



From rebellion to revenue: Revisiting commercialisation and digital platforms in Kenyan political protest music

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Abstract

This study explores the commercialisation of Kenyan protest music and how it affects its original political intent, with a focus on the transition from underground struggle to mainstream success. It further examines how digital platforms, such as social media and music streaming services, have reshaped the dissemination, reach, and reception of protest music, influencing both its economic success and political efficacy. Anchored in Antonio Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony Theory, this study explores how dominant cultural forces, such as the media and music industry, form popular ideologies and impact the political and economic roles of protest music. The research adopted a qualitative methodology, incorporating content analysis of chosen Kenyan protest songs and semi-structured interviews with Kenyan youth, particularly those involved in the recent Gen Z led protest in Kenya. The findings show significant growth in repurposed protest songs, driven by social media's role in their virality. These platforms, according to the findings, enhance accessibility, broadening audiences and boosting artists' critical and commercial success. Viral protest songs amplify public engagement with political issues, while commercialisation and digital platforms expand their reach and cultural impact, solidifying protest music as a powerful force. This study concludes that commercialisation and digital platforms contribute favourably to the transmission and influence of protest music, defying past notions regarding its dilution. Future studies should explore the potential development of Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony Theory to include the transformative function of digital platforms in redefining cultural resistance.

Introduction

Over the years, political protest music has served and continues to serve as a powerful tool for advocating equality. It amplifies the voices of marginalised groups and acts as a catalyst for mobilisation. Hidayatullah (2021) highlighted the role of music and musicians in strengthening social movements and organising opposition to unfavourable regimes. Historically, music has functioned as a means of confronting oppressive systems, expressing discontent, and rallying people around political causes. From the civil rights movement in the United States to the anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa, political protest music has not only provided an accessible and emotive medium for individuals to convey their frustrations, hopes, and demands for justice, but has also enabled them to share their pain with others who are persecuted by the government. Kelley (2022) acknowledges that music "helped generate community pride, challenged racial self-hatred, and built self-respect" (pp. 11-



12). This argument is echoed by Oluwafunminiyi (2021), who suggests that "anti-apartheid songs played an educative role by significantly contributing to the masses' awareness of the painful realities in South Africa" (p. 124). Similarly, in Kenya, protest music has become a crucial element of national discourse, with musicians harnessing their art to challenge government policies, expose socioeconomic disparities, and inspire resistance against corruption and injustices. Kebaya (2022) asserts that the arts are "central to political struggle and contestations over power, and, when reconfigured, can potentially anchor political intolerance" (p. 1).

While protest music has traditionally served as a tool for confronting social inequities, its transition from underground resistance to commodification remains contentious. Adorno, as cited by Firmantoro (2023), "viewed the cultural industry as an instrument strengthening capitalism" (p. 163), transforming music into a profit-driven commodity. According to Adorno, this has the potential to undermine music's role in combating socio-political inequalities. He argues that capitalism leads to "the creation of audiences as objects that the market can control" (Firmantoro, 2023, p. 169), suggesting that protest music, once a form of resistance, may become subject to market forces such as supply and demand. As protest songs achieve commercial success, their subversive messages risk dilution, subsequently diminishing their capacity to oppose oppressive regimes. This occurs because artists are likely to seek popular acceptability, which may involve sanitising revolutionary messages to attract a broader audience. Revenberg (2023) contends that "commercial rap music and hip-hop culture have lost their subversive potential through processes of incorporation into mainstream capitalist culture..." (p. 2). With the rise of digital platforms such as TikTok, X, and Instagram, the commodification of protest music is further complicated as artists increasingly aim to create viral content rather than engage in serious political debates, resulting in a more superficial connection compared to those forged through political causes. Kirui (2023) posits that these platforms "offer a global stage for artists, enabling them to reach audiences worldwide instantaneously, enhancing their influence and fostering a sense of community among music enthusiasts across the globe" (p. 100). This trend may promote the appropriation and trivialisation of political messages, transforming them into products that may serve the interests of dominant powers instead of resisting them. Therefore, this suggests that commercialisation not only undermines the potency of protest music but also challenges its role in fostering a meaningful fight against inequalities.

