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Social Media Listening Analysis

KENYA

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

The 2022 elections came at a time of significant economic discontent, with Kenyans concerned about rising costs of living, public debt, corruption and post Covid-19 recovery. A shuffling of identity politics was witnessed, away from inter-tribal solidarity towards an inter-class and elite competition, hinged on socio-economic inequalities, and featured as a 'hustler against dynasties'[1] contest, appealing to a majority of already struggling Kenyans. The widening rift between former President Uhuru Kenyatta and its then Deputy President William Ruto who stood for the presidential seat further raised the political stakes resulting in shifting loyalties among the political elites, voting patterns and interference of state institutions. Despite these stakes involved, the usual ethnic based tensions recurring in election cycles were less pronounced, as the political contenders mounted issue based campaigns banking on cross tribal support, resulting in relatively peaceful elections. Yet, despite peace prevailing at the community level, social media platforms emerged as fertile grounds to amplify politically instigated hate speech, disinformation, misinformation and manipulation of content. While much attention was focused on platforms like Facebook, a report[2] from the Mozilla Foundations revealed TikTok as the latest platform used for electoral-related disinformation, further exacerbated by the lack of strong measures taken by the platform to moderate local content online.

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[1] Global Challenges, "Hustlers versus Dynasty": Kenya's New Class Politics, March 2021
[2] Mozilla Foundation, From Dance App to Political Mercenary: How disinformation on TikTok gaslights political tensions in Kenya, 2022

In this context, Search for Common Ground (Search) in collaboration with the Human Rights Agenda (HURIA), Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI), Kiunga Youth Bunge Initiative (KYBI), Tana River Peace, Reconciliation and Development (TRPRD) and Ijara Women for Peace established an Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) system through embedded community observation and social media listening, with the aim to harness the shared information between communities, civil society organizations, and government authorities to identify and address imminent threats to peaceful elections, particularly looking at conflict trends, drivers and locations that could potentially trigger or experience violence. In partnership with Build Up, social media listening monitored online conversations, with a focus on Facebook and TikTok, to track hate speech, disinformation and misinformation trends and how these could potentially affect conflicts offline.

Methodology

From July 15 to September 15, 2022, Search and Build Up partnered to conduct social media listening of key Facebook and TikTok accounts and keywords, focusing on Mombasa, Kwale, Lamu, Tana River, Kilifi and Garissa Counties in Kenya. The objective of the social media listening exercise focusing on election related hate speech in Kenya was to:

- Map out main actor, actor networks, trending keywords, and main topics of discussion related ethnic, political, and gender-based harmful narratives surrounding the August 9th general election
- Analyze the link between online and offline conflict dynamics
- Provide recommendations for programming

A social media source list and a slur list[3] was developed in collaboration with Search's local partners along the Coastal counties and Garissa county. Crowdtangle was used to gather data from Facebook while TikTok data was scraped from Google chrome through HTTP Archive format files. Data gathering happened on a weekly basis and data sets from both platforms were compiled, integrated and presented in an interactive dashboard using Google Data Studio. Total TikTok videos and Facebook posts gathered and analyzed are as shown below:

4,133 videos

140,573 posts

Limitations: During the media monitoring exercise, the project team encountered several limitations that it attempted to mitigate.

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[3] A slur list is a compilation of pejorative terms or phrases in a specific context that polarize conversations online within that context

- *Data Access:* TikTok does not have a platform like Crowdtangle from Meta to help follow, analyze, and report on what's happening on Facebook. The team had to develop a third party data gathering tool to access TikTok data.
- *Language:* Although much of the data gathered online was in Swahili and English, there was some data in various vernacular languages that was not translated for analysis. Thus, the clarity of and insight from our data is likely limited by this

Key findings

1.   Pre- Elections

The social media monitoring on Facebook and TikTok revealed multiple narratives containing harmful narratives. These narratives focused on collective polarization, manifesting as electorates divided along ethnic and racial lines, targeting political competitors with inflammatory content, and institutional legitimacy manifesting as electoral misconduct.

