

Exploring Public Perceptions towards Online Content Regulation in Kenya

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Abstract

The rise in illegal online content has necessitated most governments to come up with legislation to regulate the cyberspace environment in their respective jurisdictions. Using an exploratory research design and utilizing a 5-point Likert scale survey (N = 530 Kenyan internet users) the study proposed to highlight the gravity of the public perceptions towards online content regulations in a sub-Saharan African country, with an ever-increasing youthful population. By focusing on the policy-specific factors, the study findings indicated a low public perception of the effectiveness of the existing online content regulations in Kenya. The findings further illustrate a perceived low level of trust in the government agencies responsible for the implementation of these regulations. Taken together, these findings translate to mild acceptability of the existing public policy, indicating a policy perception and acceptance gap that needs to be filled.

Keywords: Content regulation, public policy, public perceptions, online content, Kenya.

Introduction

The relationship between existing online content regulations and the internet users' perceptions of the regulation is fundamental in ensuring the success of the proposed regulation. Numerous researchers (Basse, 2016; Mutahi & Kimari, 2017; Gorwa, 2019) have studied the regulation of illegal online content and noted that it is not a new invention but rather one that is driven by access, necessity, and availability of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the anonymity features embedded in the social media platforms. As with many of the government legislations across the world, the people whom online content regulation is meant for are in most cases typically controlled through monitoring, surveillance, and enforcement (Becker, 1968). This control is also commonly left to the government enforcement authorities.

Previous studies investigating online content regulations have focused on its processes (Klonick, 2017; Paschalides et al., 2020) and approaches (Link et al., 2016; Bunting, 2018; Sander, 2019) with a few more looking at users' perceptions of content moderation from the context of the social media platform companies (Myers, 2018; Jhaver et al., 2019; Shen & Rose, 2019). Bennett, (2016) in exploring public perceptions of regulations defined it as an individual's observation, understanding, interpretation, and evaluation of a policy or an

outcome. However, the same author noted that despite research in user perceptions being able to inform policy and governance from the national to the international level, there is still a dearth of literature on users' perceptions towards a nation-specific online content regulatory framework, more so from a sub-Saharan African context.

Kenya also called the Silicon Savannah is a country famed for being among those with the fastest internet speeds in sub-Saharan Africa (Edo & Odebiyi, 2019). The legislative regulations in the country that majorly focus on online content regulation are the Kenya Constitution of 2010, the Penal Code, the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act of 2018, the Data Protection Act of 2019, and the Kenya Information and Communications Act (KICA) of 2013. The Kenya Constitution protects the freedom of expression in Article 33, and the right to access information under Article 35. The Penal Code criminalizes alarming publications, which it refers to as the publication of any false statement, report, or rumor that is likely to cause alarm and fear to the public or even to disturb public peace. The Kenya Information and Communications Act (KICA) 2013 established the Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) as an independent regulatory body to manage the Kenyan communication sector. However, in April 2016, the court ruled that Section 29 of the Kenya Information and Communications Act (KICA) was unconstitutional since it punished the right to

freedom of expression. The court further noted that the section was vaguely drafted and could be interpreted subjectively, which is against the rule of certainty in creating criminal offenses. The section had put in penalties for internet users who were distributing messages that the CA considered to be “grossly offensive or to cause annoyance, inconvenience, or needless anxiety to another person,” with a fine of up to 350 USD, three years in prison, or both (Maitha & Mbatia, 2016).

The Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act, of 2018 was objectively meant to: curb unlawful use of computer systems, improper access to information, and freedom of expression, protect privacy rights and facilitate international cooperation and prosecute, detect, investigate, prosecute and punish cybercrime (Kenya Gazette Supplement, 2018). However, several organizations among them; Kenya ICT Action Network (KICTANET), Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE), Centre to Protect Journalists (CPJ), and Article 19 Eastern Africa criticized the Act, terming it unconstitutional. In May 2018, BAKE went to court to contest 26 sections of the Act that contravened the Kenya Constitution and violated the Kenya Bill of Rights (Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) *versus* the Attorney General, Speaker, National Assembly, Inspector General of National Police Service, Director of The Public Prosecution, Article 19 East Africa & Kenya Union of Journalists [2018] Eklr, Petition 206 of 2018,).

