malicious links in the comments		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
		Users are utilising reactions to voice their opinions on the institution's content		The content here mirrors the content on X
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam.		The institution posts to make citizens aware of engagement activities
		The algorithm hides some comments regardless of the filter settings (most relevant, newest, all comments)		The institution posts positive content about itself

		Generally, has more content moderation		The institution regularly posts important information for the public
03.04.2025	X	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option		
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option	Some people have requested for press releases to come in both official languages	The institution continues to provide important updates on key initiatives
				Some people are reporting non-compliance by other entities of the state institutions directives in the comments. It's unclear how true these allegations are and if the institution logged this comment to investigate.

	Facebook	No notable changes		
16.04.2025	X	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option		
	Facebook	No notable changes		

Table L.j.2: Institution 10 observation data (Part 2).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Citizen Mobilisation	Data-Driven Policymaking	Democratic Principles
25.03.2025	X	Some people are posting memes to poke fun at the institution's approach to praising itself approach	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	People's opinion on the governance of the institutions is generally mixed and it shifts depending on the decisions they make
		The state institution generally receives a mixed level of public support with sometimes the support veering towards more of the positive or negative side.	The user anonymity might make it difficult to differentiate evidence and none-evidence for data-driven policymaking	
		Some people are using the comment section to self-advertise their initiatives	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to	

			be used for data-driven policymaking	
		The institution assists other government agencies to amplify important messages		
		They have low engagement but a high number of followers		
	Facebook	Some commentors seem to be educating each other in the comments section	The institution's low engagement metrics may limit their ability to utilise data analytics techniques	People's opinion on the governance of the institutions is generally mixed and it shifts depending on the decisions they make
		Some commentors seem to be trolling each other	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for data-driven policymaking	

		The state institution generally receives a mixed level of public support with sometimes the support veering towards more of the positive or negative side.		
		They have low engagement and a moderately high number of followers		
03.04.2025	X			
	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X			Some people feel that the state institution needs to do more to ensure compliance with its directives.
	Facebook			Some people are not happy with the decisions of the state institution.

16.04.2025	X	The state institution is facing hostility in its posts		The citizens seem to be unhappy with the moves made by the state institution
				People are using Grok to summarise the posts made by the state institution
	Facebook	The state institution is facing hostility in its posts		Some people seem to be unhappy with the moves made by the state institution

Table L.j.3: Institution 10 observation data (Part 3).

Date	Platform	Inhibitors		
		Misinformation and Disinformation	Hate Content/Activities	Security
25.03.2025	X	Some people are making certain allegations about criminal offences that may have been committed by others	Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
		Some commentors seem to ask others to summarise information in the posts for them		
		Some commentors are promoting certain investments that may not be safe		
	Facebook	Some people are making certain allegations about criminal offences that may have been	Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	

		committed by others		
		There is a commentor who is making repeated comments that may be inaccurate		
		Some people are making certain allegations about criminal offences that may have been committed by others	Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
03.04.2025	X			The nature of the strong criticism used against members of the institution could be taken as threatening
	Facebook			The nature of the strong criticism used against members of the institution could be taken as threatening

10.04.2025	X		Some people are using the comments to attack other state actors from other institutions.	The nature of the strong criticism used against members of the institution could be taken as threatening
	Facebook	Someone has written a very strange comment that appears to allege a coup attempt		
16.04.2025	X	Some people are making unfounded allegations about the state institution		
	Facebook	Some people are making unfounded allegations about the state institution		

L.k Institution 11 – National Security Organ

Table L.k.1: Institution 11 observation data (Part 1).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Social Media Platform Affordances	Socio-economic Factors	Competence and Strategies of Public Authorities
25.03.2025	X	The institution has a verification badge for governmental organisations	The institution mostly creates content in English	They have high quality original content
		The institution posts a lot of images on their content	Some people prefer to comment in Swahili	They post almost every day. Sometimes multiple times a day.
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam or potentially harmful		The institution celebrates the achievements of their staff