a.   Collective Polarization

Racial divisions including the special case of Arab and non-Arab communities

The entry of former Nairobi Governor Mike Mbuvi Sonko into the Mombasa Gubernatorial race saw the emergence of online harmful content dividing Kenyans of Arab descent and non-Arab / non-Swahili communities along the Kenyan Coast. This narrative draws from long existing fault lines between the Arab and the non-Arabs in Mombasa, dating as far back as the early 1900s during Sheikh Al-Amin Ali Mazrui's reform efforts[4]. Sonko's utterances during the campaign period signaled that the Arabs and Swahili communities had ruled Mombasa County for too long and it was time for them to go home. As a result, Sonko's ethnic group (Akamba) was targeted online, labeled as "homosexuals" and that they were "wabara"[5] and did not belong in Mombasa (which was touted as belonging to the Mijikenda community) and should leave and go back to their lands in Eastern Kenya. Kenyans of Arab descent were also targeted, being told to leave Mombasa due to their racism and their poor management of the County.

In Lamu County, videos of one gubernatorial candidate, (Hon. Issa Timmamy), perceived as marginalizing Kenyan "non-locals" in Lamu county surfaced online. By calling non-Arabs and non-Swahili communities living in Lamu as "watu sampuli sampuli"[6] in the video, he played on fears that they were the ones taking over land ownership in Lamu and that it should not be allowed. This sentiment triggered divisive conversations that saw Hon. Issa Timamy insulted for these utterances while others co-opted the term in a satirical way to mobilize support for their candidate.

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[4] Chome, N. (2019). From Islamic reform to Muslim activism: the evolution of an Islamist ideology in Kenya. African Affairs, 118(472), 531-552

[5] The term "wabara" is used to refer to the outsider communities. While the term is not hateful, in multiple instances it has been used to sow division between various communities along the coast. For instance, Sonko and his team were referred to as wabara on multiple occasions and campaigns against him urged coastal voters not to vote for or be led by wabara.

[6] Watu sampuli Sampuli directly translates to "various people"or "those other people", but in the context of Lamu county, it is used to mean "people who don't look like us*"*

Ethnic divisions

Divisive narratives based on ethnicity were also witnessed in the pre-election period, based on pre-existing stereotypes targeted at specific ethnic groups, most of which are predominantly found in the Kenyan Coast. For instance, speech degrading and dehumanizing the Duruma community was seen with posts referring to the community as hyenas and or supporting a hyena from their community. In other instances they were being referred to as the most backward and retarded community in Kenya.

On the other hand, there was also content that aimed to exalt the Duruma community as the only ones that deserve to hold power in Kwale County, and also aimed at targeting the Digo community as not worthy to rule over the Duruma community. In one TikTok video, an individual is heard shouting that "**we shall not allow to be ruled by a Digo**". The TikTok has the image of Lung'anzi C. Mangale- (a Kwale Governor aspirant) - with text that says, "**we Durumas shall not be ruled by Digos. Hate speech, and that is why we have rejected Lung'anzi**". The person posting this TikTok is calling out Lun'ganzi's camp for using hate speech in their campaign. This divisive narrative between Durumas and Digos has been witnessed on Facebook as well. While the Digo and the Duruma are sub-tribes that are under the Mijikenda, tensions over political dominance in Kwale exist and are exploited for political mobilization during elections[7].

Other ethnic based hateful speech was seen in Malindi County, in the form of divisive conversations online about the ethnic composition of leadership of Malindi. Analysis shows that on one side, Malindi natives i.e. the Giriama community did not want "outsiders'' to be leaders in their area and wanted to elect local people. Alternatively, there were "outsiders" who were planning to take over leadership in Malindi and not share power/leadership with the Giriamas. In the midst of these conversations a video began circulating on social media where purported "outsiders"- said to be the Luo community living in Malindi - were insulting the Giriama and planning on ways to take over Malindi's leadership.

The video and its descriptive text that was analysed draws its divisive narrative from a broader stereotype used by people from upcountry to demean Coastal/Swahili/tribal communities and to justify systems of ethnic discrimination that exclude local populations from political leadership, jobs, claiming that, as a people, they are uneducated and unreliable[8].