Nyabola, (2018) in criticizing the Act, argued that the cyber regulation was akin to curtailing the citizens' power in challenging government policies by threatening the Kenyan social media users who are regarded as too critical of the government. The BAKE case was however dismissed by the High Court in February 2020 (Kakah, 2020). In October 2020, the Senate went to court to contest 23 Acts of Parliament that had been passed by the National Assembly without the participation of the Senate. The High Court suspended the 23 Acts among them the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act, 2018 for a period of nine months (Senate of the Republic of Kenya, Speaker of the Senate, Senate Majority Leader, Senate Minority Leader and Council of County Governors *versus* Speaker of the National Assembly & National Assembly of Kenya; Attorney General, Kenya Medical Supplies Authority, Institute for Social Accountability, Mission for Essential Drugs and Supplies, Katiba Institute, Pharmaceutical Society of Kenya, Elias Murundu and Commission on

Revenue Allocation (Interested Parties) [2020] Eklr, Petition 284 and 353 of 2019 (Consolidated).

The Kenyan government has also on numerous occasions requested to have online content pulled down from popular social media platforms such as Google and Facebook. Senior government officials and some members of the political elite quoted certain legislations, morality, and religion to justify the takedown demands. A good example is in the second half of 2017 when the government made demands to Facebook and Google to restrict access to 13 items in Kenya for allegedly violating hate speech (Facebook Transparency, 2019).

In 2018, a local film titled *Rafiki* (Swahili for a friend) was banned from being distributed, exhibited, or broadcasted in any form and any platform including online and social media platforms because the Kenya Film Classification Board (KFCB) noted that it promoted homosexuality which is illegal in Kenya. The film producers went ahead and sued the government to allow the film to be publicly screened and ensure its eligibility for the Oscar Academy Awards. The High Court in September 2018, lifted the ban to allow for the film screening and to meet the eligibility requirements (Wanuri Kahiu and Creative Economy Working Group *versus* CEO, Kenya Film Classification Board - Ezekiel Mutua, Kenya Film Classification Board, Attorney General, Article 19 East Africa & Kenya Christian Professionals Forum [2018] eKLR, Petition 313 of 2018). The film was, however not selected to represent the country in the category of foreign-language film.

Kenyan internet users have also been critical of some of the content posted on social media platforms by other users. In April 2020, a foursome explicit sex video went viral on the Twitter platform. The video showed a woman who is known through her social media handles as Kenya Ssenga, in various sexual acts with three unidentified men. The video caused an uproar on the Twitter social media platform and was later pulled down (Capital FM, 2020). Under the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act 2018, it is an offense in Section 37 to publish obscene or intimate images of someone else.

The Kenyan courts have also participated in having some online content takedown from social media platforms. In 2019 Peter Wanyama, a city lawyer through the courts sued a colleague Nelson Havi for posting defamatory posts concerning him on his Facebook and Twitter social media pages. The court

ordered the online content to be taken down and issued an injunction on the lawyer against posting any more posts about his colleague (Ongeri, 2019). In December 2018, the courts ordered Cyprian Nyakundi, a blogger to remove online information he had posted about Steve Mbogo, a Kenyan politician (House, 2019).

In Kenya, internet intermediaries, once they are made aware of illegal online content in their service platforms, become liable for it as espoused under Section 56 of the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act 2018. The National Cohesion and Integration Act (2008) further defines and outlaws hate speech creating offenses for any media enterprise that publishes utterances that are within the definition of hate speech as adopted by the Act. As such, this implies that the provision can allow the service providers to take down content and even block the accounts of social media users spreading hate speech on social media platforms.

This study intends to fill this gap by examining the public perceptions of Kenyan internet users towards the existing online content regulations. Central to this study are inquiries into the public perceptions towards awareness of the existing online content regulations, the challenges affecting these regulations, the implications of internet access and utilization from the existing online content regulations, and the public perceptions towards the need for further continuous improvement of the existing online content regulations.