		Changes to the filter settings (most relevant, most recent, most liked) still keeps some comments hidden		The institution honours their past members
		Users are utilising likes and retweets to voice their opinions on the content posted by the institution		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
		Graphic imagery is being used in the comments by some people in the comments		Some people are asking for assistance in the comment section. It is unclear if they were given assistance via private message.
				The institution reposts important information from other affiliated accounts
				The institution seems to take

				measures against harmful acts pictured on social media that are brought to their attention
				Some people have provided their ideas for improvement. It is unclear if these ideas have been officially logged.
				The institution posts similar content on Facebook and X
				The institution posts press releases of important information
	Facebook	The institution has a verification badge	The institution mostly creates content in English	They have high quality original content
		Users are utilising reactions to voice their	Some people prefer to	Some people are asking for assistance in the comment

		opinions on the institution's content	comment in Swahili	section. It is unclear if they were given assistance via private message.
		The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option (most relevant). It defines those comments as spam.		The institution celebrates the achievements of their staff
		The algorithm hides some comments regardless of the filter settings (most relevant, newest, all comments)		The institution honours their past members
		The institution posts a lot of images on their content		The institution mostly uses the platform for one way communication
		The institution posts a lot of videos		The content here mirrors the content on X

				The institution posts press releases of important information
				Some people have provided their ideas for improvement. It is unclear if these ideas have been officially logged.
				The institution seems to take measures against harmful acts pictured on social media that are brought to their attention
		Generally, has more content moderation		The institution reposts important information from other affiliated accounts
03.04.2025	X	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option		

	Facebook			
10.04.2025	X			The state institution released a press statement refuting claims that they were engaged in illegal activities as reported by some on social media and mainstream media
	Facebook	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option		The state institution released a press statement refuting claims that they were engaged in illegal activities as reported by some on social media and mainstream media
16.04.2025	X	The algorithm hides some comments on the default comment filter option		The state institution has flagged a false recruitment advertisement purporting to be from them
		Graphic imagery is being used in the comments by some people in the comments		

	Facebook			The state institution has flagged a false recruitment advertisement purporting to be from them
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Table L.k.2: Institution 11 observation data (Part 2).

Date	Platform	Enablers		
		Citizen Mobilisation	Data-Driven Policymaking	Democratic Principles
25.03.2025	X	Some people are using memes to rally against the state institution	The user anonymity might make it difficult to differentiate evidence and none-evidence for data-driven policymaking	The institution generally faces negative perceptions about their governance from the public
		Some people are showing support to the institution's members	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for data-driven policymaking	The public is using the comments to report probable offenders
		The state institution predominantly faces negative comments, but they sometimes get mixed reactions and positive comments		Some people seem to disagree with the narratives they provide

		They have moderate engagement and a high number of followers		
	Facebook	Some people are showing support to the institution's members	It is unclear whether the comments hidden by the algorithm can be accessed and filtered to be used for data-driven policymaking	The institution generally faces negative perceptions about their governance from the public
		The state institution predominantly faces negative comments, but they sometimes get mixed reactions and positive comments		The public is using the comments to report probable offenders
		They have moderate engagement and a high number of followers		Some people seem to disagree with the narratives they provide
03.04.2025	X	One of the officers of the state institution		Some people do not seem to have faith in

		is under sharp criticism		the state institution's independence
		Some people are displaying displeasure against state actors from other institutions		People wish for the identities of offenders to be made public
	Facebook	Some citizens seem to appreciate the efforts of the state institutions recent operations		People wish for the identities of offenders to be made public
		One of the officers of the state institution is under sharp criticism		Some people do not seem to have faith in the state institution's independence
10.04.2025	X	The state institution is facing a lot of pushbacks over their press statement saying they are being wrongfully accused of an illegal activity		People do not seem to believe the narrative of the state institution in the press statement