Economy and poverty discourse

Discourse about the economy and levels of poverty within the community dominated a lot of the discussions online. Incumbent leaders received most of the blame for the poor state of affairs in the County, while their opponents were looked at with suspicion and accused of being no different from their predecessors, that they will still be corrupt if they got into power. While political rhetoric of this type is allowed on social media platforms and even encouraged by advocates for free speech it is problematic when it negatively polarizes and divides communities along their identities. For instance in Mombasa county some politicians alleged that the outgoing Mombasa governor and the President sold the port to Arabs in Dubai. This resulted in conversations alleging the favoritism of some ethnic groups through the use of the port and its employment opportunities. Some people noted that only the Arab community in Mombasa that the governor hailed from and non- Mijikenda communities had benefited from the port before it was moved inland where it only benefited the Kalenjin community-where the deputy president hailed from.

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[7] International Alert (2022) Uwiano, machafuko au Utengano: The path towards August 2022 elections in Kenya
[8] Peacetech Lab (2017). Youth and Radicalization in Mombasa: A lexicon of violent extremist language on social media.

As political actors campaigned on social media, there was documentation of communities living in deplorable conditions as a campaign tool. Some politicians would document the poor communities and caption this with a message of change and improved living conditions if they got elected. Our analysis however revealed that some individuals responding to these types of campaigns in Mombasa did not believe that the poor people in the videos were "Coastarians[9]". They went as far as stating that they should be returned "home" and referred to them with hateful terms like ombaomba[10]. The wabara or "outsiders" narrative seen earlier also shows up here as social media users claim that the poor are the wabara and need to be returned home.

The constitution of Kenya 2010, provides for the freedom of movement and residence under the Bill of rights. That every citizen has the right to enter, remain in and reside anywhere in Kenya[11]. Demanding that Kenyans of a specific ethnic group or social class be evicted from a county goes against these freedoms enshrined in the constitution and are likely to prevent community integration and cohesion and creating divides that can be exploited for violence.

Insults against political leaders

As political leaders were exchanging blame for the economic woes in different counties, the online conversations stemming from these exchanges would spiral into insults, hateful rhetoric and mudslinging campaigns against political leaders. In Mombasa county, the clash between Mike Sonko and former governor Ali Hassan Joho during the campaign period, played out on social media as the public branded them homosexuals and drug dealers. In Kwale county, Lung'anzi Mangale- a Gubernatorial aspirant was labeled as a hyena with divisive politics and hungry for power.

Women candidates particularly were disproportionately targeted with hate online that would sexualize them and attack their families and social status. Aisha Jumwa -a Kilifi gubernatorial aspirant- for instance, was constantly attacked with insults and hate speech that was sometimes sexist. For instance, there was a video on TikTok of a politician insulting Aisha Jumwa as **"having the body shape of a probox"**[12] at a public campaign rally.

In Malindi county, politicians such as Amina Mnyazi - a Malindi Member of Parliament aspirant - were victims of propaganda and mudslinging campaigns. Content emerged on social media that Amina was a project that had been funded by a person called Renzo to take back a large parcel of land from the community and give it back to Renzo. This would later be used to caution the residents of Malindi from voting for Amina because **she was poisonous**. Others cited that Malindi had decided "**not to vote for her until she got married and moved out of her mothers house".**

Manipulated audio and video material was also seen on TikTok, a few days before the election. An edited audiogram claiming that Moha Jicho pevu will impeach Raila Odinga if he wins the elections surfaced on TikTok a day before the election day. The comments analysis revealed that TikTok users seemed to be aware that the post was doctored and not true. This points to an awareness and a level of alertness in the social media community during this period where a lot of misinformation is circulating on social media.