Theoretical Framework

Most studies exploring local people's perceptions of regulation policies tend to focus on environmental management and conservation issues (Bennett, 2016; Collins et al., 2020; Ejelov & Nilsson, 2020). Borrowing from the same framework, this study adopts cyberspace as a media ecosystem that needs protection from illegal and harmful online content and its conservation as paramount to the creation of an inclusive, safe, respectful and harmonious cyberspace environment. This is because the cyberspace environment has distinguished itself as a multimedia ecosystem, due to its ability to merge the options of the media that preceded it. It merges the aspects of judgment, the free association of speech and interactivity (Innis, 2008; Postman, 2006) the linearity and independence of both spoken and written text (Postman, 2006; McLuhan, 2003), and the experience orientation of audio-visual media

(McLuhan et al., 1994). This combination of the different aspects into one platform has its distinct social, cultural, as well as psychological feature tendencies, thereby creating a holistic society, represented as an ecosystem.

Bennett, (2016) in his definition of people's perceptions noted that it referred to the public's observation, understanding, interpretation, and evaluation of a policy, or an outcome. Ejelov and Nilsson, (2020) posit that three factors may influence the acceptability of policies among the public. These are socio-demographic factors, personal factors, and policy-specific factors. Demographic factors such as age, gender, and income have a varied impact on the acceptability of policies across various studies. However, some studies have noted that a higher level of education is consistently related to positive acceptability for public policies in the transport sector (Nilsson et al., 2016), environmental recycling (Grębosz-Krawczyk & Siuda, 2019), and climate change (Jagers et al., 2019). Personal factors such as personal values, norms, ideology, political trust, the generalized trust had varied impacts on policies. On the other hand, policy-specific factors which include; specific trust, freedom, fairness, effectiveness, problem awareness, and perceived outcomes indicate a significant influence on the positive perceptions of the public towards the policies consequently translating into public policy support (Ejelov & Nilsson, 2020).

Consequently, this study in exploring the public perceptions towards the existing online content regulations looks into the policy-specific beliefs which Ejelov & Nilsson, (2020) note that this may be effective in explaining public policy acceptability although the importance of the specific beliefs may vary between different policy contexts. According to Bennett, (2016), one of the major benefits of examining public perceptions of conservation-based regulations is that they are pivotal in guaranteeing the success of the regulation. There is a need to conserve and protect the cyber-environment from people who engage in irresponsible internet user behavior and pollute the cyber environment with illegal and harmful online content. Therefore, knowing the perception of internet users is crucial in not only ensuring the success of online content regulations but also in encouraging users to be responsible as they navigate the cyberspace environment.

Methodology

The study employed an exploratory research design and utilized a 5-point Likert scale survey to get a better understanding of public perceptions and acquire new insights into the existing online content regulations in Kenya. The study sample was calculated using Cochran's (1963) formula because of its effectiveness in creating a sample size from a large undefined population and making certain that the sample was a representative enough proportion of the population under study:

$$n_o = \frac{Z^2pq}{e^2} \dots\dots\dots (i)$$

Where:

n = sample size

Z = the Standard Normal Deviate, or Normal score, the value is found in statistical tables that contain the area under the normal curve.

e = the level of precision

p = estimated proportion of attribute present in the population

q= 1-p

For the study to yield a representative sample, the formula employed assumed the maximum variability of 0.5 because we were not aware of the population’s variability in the proportion of active internet users, a 5% level of precision, and a confidence level of 95%.

Calculating the study sample

$$n_o = \frac{Z^2pq}{e^2} = \frac{(1.96)^2(.5)(.5)}{(.05)^2} \dots\dots\dots (ii)$$

Sample size = 385 respondents

The online questionnaire was shared and distributed online through LinkedIn, Facebook, and WhatsApp social networking platforms in the month of June 2021 attracting 540 respondents. Participants were not offered any incentives or asked to provide identifying information. All participants gave informed consent for the data to be used in research by clicking a consent statement that they were required to read at the start of the survey. A cookie

was used to ensure that only one response could be given per ISP address. The data was coded and captured using SPSS statistical analysis software. Thereafter, it was checked for any errors before analysis commenced. Descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize and provide a general overview of responses to the study.