		The state institution is facing a lot of criticism in the comments		People are using Grok to summarise posts by the institution
		Some people seem to be in support of certain criminal activities being fought against by the institution		People are not pleased with the operations of the state institution
				Some people seem to be unhappy about the stoppage of some criminal activities
	Facebook	The state institution is facing a lot of pushbacks over their press statement saying they are being wrongfully accused of an illegal activity		People do not seem to believe the narrative of the state institution in the press statement
		People seem to support some initiatives of the state institution to		People are not pleased with the operations

		help prevent the loss of lives		of the state institution
		Some people seem to be in support of certain criminal activities that the institution is fighting against		Some people are providing assistance to the state institution in carrying out their mandate
				Some people seem to be unhappy about the stoppage of some criminal activities
16.04.2025	X	The state institution is facing negative reactions in the comments		People seem to be unhappy with the operations of the state institution
		People are using memes to show their disapproval of the institution		
	Facebook	Comments here appear to be a bit more supportive of		People seem to be unhappy with the operations of

		the state institution		the state institution
		The state institution is facing negative reactions in the comments		

Table L.k.3: Institution 11 observation data (Part 3).

Date	Platform	Inhibitors		
		Misinformation and Disinformation	Hate Content/Activities	Security
25.03.2025	X	Some people are making some serious allegations about others in the comments	There are graphic images of some of the members of the state institution in some of the comments	
		One of their press releases has been community noted using counter narratives from other X accounts	Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
	Facebook	Some people are making some serious allegations about others in the comments	Some of the language used in the comments that are critical of the institution is strong	
			Some citizens are making very insensitive comments	
03.04.2025	X	Another press release was community noted using a	The sharpness of the critical language used against the state	The nature of the strong criticism used could be

		counter narrative from a news agency	institution has ramped up	taken as threatening
				Some people are calling for violence against members of the institution
				Some members of the state institution have had their private information leaked
	Facebook		The sharpness of the critical language used against the state institution has ramped up	The nature of the strong criticism used against members of the institution could be taken as threatening
				Some people are calling for violence against members of the institution
10.04.2025	X	Some citizens are making allegations	Some citizens are resorting to sharp language in their	The nature of the strong criticism

		against state officers from other institutions	criticism of the state institution	used against members of the institution could be taken as threatening
			Some citizens are using AI to generate unflattering images of state officers from other institutions	Some people are calling for violence against members of the institution
		Facebook	No notable changes	
16.04.2025	X	Someone who was making allegations about individuals in the comments of another state institution is doing the same here	Some people are using unflattering memes/images to mock state actors from other institutions	
		Some people are making unfounded allegations against state officers from other institutions		
		Someone is making very strange		

		allegations of criminality regarding a certain initiative of the institution		
Facebook		There appears to be a doctored newspaper front page being used to tarnish the image of a member of the institution	The sharpness of the critical language used against the state institution has ramped up	Some people are calling for violence against members of the institution
		Some people are making serious allegations about certain state officers		The nature of the strong criticism used against members of the institution could be taken as threatening
		Some people are making unfounded allegations against state officers from other institutions		