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[9] *An informal term used to refer to the indigenous communities found in coastal Kenya.*

[10] A derogatory term used to refer a community as beggars, or a community that is lazy and cant work and instead choose to beg

[11] Constitution of Kenya (2010). Chapter four- Bill of Rights, Part 2: Rights and fundamental Freedoms. Article 39

[12] A probox is a five-door, two- or four-seater light commercial van and passenger wagon manufactured by Daihatsu for Toyota that has a wide boxy shape

b.   Institutional legitimacy

Electoral misconduct

There was also a high volume of conversations alleging incidents of **voter bribery and other forms of electoral misconduct.** For instance, some social media users stated they were receiving large amounts of money, as the election day drew near, compared to the beginning of the campaign. Political parties and candidates were also targeted through these allegations online, and accused of bribing voters and purchasing identity cards from the electorate in order to limit the voter turnout. For instance, Fatuma Achani who was running for the governor position in Kwale was accused of voter bribery by her opponent's camp on social media.

> *...Tonight, Fatuma Mohamed Achani has Given village admins *500K* per village to bribe you so that she can continue to oppress you. Kindly I urge all of you to take the MONEY from Achani because it is your money. But vote for the right leaders tomorrow. 1. _To end Corruption in Kwale , Achani must go._ 2. _To bring medicine in our hospitals, Achani must go._ 3. _To create jobs four our youths, Achani must go._ 4. _To improve our infrastructure, Achani must go._ 5. _To restore dignity in leadership, Achani must Go._ *Take the money from Achani, But Vote for Prof Hamadi Idd Boga.* _Thank you._*

While various political actors and their camps were accused of voter bribery it was not backed by evidence to determine whether it was true. This contributed to information disorder during the electoral period where disinformation and misinformation was prevalent. A linked narrative to voter bribery, also seen on social media, was the encouragement of the electorate to take the bribes but vote for the "right leaders". A narrative that seems to normalize the concept of voter bribery during elections and is expected in one form or another. As a result, people online were stating that they will take the money and still make their independent decisions.

Elections, Tallying and Counting

On Election day and the few days that followed, the information landscape shifted to describing the events of voting, tallying and counting. Information also focused more on the happenings at particular polling stations at the ward level. From our analysis, the main conversations that were emerging on social media are outlined in below sections.

2a. Election day

a.   Institutional Legitimacy

Electoral misconduct

On election day, Kenyans woke up to news of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commision (IEBC) postponing four local polls until further notice due to erroneous ballot papers. Gubernatorial polls for

Mombasa were among the ones affected. This was met with disinformation and propaganda on social media. For instance, images of what some claimed to be the erroneous Mombasa ballot paper for the gubernatorial position began circulating with Sonko's name and image on the paper, with captions alleging that the IEBC was trying to rig the election in favor of Sonko. Sonko had earlier been barred from contesting for the gubernatorial seat in Mombasa county, as such the false images of the ballot papers triggered highly polarized conversations. The resulting responses were filled with insults as some social media users raised their concerns with IEBC while others tried to debunk the false information. For instance:

"I smell a rat, shitty Chebukati is hiding something"

"***You are one very lazy ill informed blogger. The ballot papers had
already been printed bfo Sonko's revocation!!!***"

Other ethnic driven posts emerged on the same issue of the mix up and postponement and following the disqualification of Mike Mbuvi Sonko as an aspirant for the Mombasa Gubernatorial race. There was a narrative calling upon Mijikenda to vote for an aspirant from their tribe as a way of liberating them from the hands of "wala urojo"[13] rule in Mombasa County

b.   Physical Violence

At the constituency level, there were incidents that disrupted elections at some polling centers. Chaos erupted[14] in Mvita constituency at a polling station where supporters from different camps clashed. Some social media users took this opportunity to target the Orange Democratic Movement party (ODM) as a violent party (a nationwide narrative targeting the OMD party and its leader, that began months before the elections) while others spun it as violence between the arab community - a local narrative targeting the Arab community in the Kenyan coast.

"ODM is literally a violent party."

In Nyali constituency (Mombasa county) images of Mohammed Ali aka "Moha Jicho Pevu", the incumbent aspirant for Nyali Constituency, lying in an ambulance began circulating on social media. Moha had been trailed by goons but was rescued by the police and taken to a police station[15] where he became dizzy and was taken to hospital. Online content covering Moha's ordeal was however met with insulting and inflammatory content towards him and his supporters. While the targeted insults continued to pile on, others argued that the images and situation he was in, was stage-managed.