This study aims to investigate the commercialisation of protest music in Kenya, particularly through digital platforms, and its impact on the ability of such music to challenge political structures and shape public consciousness. Historically, protest music in Kenya has served as a crucial tool for resistance, from the colonial era to past oppressive regimes. However, with the rise of digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, X, and music streaming services, protest music has increasingly transformed into a commercially viable product, sparking debates about its authenticity and political significance. Scholars like Kirui (2023) and Abbas et al. (2022) emphasise how digital platforms expand the reach of protest music but also risk sanitising radical messages for marketability, turning them into consumable products, some of which have been repurposed, leading to the dilution of the original message. By applying Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony Theory, this study will examine how the commercialisation of protest music reshapes its role in Kenya's political landscape, where the potential of music for resistance is intertwined with the influences of capitalism, media, and globalisation.

Literature review

This literature study examines the evolution of protest music in Kenya, focusing on its transition from a tool of revolt to a commodity driven by commercialisation and digital platforms. It explores how



commercialisation affects the political power and authenticity of protest music, as market interests increasingly dictate the creation and consumption of political material.

Protest music as a catalyst for political change in Kenya

Protest music has consistently served as a powerful weapon for advancing social justice and amplifying marginalised voices, acting as a catalyst for political change. Sadler (2022) emphasises its critical role in American social movements, a sentiment echoed in Kenyan political activism. "Protest music and chants have historically formed a central part of American social change movements focused on the rights of marginalised people" (Sadler, 2022: 1). Protest music has played a significant role in Kenya, ranging from the struggle for independence to the 2024 Gen Z-led protests against President William Ruto's administration. Theories such as Antonio Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony Theory, Critical Theory (Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer), Cultural Resistance Theory (John Fiske, Raymond Williams), Conflict Theory (Karl Marx), and Social Identity Theory (Henri Tajfel, John Turner) provide frameworks for understanding how protest music challenges dominant ideologies, empowers marginalised groups, and strengthens collective identity. Furthermore, Symbolic Interactionism (George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer) and Postmodernism (Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault) highlight how protest music generates shared meanings and opposing viewpoints, undermining prevailing narratives of authority and power. These perspectives, however, suggest that when protest music achieves commercial success, its intended message may become diluted, shifting its focus from a tool of resistance to an economic artefact, thereby diminishing its capacity to challenge the existing status quo.

Sadler (2022) highlights the dual nature of digital platforms like TikTok, which extend the reach of protest music while also commodifying and decontextualising its original political intent. TikTok's features, such as lip-syncing and green screens, enable marginalised communities to express defiance and solidarity in creative virtual spaces; however, the algorithm-driven nature of these platforms often prioritises virality over activism, detaching protest songs from their roots in movements like Black Lives Matter. This dynamic is reflected in the Kenyan context, particularly with the songs *Anguka Nayo*, *Kasongo* and *Wanapanga*, which became protest anthems during Gen Z-led protests in 2024. Originally, *Anguka nayo* began as a grassroots resistance anthem but gained worldwide fame through a viral dance challenge, turning its repurposed political message into a mainstream sensation. While this increased attention to the protest heightened visibility, it also risks diluting the song's original subversive impact. As Kenyan protest music shifts from grassroots movements to digital and commercial platforms, this study explores whether digital amplification bolsters or undermines its political power. It investigates how platforms like TikTok and music streaming services transform protest music into marketable content, raising questions about the potential tension between digital visibility and the preservation of protest music's activist roots, and whether its commercial success ultimately diminishes its role in fostering social and political change.

Cultural hegemony and the commercialisation of political music

Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony provides a framework for understanding how digital platforms monetise Kenyan political protest music. Gramsci highlights how dominant ideologies influence cultural expression through institutions and practices. Similarly, Poell et al. (2021) assert that "Platform companies simultaneously employ a multitude of governing instruments to control how, and what kind of, content and services are shared through their platforms" (p. 263). These governing bodies serve as modern extensions of hegemonic power, regulating market access, infrastructure, and visibility, while often favouring financial viability over radical or politically charged discourse. Poell et al. (2021) illustrate how these emerging digital platform policies act as



power, controlling who can "create, distribute, market, and monetise their content and services" (p. 238). This power dynamic frequently prioritises business viability over radical expressiveness. Such gatekeeping mechanisms undermine the revolutionary essence of political music, transforming it into entertainment commodities aimed at global consumer markets.