M Empirical Data Enabler–Inhibitor Relationship Map

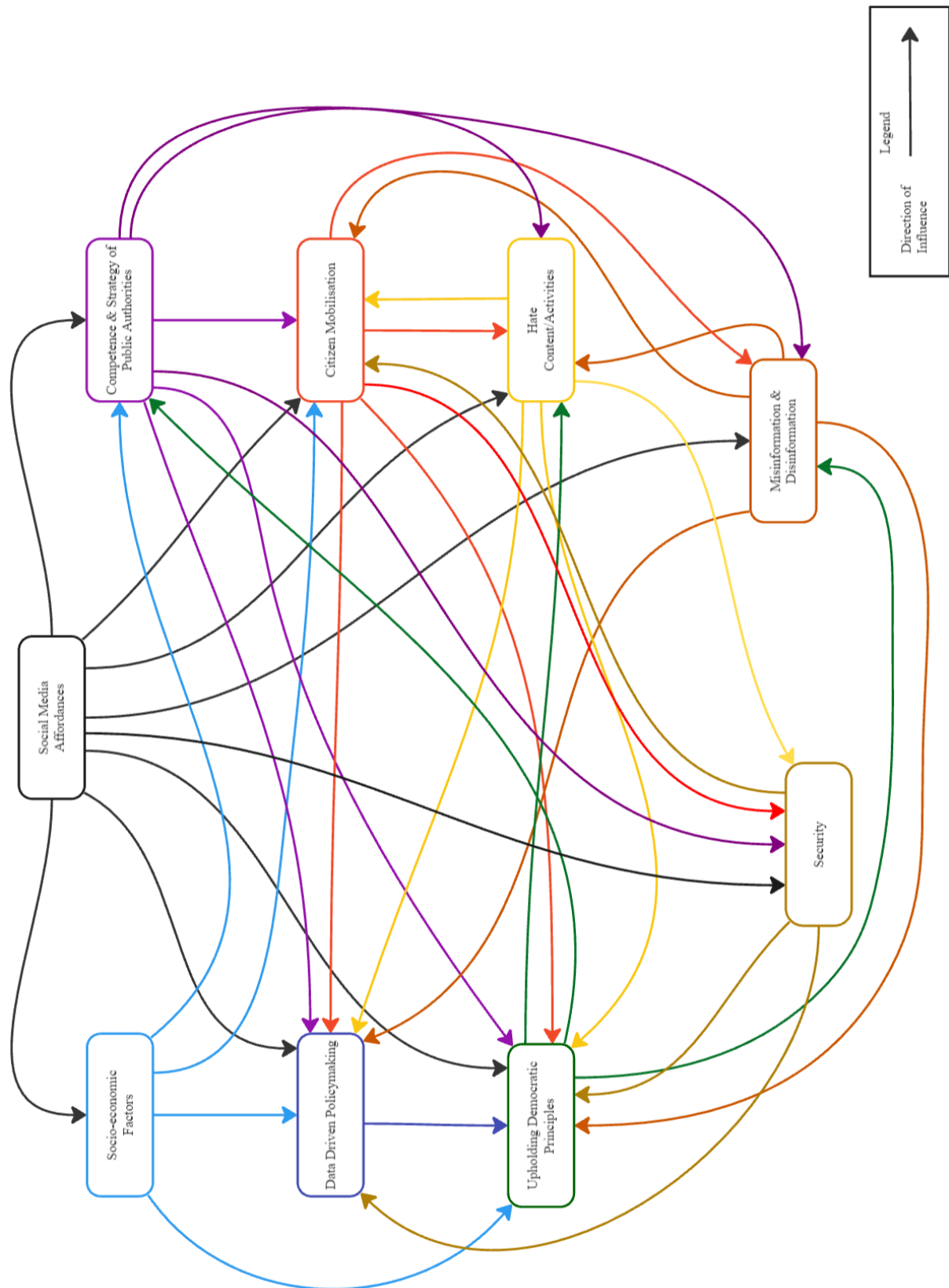


Figure M.1: Enabler and inhibitor relationships in the empirical data (Arrows indicate the direction of influence, e.g., $A \rightarrow B$ means A influences B).

N Constitution of Kenya (CoK)-Compliant Policy Recommendations

This thesis proposes specific reforms to the prospective Office of the Registrar of Public Participation (ORPP) that diverge significantly from the current provisions in the Public Participation Bill (PPB). As currently drafted, the PBB places the ORPP under the authority of the Cabinet Secretary (CS) responsible for public participation in the national government. It also restricts the ORPP's mandate to coordination and record-keeping, thereby limiting its potential to serve as an effective institutional advancement in the governance of public participation (Public Participation Bill, 2024).