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[13] Wala Urojo (those who eat soup) in this context is used in a derogatory way to refer to communities of Arab descent residing in Mombasa County

[14] The Star (2022). Mvita UDA candidate arrested after chaos erupts at polling station. Available at https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/realtime/2022-08-09-mvita-uda-candidate-arrested-after-chaos-erupt-at-polling-station/ Accessed on August 9, 2022.

[15] K24 Digital (2022). Nyali MP locked up in a cell as suspected goons bay for his blood. Available at : https://www.k24tv.co.ke/news/nyali-mp-locked-up-in-police-cell-as-suspected-goons-bay-for-his-blood-74838/. Accessed on August 9, 2022.

"The oldest trick in the book, looking for sympathy votes"

This strategy is becoming more common in information/communication ecosystems where malicious actors focus on discrediting legitimate incidents instead of putting out overt mis/disinformation campaigns. This contributes further to information disorder[16] creating a situation where online communities begin to question the legitimacy of reliable and trusted sources of information.

Offline altercations between political leaders also generated inflammatory narratives online. For instance, Mike Sonko and his team got into a violent altercation with the gubernatorial contestant for Mombasa county Abdulswamad Nassir and the incumbent governor Ali Hassan Joho. Sonko was whisked away bylaw enforcement agents for his own safety. Multiple videos circulating on TikTok and Facebook, covering snippets of the altercation, generated polarizing comments that were a mixed bag of insults, violence condemnation and satire.

The wabara narrative that has been present in previous themes was also seen in some reactions while insults and hateful content also varied from targeting individuals to groups.

Security incidents were also reported in some counties on election day. In Garissa county voting was suspended due to security concerns after a gunfire incident[17]. Immediately this happened, information about the incident emerged on social media platforms with varied allegations:

"Gunshots and voting interrupted at Dadaab Primary polling station, Garissa County. Tension high as a result of Farah Maalim vs Kerrow."

This post above for instance alleging that the security concern was because two political candidates were fighting each other, was met with various responses as others insulted the candidates and accused them of the violence. Others condemned the information as false while others used stereotypes against the Somali community.

"Farah Maalim has armed militias"

2b. Counting and Tallying

Vote counting and tallying began immediately after voting was completed. In this period, **the online information monitored in our process shifted from previous insults to more forms of disinformation about the counting and tallying activities and the results that were streaming in on mainstream media.**

As early as the second day of tallying, allegations against Kwale gubernatorial candidate Fatuma Achani and her camp on ballot box stuffing began to emerge on social media. It is important however, to note that at least two presiding officers were arrested in Kwale, their affiliation or who they were working for had not been ascertained[18]. Despite mainstream media covering these incidents and others with accurate

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[16] Wardle Claire (2020). Understanding Information disorder. Available at: https://firstdraftnews.org/long-form-article/understanding-information-disorder/ Accessed on August 13, 2022.

[17] Capital FM (2022). Kenya: Voting Suspended in Eldas Constituency Due to Security Concerns. Available at: https://allafrica.com/stories/202208100047.html. Accessed on August 14 2022.

[18] The Star (2022). Two arrested for possessing ballot papers, Forms 34A in Kwale. Available at https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2022-08-11-two-arrested-for-possessing-ballot-papers-forms-34a-in-kwale/. Accessed on 13th August 2022

information, some social media users claimed - without reasonable evidence - that the perpetrators of election misconduct belonged to a particular party or were acting on behalf of a specific candidate.

HAPPENING NOW Counting of Ballot Papers for the Position of Kwale County Governor has not started in some Wards in Kwale County. Concerns of Ballot Staffing after two Fatuma Achani campaigner got arrested while in possession of Ballot papers. One of those arrested with Ballot Papers if former Candidate for UDA Senator, Mshenga Ruga. Joseph Wambua, also Known as Mutunga of Kwale town was today morning nubbed with two ballot boxes containing Ballot papers as he tried to bring them to Kwale Town's Baraza Park polling station. Remain vigilant…

The presence of voices opposing disinformation in a political context might signal a subset of a public that is aware of this information online and is willing to push back against it to prevent further spread. While this is yet to be determined, identifying and amplifying opposing voices against harmful content online can play a major role in addressing harms online.