Algorithmic curation is employed on digital platforms to modify content accessibility and reach by prioritising engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments. According to de Boise (2022), "polarising content is more likely to be shared by both supporters and detractors, increasing its reach and visibility" (p. 50), which often results in the amplification of content with high levels of engagement, irrespective of its political significance. However, this focus on participation may exclude politically charged or subversive music that fails to generate viral interaction. De Boise further explains that "digital technologies may have built-in features that marginalise, restrict, and exclude rather than empower" (p. 49), highlighting how the very structures of digital platforms can inadvertently suppress protest music. While these platforms offer unprecedented access to global audiences, they also commodify content by prioritising financial success (Kirui, 2023) over political messaging, thereby increasing the likelihood of protest music becoming a mass-market product. As platforms evolve, their growing economic and cultural concentration diminishes creators' bargaining power, entrenching the commercialisation of music and lessening its political impact. This transformation creates a complex dynamic where the democratising potential of digital platforms is balanced against their role in reinforcing hegemonic market forces that favour profit over political discourse. This study explores how digital platforms, such as social media and music streaming services, have changed the distribution, reach, and reception of protest music, influencing both its economic success and political efficacy.

The impact of digital platforms on political protest music

"Digital media is reshaping our understanding of social movements as connective action or acts of protest centred around one's network" (Sadler, 2022, 2-3). As a result, artists will have unparalleled access to audiences and increased visibility for their voices. Social media provides a centralised platform for dialogue and sensitisation (p. 65). This transformation has altered the production, marketing, and consumption of political protest music, with internet platforms enabling artists to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and connect directly with global audiences. Protest music can quickly spread across networks through social media and music streaming services, fostering solidarity and energising supporters in real time. However, while these platforms present new avenues for awareness, they also impose limitations by prioritising content that generates high engagement, often marginalising more politically extreme or niche music. Therefore, digital platforms play a dual role in both empowering and constraining access to protest music, underscoring the complexities of utilising digital platforms for political expression in a commodified media landscape. TikTok, Instagram, and various music streaming platforms facilitate the rapid transmission and sharing of politically sensitive songs, creating opportunities for virality that traditional media cannot match (Sadler, 2022).

This democratisation of music distribution allows underrepresented voices to be heard, fostering a sense of community and collective identity among listeners. However, increased accessibility introduces its own set of challenges. The pursuit of virality may lead to the trivialisation of radical ideas, as artists repackage their concepts to appeal to a broader audience. This monetisation risks reducing serious political issues to catchy sound bites intended for entertainment rather than advocacy. Furthermore, digital platform algorithms often favour amusement over substantial content, distorting political narratives and promoting sensationalism. These debates raise significant questions



about whether political protest music can maintain its revolutionary purpose in a digital society that commodifies information. As protest music evolves within this context, its potential to challenge power structures may diminish, causing it to align more closely with market-driven imperatives rather than political resistance. This study explores these tensions.

Commercialisation of protest music in Kenya

Poell et al. (2021) argue that "cultural producers have long struggled to accommodate the demands of commercial entities while retaining their creative economy" (p. 214). Similarly, Brusila et al. (2021) assert that digital technology "has not only affected the accessibility of culture but has also altered the conditions for its production" (p. 6). This dichotomy is evident in Kenyan protest music, which has evolved from grassroots opposition into a commercial commodity, primarily due to social media platforms and music streaming services. As its popularity increases, commercial pressures jeopardise its innovative core, raising concerns about how to achieve a balance between artistic originality and financial sustainability. Kenyan protest music originated as an underground movement aimed at amplifying underrepresented voices and addressing socio-political injustices. However, as the music industry develops, musicians must navigate a commercial framework that prioritises broad appeal and profitability. Brusila et al. (2021) interpret digitalisation from two perspectives: the dystopian view, which perceives it as a "decline of human culture," and the utopian view, which considers it as "increasing social and cultural well-being" (p. 2).

These dynamics influence the commercialisation of cultural products, such as protest songs, often leading to the repackaging of radical political ideas into more palatable forms, which may diminish their original significance. This argument aligns with the critique presented by Frankfurt School theorists Horkheimer and Adorno, who contended that the modern cultural industry produces homogeneous, escapist products that elicit passive, uniform responses from consumers (Malysenko, 2024). Similarly, the commercialisation of Kenyan protest music reflects this dynamic, as artists may sacrifice authenticity for financial viability in pursuit of popular trends. While these circumstances might broaden the reach of protest music, its original purpose—confronting power dynamics and advocating for change—can be overshadowed by a focus on entertainment value. Furthermore, the desire to conform to commercial interests often leads to self-censorship, prompting artists to avoid controversial subjects to maintain marketability. This relationship raises questions about the validity and utility of protest music as an activist tool. This study investigates how digital platforms and market pressures affect its political aims, as well as the challenge of balancing reach and authenticity amidst commodification.