The first key departure concerns the institutional positioning of the ORPP. Rather than serving under a Cabinet Secretary, the ORPP should be established as an independent constitutional office mandated to serve all levels and branches of government. This design would mirror institutions such as the Controller of Budget (CoB), whose independence and jurisdiction extend across all state bodies within the Republic (The Controller of Budget Regulations, 2021). Public participation is a constitutional imperative under Article 10 of the Constitution of Kenya (CoK) and applies to all state officers engaged in public policy (The Republic of Kenya, 2010). It would therefore be most effective for a centralised and standardised participation process to be implemented and overseen by a single, unified institution to ensure consistency nationwide.

Second, the ORPP should be granted a substantive mandate beyond coordination and record-keeping. It should be empowered to ensure that public participation is conducted in good faith by both state actors and citizens. This includes the power to impose time-bound obligations on public institutions to respond to citizen input submitted via approved channels. The ORPP should also have the authority to administer proportionate, appealable sanctions—including temporary bans on citizens who deliberately disrupt online public participation forums, excluding essential services such as emergency lines. Likewise, where state organs ignore legitimate citizen input without credible justification, the ORPP should be able to issue administrative sanctions. While it may refer serious violations to investigative authorities under instruments such as the Computer Misuse Act, this referral power should remain discretionary and only exercised where proportionate. The ORPP's primary function would be to act as a neutral arbiter, safeguarding the integrity of participatory processes.

Third, the ORPP should work in close partnership with other state institutions to fulfil its mandate. It should coordinate with the Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK) to oversee the use of digital media in public participation (Kenya Information and Communications (Amendment) Act, 2013). The CAK would serve as a bridge between the ORPP, and digital platforms used for civic engagement. The ORPP should also

collaborate with the Public Service Commission (PSC) and equivalent public service bodies to develop social media guidelines for state officers (Public Service Commission Act, 2017). Furthermore, it should partner with the Kenya School of Government (KSG) and other accredited public learning institutions to provide ongoing sensitisation and training for public officers on the appropriate use of social media in official duties (Kenya School of Government Act, 2012). In addition, the ORPP should coordinate with the Office of the Attorney General (AG) and the Inspector General of Police (IG) to explore the lawful strategic use of inhibitors—such as disinformation—where such tools can be repurposed to support the preservation of national security.

Fourth, the President shall appoint the ORPP, subject to the approval of the National Assembly. The officeholder shall be subject to the provisions of Article 251 of the Constitution and shall serve a single, non-renewable term of eight years (The Republic of Kenya, 2010). To qualify for appointment, a candidate must demonstrate extensive knowledge of public participation and have at least ten years of experience in public policy, governance, or information systems (IS).

To support fiscal prudence, this thesis proposes an alternative institutional model: integrating the ORPP's mandate into the existing National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC). This would reduce institutional duplication while preserving essential oversight and enforcement functions. Under this model, the NCIC would be repurposed and legally restructured to operate with enhanced independence and an expanded mandate encompassing all functions of the ORPP. The rationale for this merger is that the NCIC already serves as a body mandated to address vices such as hate speech in order to preserve national unity (National Cohesion and Integration Act, 2008). This function is directly relevant to the protection of public participation, as hate content and related activities are among the key inhibitors of social media e-participation identified in this thesis. Expanding the NCIC's scope to include a public participation mandate represents a pragmatic institutional adaptation. It would enable the commission to address civic engagement more holistically, aligning its existing role in mitigating hate speech with broader responsibilities in public participation management. At the same time, this approach avoids the financial burdens associated with establishing a new office.

Summarily, the establishment of the ORPP, in one legal form or another, is a logical next step in safeguarding Kenya's constitutional principles. While the institutional form may vary, the core objective remains the same: to uphold a uniform, structured, inclusive, and accountable public participation framework in accordance with the CoK. Its successful implementation could strengthen Kenya's position as a leading example of participatory democracy management in East Africa (EA) (Herre et al., 2013).

O Justification for Networked Irrationality as a Distinct Concept

Table O.1: Exploration of different terms that may be closely related to networked irrationality and why they fail to fully meet the characteristics of it.