Allegations of ballot stuffing were not unique to Kwale county, and were emerging in relation to different counties across Kenya from Homa Bay, Kirinyaga and Nairobi Counties.

Beyond the false accusations and allegations, **this period saw a lot of false and unverified election results circulating online.** Immediately the IEBC began uploading their tallying and counting results on a publicly accessible portal while social media was flooded with information from users declaring unverified results. Despite efforts by the IEBC cautioning against people making winning or losing declarations when the commission had not yet officially declared the results, this wave of unverified information continued up until the IEBC and mainstream media declared and broadcasted the information respectively. For instance, In the post below the person congratulates Aisha Jumwa - a contestant for the Kilifi gubernatorial position- on August 10th for her win. Official results of her loss were announced days later by IEBC.

Governor-Aisha Jumwa wins it..Congratulations Mama 👏

While the official IEBC results aligned with the above claim, the claim had been made 2 days before the official results, signifying that it was unverified. The claim received support online via comments and likes, which is not uncommon especially during elections where social media users might begin aligning with information that supports their intended results.

While this information might include insults e.g. vibaraka[19] but is not hateful, it contributes to increasing polarization in an already divided society during elections. As broadcasts of the official results for various positions began, the losing candidates found themselves on the receiving end when Kenyans took to social media with insults and hate. Aisha Jumwa was bullied and ridiculed when official results of her loss was announced. Insults and hateful narratives against political leaders.

AISHA JUMWA IS FEELING MENSTRUATION I don't know why

In Kwale county politics, Lung'anzi and Hamadi Boga were also targeted after they lost.

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[19] Pupppets

2c. Post elections

On 15th August, the IEBC declared the winner of the presidential election, marking the beginning of the post election period. The Mombasa gubernatorial race was however conducted on August 29th, after being postponed due to errors on the ballot papers.

a.   Collective Polarization

In the lead up to the vote, some campaign messages focused on using divisive narratives to stir up emotions. For instance, some online posts depicted that the candidate receiving support from the incumbent was part of a leadership that had marginalized people based on ethnicity, tribe and religion and color. The same narrative that Mike Sonko had used when he was planning to run for office. Other posts depicted that the candidate belonging to the president - elect party was a tribalist and they could not vote for him.

Dis/ misinformation on election misconduct was also prevalent online on election day and it targeted these political leaders that had come to support their candidates. For instance, Mike Sonko - former Nairobi Governor- while targeting Esther Passaris[20] posted the following on Facebook:

Nairobi County Women Representative Esther Muthoni Passaris arrested at Kongowea social Hall,bribing voters with ksh 200…. Sharing video shortly… Cc Mike Sonko

It was later found out to be disinformation after Esther Passaris responded on Twitter:[21]

Other political leaders from other regions that were campaigning in Mombasa were also caught up in the disinformation wave. For instance a video circulating on social media of a group of young men attacking an individual in a vehicle included a caption stating that Moses Kuria[22] was bribing voters in Mombasa. It was later found out that the person in the vehicle being attacked was not Moses Kuria. While politicians are allowed to provide support to their candidates in different counties, it can be said that in Mombasa County, any "outsider" politician was met with suspicion by the local electorate. False and accurate content that targeted the "outsider" politicians had some reactions that carried the sentiment of asking them to leave Mombasa county and go back to their homes and county and not get involved in Mombasa county politics.

In the broader coastal region, insults and narratives against political leaders that had lost the election continued online. Women e.g Aisha Jumwa, were especially insulted and trolled with gendered hateful language.