Methodology

This study investigates the commercialisation of Kenyan protest music and examines how digital platforms have influenced its political impact. A qualitative approach was employed, incorporating semi-structured online interviews with young people, musicians, producers, and cultural critics involved in recent political protests. A total of 24 participants were interviewed for this study. Content analysis of selected Kenyan protest songs was conducted to investigate the shifts in political messaging as they evolved from grassroots resistance to commercially viable products. Data from social media platforms such as TikTok, X, and Instagram were analysed to determine their impact on the virality and economic success of protest songs.



Results and discussions

Repurposing of protest music

The findings indicate a growing trend in the repurposing of protest songs, signalling a notable shift in their role in political participation. A prime example is “*Anguka Nayo*,” which many respondents cited as having a significant impact on the protests. Although the song's original lyrics were not political, its catchy melody, rhythm, and lively tempo made it an ideal choice for protest demonstrations. Other songs that were repurposed included *Kasongo* and *Wanapanga*. These attributes heightened its appeal among demonstrators, who transformed them into revolt anthems. Historically, protest music has served as a grassroots tool for expressing dissatisfaction and challenging the status quo. However, with the rise of social media, “*Anguka Nayo*, *Kasongo* and *Wanapanga*” gained popularity, partly due to their viral dance challenge on TikTok, X and Instagram. One respondent, a musician, noted that the song "gained viral traction, with its dance challenge spreading beyond Kenyan borders." This virality supports de Boise’s (2022) assertion that contentious content, which engages both supporters and opponents, is more likely to be shared, thereby increasing visibility. Another respondent, a music producer, stated that "songs can go viral through challenges, memes, or short videos," fostering a sense of community. This contradicts Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony Theory, which posits that internet platforms encourage underrepresented voices while enabling counter-narratives to emerge. Even when repurposed, viral songs can achieve critical and financial success while advocating for social and political change and addressing inequities. According to Abbas et al. (2022), adding music to micro-videos "could encourage virality and the creative crafting of direct and indirect political content, making TikTok a space for political expression, mobilisation, and online activism" (p. 309). This underscores how TikTok, X and Instagram may enhance an artist's visibility while simultaneously broadening the reach of protest messages, blending entertainment and activism. Table 1 below displays the translation of “*AngukaNayo*,” a song that has been repurposed for the protest.

Table 1: *Lyrics and translation of "Anguka Nayo" by Wadagliz.*

<p>Chorus <i>Anguka nayo, eh, ati</i> <i>Anguka nayo, cheki</i> <i>Anguka nayo twende down low nayo</i> <i>Stand up to your feet</i> <i>Mikono juu alafu click</i> <i>Tuliza pace alafu one lege</i> Chorus <i>Anguka nayo, one lege, eh</i> <i>Anguka nayo, ati</i> <i>Anguka nayo, ati, eh</i> <i>Anguka nayo</i> <i>Anguka nayo</i> <i>Ati</i> <i>Anguka nayo kama uko na new catch, ati</i> <i>Anguka nayo ka unaparty na magwash, aha</i> <i>Anguka nayo round two kwa hii bash, ati</i> Chorus</p>	<p>Chorus Fall with it, Fall with it, check Fall with it, let's go down low with them Stand up to your feet Hands up then click Calm the pace then one leg. Chorus Fall with it, one leg Fall with it, what Fall with it, what, eh Fall with it Fall with it Ati Fall with it if you have new catch, what Fall with it if you're partying with friends, Fall with it round two for this party, what Chorus</p>
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The chorus section of *Kasongo* was repurposed by the youth to advance their online protests. **Table 2** shows the translation of the chorus.