Findings

The study targeted a sample of 600 Kenyan internet users, out of which 540 responses were obtained. This represented an 89.9% response turnout. However, 10 questionnaires had incomplete and/or invalid responses which the researcher discarded. The valid responses of a total of 530 represented 88.3% response turnout. According to Babbie, (2007), any response of 50% and above is adequate for analysis thus 71% was even better. Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) observed that a 50% response rate is adequate, 60% good, while 70% is rated very good.

Public perceptions of online content regulations

The study examined the public perceptions towards the existing online content regulations in three dimensions; (a) the level of awareness of the Kenyan internet user on the existing regulations, (b) internet user participation in the legislative frameworks, and (c) the internet users’ perception of the extent of success of the regulations. Results of the level of awareness of the Kenyan internet users of the existing regulations showed that the scale used to measure internet users’ level of awareness has good reliability, as depicted by Cronbach’s alpha of 0.834 (Table 1). The two items used to measure the internet users’ level of awareness of the existing online content regulations had a scale mean of 3.19. This indicates that the participants in the survey have a satisfactory level of awareness of the existing online content regulations.

Table 1. Internet user awareness of online content regulations

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q9 To what extent do you know about the existing online content regulations?	3.21	1.144	530
Q10 To what extent do you understand the online content regulations that apply to you on the internet?	3.18	1.166	530
Scale means	3.195		2
Cronbach's alpha	.834		2

*Scale: Poor 1 Low 2 Satisfactory 3 Good 4 Excellent 5

Results of perceptions towards user involvement in the existing regulations indicated that the scale used to measure Internet users' involvement in the existing online content regulation has acceptable reliability, as illustrated by Cronbach's alpha of 0.789 (Table 2). The two items used to measure the level of involvement

of internet users in online content regulations had a scale mean of 2.59. This indicates that the participants in the survey perceived a low level of internet user involvement by the government authorities in the existing online content regulations.

Table 2. Internet user-perceived involvement in content regulations

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q16 To what extent do you think the national regulatory authorities have involved internet users in coming up with regulations on online content?	2.66	1.193	530
Q17 To what extent do you think the national regulatory authorities involved internet users in the implementation of online content regulations?	2.54	1.165	530
Scale mean	2.598		2
Cronbach's Alpha	.789		2

*Scale: Poor 1 Low 2 Satisfactory 3 Good 4 Excellent 5

In measuring the public perceptions towards the success of the existing online content regulations as shown in Table 3, the scale used to measure the Internet users' perception of the level of success of the existing online content regulations shows good reliability, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha of 0.820 (Table 3). The three items used to measure internet users' perception of the success of the online content regulations had a scale mean of 2.58. This indicates that the participants in the survey perceived a low

level of success of the existing online content regulations.

Table 3. Internet users' perception of the level of success of the existing online content regulations

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q20 To what extent do you think the existing online content regulations have been successful in eliminating illegal online content such as hate speech or false information from the internet?	2.72	1.242	530
Q21 To what extent do you think the existing online content regulations have been successful in keeping people safe, especially children on the internet?	2.39	1.216	530
Q22 To what extent do you think existing online content regulations have been successful in protecting the personal data of internet users on the internet?	2.63	1.186	530
Scale mean	2.580		3
Cronbach's Alpha	.820		3

*Scale: Poor Low Satisfactory Good Excellent
 1 2 3 4 5

Challenges to the regulation of illegal online content

The study further sought to identify internet users' perceptions of the challenges that limit the effectiveness of the existing online content regulations. Table 4 shows that the scale used to measure the Internet users' perceptions of the challenges affecting the existing online content regulations has acceptable reliability, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha of 0.715. Six items were used to measure internet users' perception of gaps and challenges in the existing online content regulations

had a scale mean of 2.27. This indicates that the respondents in the survey agreed that the challenges such as; limited knowledge and information of the officers involved with online content regulation, lack of political goodwill in regulating online content, lack of clarity in the regulations (e.g., vague and overbroad definitions), lack of awareness of online regulations by internet users, lack of digital skills by internet users utilizing the internet as well as, the unwillingness of internet users to report cases of illegal content to the authorities significantly affect the effectiveness of the existing regulations on online content.