At the national level, the presidential results by IEBC were contested at the supreme court of Kenya[23]and on September 5th the court upheld the election results. **Online conversations at the local level shifted to discuss national level candidates and their parties.** A common theme was on the number of times that

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[20] Esther Passaris is a politician who was contesting for the Women's Representative position in Nairobi County-

[21] See Appendix for social media response by passaris
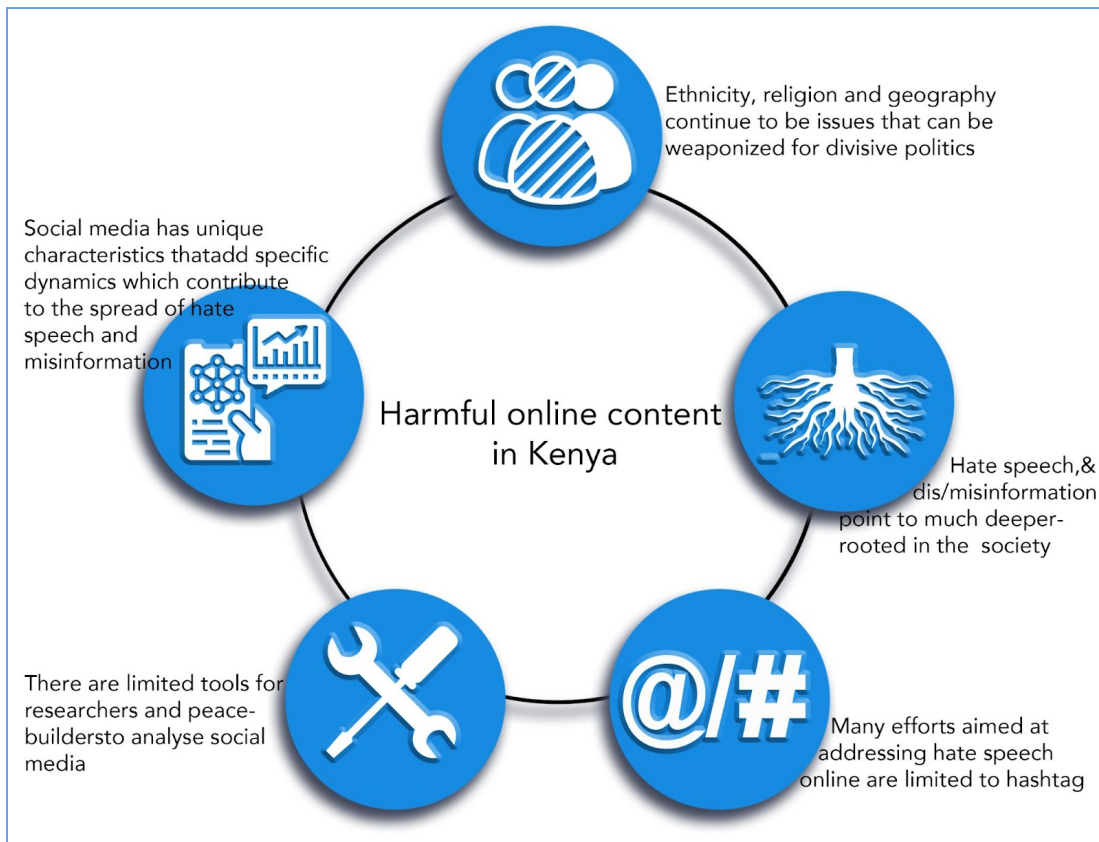
[22] Moses Kuria is a politician who was contesting for the gubernatorial seat in Kiambu County

[23] Business Daily Africa (2022). Raila contests presidential election results in the Supreme court. Available at: https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/economy/raila-contests-presidential-election-results-supreme-court-3922660. Accessed on : August 24th 2022

Raila has run as a presidential candidate and the number of times he has claimed that the election was rigged against his favor.

Conclusion

Social media conversations in Mombasa reveal that themes surrounding harmful speech are inter-related on various facets. **Political discourse is embedded in divisive narratives about the outsider community** e.g. between Arab and Non-Arab communities, indigenous and non-indigenous communities that are rooted in deeper issues e.g. of historical grievances related to resource allocation between communities.