Table 2: *Lyrics and translation of the Kasongo, Chorus section only*

<p>Chorus <i>Kasongo</i> <i>Mobali na ngai</i> <i>Kasongo</i> <i>Nga nawe oh,</i> <i>Zonga libala eh</i></p>	<p>Chorus Kasongo My husband Kasongo I am dying Come back to the marriage</p>
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Like the previous songs, protesters used part of Wanapanga song to contextualize to the struggle, as shown in **Table 3** below. This song for instance is a gospel song sung by Pastor Nganga, Kenyan Preacher, during his church services.

Table 3: *Lyrics and translation of the Wanapanga song, as sung by Pastor Nganga*

<p><i>Wanapanga kunimaliza Baba</i> <i>Wanapanga kunimaliza</i> <i>Wanapanga kunimaliza Baba</i> <i>Wanapanga kunimaliza</i></p> <p><i>Nakuomba unitetee Baba</i> <i>Nakuomba unitetee</i> <i>Nakuomba unitetee Baba</i> <i>Nakuomba unitetee</i></p>	<p>They are planning to finish me, God They are planning to finish me They are planning to finish me, God They are planning to finish me.</p> <p>I am requesting you advocate for me, God I am requesting you advocate for me, I am requesting you advocate for me, God I am requesting you advocate for me</p>
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Role of digital platforms in the virality of protest music

The data emphasises the crucial role of digital platforms, particularly social media, in the virality of protest music, enabling it to reach broad and diverse audiences. One respondent, a musician, noted that “international visibility helped raise awareness of the protests, amplifying calls for government accountability on a global scale,” facilitated by platforms such as TikTok, X and Instagram. These platforms enable protest songs to go viral within hours, extending their impact far beyond local protests. This aligns with Sadler (2022), who highlights that platforms such as TikTok, X and Instagram. facilitate the swift transmission and sharing of politically sensitive music, offering viral opportunities that traditional media cannot match. Both musicians and producers pointed out how social media enhanced protest songs, making them globally accessible. Tracks like *Anguka Nayo*, *Kasongo* and *Wanapanga* exemplify how TikTok, X and Instagram can accelerate political mobilisation,



allowing young people to engage in activism through their phones and other electronic devices. In Nigeria, as noted by Owoaje and Sofola (2021), the EndSARS protest, which originated on social media under the hashtag #EndSARS, ultimately “moved to the streets in various cities in Nigeria” (p. 79). Similarly, the Gen Z-led protests in Kenya, under the hashtag #RejectTheFinanceBill, transitioned to the streets and spread across the country.

This virality not only increases public participation but also strengthens the political and social impact of protest music. Mukhongo (2020) supports this point by asserting that “social media tools have fostered participatory and viral media cultures in Kenya,” (p. 154) resulting in the swift dissemination of messages, mobilisation, and a drive for social change. This challenges Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony Theory, which posits that dominant groups maintain power by manipulating cultural norms and suppressing counter-narratives. Digital platforms contest this by decentralising cultural creation, bypassing conventional gatekeepers such as mainstream media, and encouraging underrepresented voices to amplify dissent. Viral protest songs create avenues for alternative narratives, promoting collective identity and organising communities to challenge entrenched power structures. This shift illustrates how digital platforms possess the revolutionary potential to contest cultural domination, alter power dynamics, and amplify global activism.

Commercialisation and its impact on protest music

The study challenges the notion that commercialisation undermines the political significance of protest music. One respondent, a cultural critic, remarked that “music was highly effective in raising awareness about the movement’s aims,” affirming that the political message was conveyed despite its commodification. TikTok, X and Instagram apart from connecting individuals, actively engage users with interactive and relevant content. As Poell (2020) notes, “commercial platforms are geared towards maximising user activity by algorithmically favouring trending items over content that generates sustained social engagement” (p. 654). Even with repurposed songs like *Anguka Nayo*, *Kasongo*, and *Wanapanga* one respondent, a musician stressed that “music served as an accessible and engaging tool for reaching large audiences, particularly through platforms such as TikTok, X and YouTube,” which have played a significant role in the commercialisation of the music industry. As protest songs gain traction, commercial success is gradually achieved by attracting attention from mainstream media, sponsorships, and advertising, providing artists with the means to further amplify their message. This commercialisation does not detract from the political value of protest music; rather, it transforms it into a more potent cultural force. Songs that go viral on digital platforms like TikTok and YouTube not only engage listeners politically but also play a crucial role in enhancing the visibility and legitimacy of protest movements. By achieving commercial success, viral songs establish a presence within broader cultural and media landscapes, amplifying the recognition and influence of the movements they support. This phenomenon contests the traditional view, rooted in Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, that integration into commercial culture diminishes the potency of protest music.