Table 4. Internet users' perceptions of gaps and challenges in the existing online content regulations

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Challenges and gaps of the existing online regulations			
Q23 Limited knowledge and information of the officers involved with online content regulation	2.23	1.039	530
Q24 Lack of political goodwill in regulating online content	2.27	1.110	530
Q25 Lack of clarity in the regulations (e.g., Vague and overbroad definitions)	2.30	1.149	530
Q26 Lack of awareness of online regulations by Internet users	2.18	1.123	530
Q27 Lack of digital skills by internet users utilizing the internet	2.50	1.129	530
Q28 The unwillingness of internet users to report cases of illegal content to the authorities	2.16	1.080	530
Scale mean	2.272		6
Cronbach's Alpha	.715		

*Scale: Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

1 2 3 4 5

Implications of internet access and

utilization from online content regulations

The study also sought to identify the internet users' perceptions of the implications of the existing online content regulations towards digital access and utilization. This was measured through their access to online information, online participation and interactivity, their online freedom of expression, their ability to utilize the internet for socioeconomic benefits, and the facilitation of the internet to be free, open, and accessible. The scale used to measure the Internet users' perceptions of the existing online content regulations concerning the implication of digital inclusivity has acceptable reliability, as shown by Cronbach's alpha of 0.788 (Table 5). The five items used to measure the perceptions of the existing online content regulations concerning the implication of digital inclusivity had a scale mean of 3.301. This indicates that the participants in the survey agree that the existing online content regulations have a somewhat moderate implication on digital inclusivity.

Table 5. Internet users' perceptions of the existing online content regulations concerning their implications to digital inclusivity

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q11 To what extent do the current online content regulations promote your participation and interactivity on social media?	3.24	1.160	530
Q12 To what extent do you think the existing online content regulations promote your freedom of expression online?	3.25	1.138	530
Q13 To what extent do you think the existing online content regulations promote your right to access information online?	3.33	1.141	530
Q14 To what extent do you think the existing online content regulations promote the social-economic benefits brought by new technologies?	3.45	1.089	530
Q15 To what extent do you think the existing online content regulations facilitate the internet to be free, open, and accessible?	3.23	1.112	530
Scale mean	3.301		5
Cronbach's Alpha	.788		5

*Scale: Very Low Low Medium High Very High
 1 2 3 4 5

Need for improvement of the

existing online content regulations

The study also measured the internet user perceptions towards improvements in the existing online content regulations and their opinion on the incorporation of digital literacy to improve the regulation of online content. The findings as illustrated by Table 6 show that the two items used to measure the perceptions of the internet users towards

improvements in the existing online content regulations had a scale mean of 4.57. Additionally, the scale used to measure the Internet users' perceptions of improvements in the existing online content regulations has good reliability, as shown by Cronbach's alpha of 0.876. This indicates that the participants in the survey agreed on the need for improvements in the existing online content regulations.

Table 6. Internet users’ perceptions of improvements in the existing online content regulation

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q31 To what extent do you agree that the national regulatory authorities should improve on the regulation of online content in cyberspace	4.60	1.407	530
Q32 To what extent do you agree that the incorporation of digital literacy among internet users would improve the regulation of online content?	4.56	1.442	530
Scale Mean	4.577		2
Cronbach's Alpha	.876		2

*Scale: Strongly Agree 1 Agree 2 Neutral 3 Disagree 4 Strongly Disagree 5

The study further measured the Internet users’ perceptions of the need for the creation of public awareness on online content regulations together

with digital literacy skills (Figure 1). The majority of the respondents in the survey agreed on the need to create public awareness of the online content regulations coupled with digital literacy skills.