Term	Resource used for Definition and Characterisation	Conformity to sub-components of networked irrationality			Why the term is insufficient
		Social Media Echo Chamber	Misinformation or Disinformation	Resistance to Correction	
Echo Chamber	Diaz Ruiz & Nilsson (2023)	Not exclusive to social media.	Optional	There is a strong resistance to correction.	Reinforces bias, but beliefs may be true.
Filter Bubble	Kaluža (2022)	Not exclusive to social media echo chambers.	Optional	There is a strong resistance to correction due to the closed off nature involved.	Filtering based on algorithmic personalisation that is present in digital technologies such as search engines and social media.
Motivated Reasoning	Ziva (1990)	Not exclusive to social media echo chambers.	Optional	There is a strong urge to resist correction.	Based on the tendency of individuals to search for information that

					supports their desired conclusions.
Information Disorder Syndrome	Kandel (2020)	Social media echo chambers may be a major vector for the term but may not necessarily be the only way for its operationalisation.	Exclusively tied to misinformation, disinformation and malinformation.	Resistance to correction may occur with Grade 1 offenders.	Based on the tendency to share or create misleading information. Characterised as Grades based on the severity of the syndrome (1,2, and 3).
Delusion	Bell et al. (2021)	Not exclusive to social media echo chambers.	They are based on implausible beliefs which do not exclusively need to originate from misinformation and disinformation.	The individuals are strongly resistant to change.	Delusions are more of a psychiatric condition associated with psychotic disorders.
Cyber Tribalism	Duile (2017)	The term is strongly associated with social	Optional	Members may strongly hold onto	Cyber tribalism involves online

		media echo chambers but may not be exclusive to it.		their collective beliefs due to their emotional and symbolic meaning to the group identity.	communities who are bound together by common identity.
Groupthink	Turner & Pratkanis (1998)	Not exclusive to social media echo chambers.	Optional	Members may strongly hold onto their collective beliefs.	Linked to the self-censorship and suppressed critical thinking that occurs within a specified group environment that does not have to be online.
Mass Hysteria	Pradhan et al. (2024)	Not exclusive to social media echo chambers.	Optional	Individuals may strongly resist correction, but it is possible to eventually get	It is a behavioural condition within a group that may be triggered through psychological

				through to them.	al or social factors.
Epistemic Trust/Mistrust	E. Li et al (2023)	Not exclusive to social media echo chambers.	Optional	Individuals may strongly resist correction.	It is generally linked to the ability to either trust or mistrust others as a source of knowledge.
Epistemic Bubbles	C. Turner (2023)	Not exclusive to social media echo chambers.	Optional	Unlike echo chambers, they do not cause strong rejection to correction.	Epistemic bubbles are similar in a way to echo chambers only that they involve the omission of alternative views not the active discrediting as witnessed in echo chambers.
Collective Irrationality	Voinea et al. (2023)	It has been strongly amplified by social media echo chambers but is not	Optional	There is a strong resistance to correcting beliefs that are based around	Collective irrationality is generally based on group identity and moral opinions

		exclusively linked to it.		morality or identity.	coupled with epistemic reinforcement.
Information Cascades	Bikhchandani et al. (2024)	Not exclusive to social media echo chambers.	Optional	There does tend to be resistance to correction, but this resistance can be overcome.	Information cascades are similar in a way to group think but they involve sequential imitation of others even where private information is available. It is more based on rational inference than the desire to maintain group identity.

O.a Selection Procedure of the Analysed Terms

The terms listed in Table O.1 were selected through a conceptual decomposition process. Each was considered because it appeared to reflect at least one of the three subcomponents of networked irrationality—exclusively linked to social media echo chambers, exclusively operationalised using misinformation or disinformation, and resistance to correction. The aim was to determine whether any existing concept satisfied all three criteria in combination. None did, thus justifying the conceptual distinctiveness of networked irrationality.