Transformation of protest music into a cultural force

According to the findings, the interaction between protest music and digital platforms has transformed it from a mere form of resistance into a cultural artefact. One respondent, a cultural critic, pointed out that *Anguka Nayo* “stood out because it encapsulated the emotions of the movement, energised participants, and served as a tool for solidarity and messaging,” thus establishing a sense of community through a shared cultural artefact. Protest songs are portrayed as powerful cultural products on commercialised platforms, which are then amplified through TikTok, X and Instagram to reach global audiences. Mukhongo (2020), for example, suggests that “what makes online activism



unique is its situatedness in a cultural landscape characterised by emerging media technologies, which are far more participatory and spreadable" (p. 166); thus, this aligns with a music producer's assessment that a "shared soundtrack for the digital age, uniting people across geographical and cultural divides" contributed to fostering a sense of community. The research also indicates that these songs are no longer merely about resisting oppressive authorities but have evolved into components of a broader cultural identity. One respondent, a musician, emphasised the "significant role of music associated with protests, particularly in creating a sense of cultural identity and unity," reinforcing the cultural relevance of protest music. This role is consistent with Kirui (2025), who noted that protesters utilised "music to circumvent structural constraints, challenge hegemonic systems, and raise their voices for social and political change" (p. 14), thereby creating cultural identity and unity. The viral nature of protest music on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok ensures that these cultural commodities are more than just passing trends; they are lasting emblems of collective political action. This coincides with a respondent's assessment that a "shared soundtrack for the digital age, uniting people across geographical and cultural divides" helped to foster a sense of community.

Future study of Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony Theory in the digital age

The findings suggest that the commercialisation of protest music and its evolution through digital platforms represent a potential path for the future development of Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony Theory. Gramsci's theory posits that the dominant class uses culture to maintain control, while also recognising the possibility of cultural resistance through counter-hegemonic movements. According to Mukhongo (2020), "digital technologies are reshaping the landscape of activism" (p. 165) by transforming how cultural resistance functions, particularly in the circulation and impact of protest music. By enabling protest music to reach global audiences and achieve financial success, digital platforms challenge established forms of hegemony and amplify the voice of the resistance. This broader reach has the potential to affect how culture is consumed, disseminated, and interpreted within political movements. The study suggests that future research should explore how digital platforms are reshaping cultural resistance and potentially altering traditional power dynamics. In the digital age, cultural artefacts such as protest music can transcend local conflicts and become integral to a global dialogue, forging new pathways for resistance and social change. The rise of protest music on internet platforms could further enhance our theoretical understanding of cultural hegemony in the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

This study examines the transformative influence of digital platforms on political protest music, demonstrating how it has evolved from a traditional method of resistance into a multidimensional cultural artefact. TikTok, YouTube, and X enable protest songs to transcend local movements, reaching global audiences and establishing shared cultural identities. The Kenyan protest led by Gen Z, initiated under the hashtag *#RejectTheFinanceBill*, transitioned from digital platforms to street demonstrations, highlighting the link between online activism and grassroots mobilisation. The viral nature of protest music amplifies political messages, reshapes cultural dynamics, and challenges entrenched power structures. While commercialisation is sometimes viewed as a threat to the authenticity of protest music, this study argues that it can enhance the genre's social and political significance, deepening its impact on public discourse and social movements. Furthermore, the findings challenge Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony Theory by illustrating how digital platforms decentralise cultural production, empowering underrepresented voices to contest dominant narratives and redefine the cultural and political relevance of political protest music in the digital age.



Despite the valuable insights offered by this study, two primary limitations highlight avenues for future research. Firstly, while the study focuses on the viral success of protest songs such as “*Anguka Nayo, Kasongo and Wanapanga*” it primarily examines their impact in specific geographic locations, mainly Kenya. This geographical focus hinders our understanding of how protest music performs in diverse cultural and political contexts across the globe. Secondly, the study centres on the digital components of political protest music, specifically how platforms like TikTok, X, and YouTube promote virality and online mobilisation. However, this approach overlooks the essential role that traditional media, such as radio, television, and print, along with offline mobilisation through concerts, rallies, and community events, plays in determining the overall influence of protest music.

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