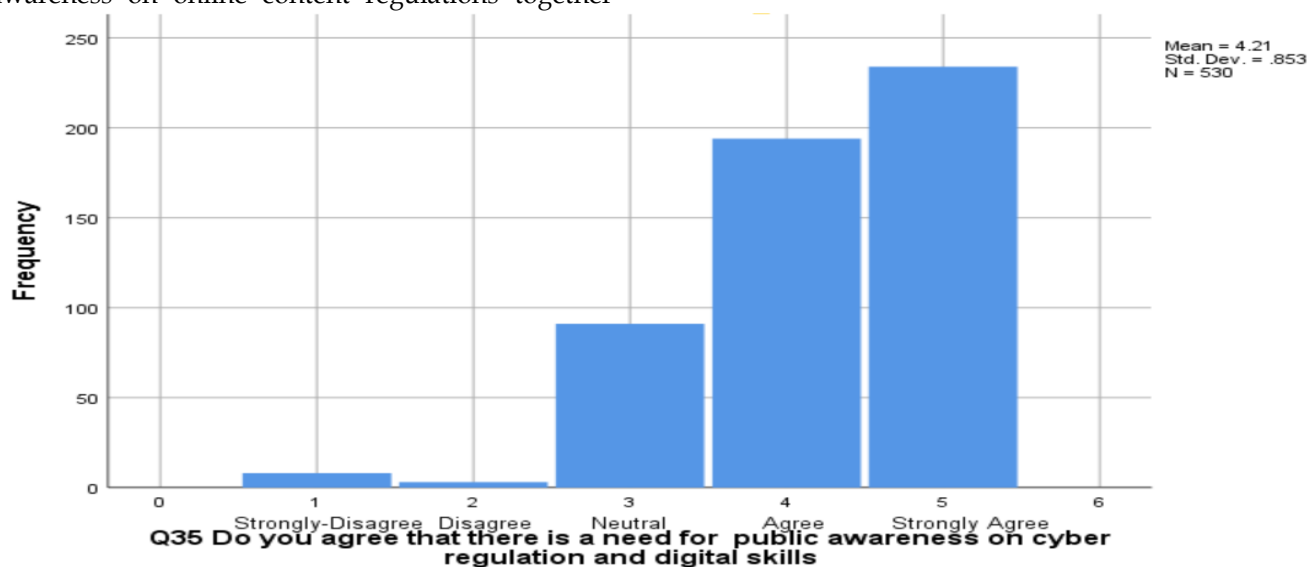


Figure 1. Results of responses on the need for public awareness of regulation and digital literacy

Discussion

This study of public perceptions of Kenyan internet users offers a snapshot reality check that highlights the gravity of the public perceptions towards the regulation of illegal online content and irresponsible internet user behavior in a sub-Saharan African country with an ever-increasing youthful population getting online every day. Online safety concerns are

not only national but global issues as well as the borderless nature of the internet. Additionally, the court-related challenges that have resulted in the suspension of the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act 2018 on several occasions illustrate the need for a more effective online content regulatory framework that is not prone to litigations. By focusing on the policy-specific factors, this study discusses and illustrates their importance in promoting the public

perceptions and acceptability of online content regulation policies.

According to Demir, (2020), the functionality of a healthy democracy needs an informed and committed citizenry whose public perceptions and preferences illustrate a cautious consideration of a wide range of political information. Part of this information concerns the government authorities who are mandated with the implementation of government policy. In rating the acceptance of the public policy, the public's perception of trust towards government authorities involved in public policy implementation is very helpful in forming evaluations of a policy (He & Ma, 2020). As reflected in the survey, most Kenyan internet users have a low level of trust in the government authorities responsible for implementing policies and regulations. This is illustrated in their perceived low levels of participation in coming up with and implementing the regulatory policies.

Additionally, the majority of the respondents agreed that limited knowledge and information of the officers involved with online content regulation, the lack of political goodwill in regulating online content, and the lack of clarity in the regulations (e.g. vague and overbroad definitions) challenge the effectiveness of the online content regulations. These perceptions could translate to the public's lack of confidence in the institutions mandated with the implementation of public policies. He and Ma, (2020) advice that the proper designing and execution of citizen participation in public policies generate positive outcomes, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of both the regulatory policies and the government. In Kenya, this citizen participation is espoused in Article 10 of the Kenya Constitution as a requirement in policy-making however, it has proved to be a challenge. This is because the constitution does not explicitly state how public participation should be conducted and there is a lack of substantive law on public participation. Imbo and Kiruthu, (2019) and Pabari and Odhwa, (2020) in their studies also observed that the lack of public participation regulations or guidelines has subsequently limited the capacity for public participatory processes in Kenyan policymaking.

When measuring the effectiveness of a public policy, Jagers et al., (2017) note that the public perception that a policy can both individually and collectively solve social problems may translate to the public's

acceptability of the public policy. In addressing the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act 2018, having some sections of the Kenyan public (inferring to the bloggers and the members of the Senate) challenge the law's constitutionality in court denotes a lack of public acceptability of the law. These disagreements between some sections of the public and the law could to some extent account for the survey results indicating the respondents perceived a low level of the regulations being successful in curbing illegal online content, promoting online safety, and protecting personal data. Consequently, this limits the effectiveness of the regulation in fulfilling its intended purpose in the Kenyan cyberspace environment. This is especially true for more than 25 months when the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act, 2018 is in suspension.

Ejelov and Nilsson, (2020) denote the need for distinguishing between individual perceived outcomes and collective perceived outcomes from a public policy. When the public perceives a greater personal benefit from the policy, the scholars note that this could positively relate to the acceptability of the policy. In the Kenyan case, one of the issues being contested in the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act, of 2018 was the right to freedom of expression as espoused in Article 33 of the Kenya constitution. BAKE in their petition argued that Section 22 and 23 of the Act limits the right to the freedom of expression through the use of vague terminologies which also goes against Article 24(2) of the Kenya Constitution on the clarity and specificity of laws. This observation was also raised by Walubengo and Mutemi, (2018) and Sugow, (2019) who in their analysis of the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act, 2018 observed that the law fails to define the words 'publish' in Sections 22 and 23 of the Act. Additionally, Sugow (2019) noted that the use of the word reasonable grounds in Section 53(d) of the Act weaponized the law, by making use of the words 'publish' and 'reasonable grounds' prone to subjective interpretation.

Some scholars further advance that when a section of the public perceives that a policy might in one way or another infringe on their rights then there is a high likelihood of lower acceptability of the policy by the public (Ejelov & Nilsson, 2020). This has been evidenced in transport (Jagers et al., 2017), energy (Leijten et al., 2014), and environmental issues (Garba & Gunawardana, 2017). Likewise, the more a policy is perceived to infringe on individual freedoms, the

less fair the public perceives it (Douenne & Fabre, 2020) consequently, affecting its acceptability (Nordlund et al., 2018). These concerns are consistent with the study results where most of the respondents agreed to the existing regulations influencing their access and utilization of the Internet. Although the study did not measure whether the influence was negative or positive, there was a general census from the survey respondents indicating the necessity to improve on the existing regulations, with a greater need for the creation of public awareness of the existing online content regulations coupled with digital literacy skills.

Taken together, the diverse set of evidence illustrated in this study suggests that despite the online content regulations being in place, there is a need for positive public perceptions to guarantee the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulations in achieving their intended goals. Public trust is paramount in easing the work of the government agencies in the implementation of public policies and in collaborating with the public, especially in reporting illegal online content and incidents of irresponsible user behavior. The findings indicate that the citizens' knowledge of the regulations is not enough to promote positive perceptions, and there is a need for more internet user involvement and participation as well as the integration of the existing moderate knowledge on content regulations with digital literacy. This position is also supported by Yue et al., (2019) who note that integrating digital literacy initiatives may lead the public to develop more numerous and internally consistent attitudes, boost their involvement, and promote several civic attitudes such as efficacy and political interest.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the public perceptions of Kenyans towards the existing online content regulations. Although the law has been subject to several months of suspension from the court cases it has been subjected to; there seems to be a low public perception towards the success of regulating illegal online content and irresponsible user behavior. By focusing on the policy-specific factors, the study has illustrated their importance in promoting the acceptability of a public policy. Consequently, identifying a gap that needs to be filled in enhancing positive public perceptions and acceptability of the existing online content regulations. There is an urgent need to find solutions to reduce the court litigations

against public policies in Kenya. Also, there is a need to find ways how government implementation agencies can integrate Kenyan internet users in taking part in the regulation of online content in the quest for an inclusive, respectful, and harmonious cyberspace environment.

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