All these show up online as a hateful post that catalyzes a string of more hateful comments and reactions. Within this ecosystem, the efforts that exist to address the harm are mainly limited to hashtag activism and peace messaging campaigns. As researchers of this space we also recognise that local peacebuilders have limited tools to monitor the social media spaces where this hate resides. As such, peace actors might not be fully aware of the role that unique characteristics, e.g. speed and scale, that social media platforms play in contributing to the spread of harmful content.

Recommendations

Civil society

Increase capacity and skills to digital media listening: Civil society organizations need to invest in and continue the monitoring of social media to understand how harmful narratives shift over time and over various incidents helps civil society actors to be aware of situations where violence might be catalyzed or when new divisive themes emerge. For instance, awareness of long standing issues online that have the potential to weaponize or polarize communities online (e.g. the Mombasa Port) during an election, can be addressed early in digital spaces before the election as a preventive measure.

Sustained engagement with communities that goes beyond elections: Concentrating on the societal root of harmful content online is key to changing the societal dynamics around hate speech that shows up online. This requires sustained community engagement, that begins when one general election ends and continues to when the next one begins. Social media monitoring and analysis can serve as snapshots in time to guide civil society actors to evaluate whether the sustained offline engagement is changing societal dynamics.

Address hate speech with an awareness of mis-disinformation: Civil society actors should think of applying approaches that address hate speech and disinformation and misinformation together and not necessarily separately. Hate speech thrives where disinformation about a target group is rife. Only targeting one digital harm e.g. hate speech and neglecting disinformation fails to view digital harms as interlocking under various societal systems, resulting in half baked solutions.

Technology Companies

Accessible social media monitoring tools: Technology companies should provide easy to access tools and platforms for monitoring their products. Barriers to access these tools, relegates platform users and communities to powerless actors who have to wait for the companies to provide trends analysis and reports of the volume of harmful content they have acted on within their platforms. Communities need to be able to interrogate these trends as they unfold, hold perpetrators and technology companies accountable.

Transparency on platforms' risk of harm: Technology companies need to be transparent on the harms or any risks that the users of their platforms might be exposed to at any given time. Social media companies have a duty to protect users of their products and often research the impacts their products have on users and develop policies to mitigate any harm. The leaked Facebook papers for instance revealed the extent of Meta's knowledge about the realities of their algorithm to enforce polarization and radicalize users. TikTok's algorithm was found to suppress and censor content from Black creators, warranting an apology from the company.

Appendix

A sample of social media posts highlighted to show how various themes were showing up online.

Pre Elections

a.   Collective Polarization

Racial divisions, including the special case of Arab and Non-Arab Communities	
Watu sampuli sampuli tumeamua umoja ni nguvu . Tunataka kiongozi atakaye tusikiza. Kiongozi ambaye hata tutusi . Kiongozi ambaye hata baguaa . Kiongozi ambaye ata timiza ahadi zake. Kiongozi ambaye ni Eric Mugo . #EM005 #Eric4governor . We want change and prosperity with Eric Mugo	*We the sampuli sampuli people have decided that unity is strength. We want a leader that will listen to us. A leader that won't insult us. A leader who will not discriminate against us. A leader who will deliver their promises. A leader who is Eric Mugo. #EM005 #Eric4governor . We want change and prosperity with Eric Mugo*

Ethnic Divisions	
Waduruma ndio watu washamba Kenya nzima. Kubali Ukweli	*The Duruma is the most backward community in Kenya..Just accept the truth*
Sisi hatutakubali kutawaliwa na Mdigo	*We shall not allow to be ruled by a Digo*
Waduruma hatutawaliwa na Wadigo. Hate speech na ndio tumekataa Lunganzi	*We Durumas shall not be ruled by Digos. Hate speech and that's why we have refused Lunganzi*
Mumeona hip video, wajaluo wanasema wagiriama ni wajinga na wavivu na lazima wawatawale hapo MLD town ward? Chungeni Sana	*Have you seen that video where the Luos are saying that Giriamas are stupid and Lazy and they must rule over them here in Malindi Town Ward? Be very careful*
Ukabila lazima Kwani Wajaluo Klf ni kwao, siakatafte kwao	*Tribalism is a must, does Kilifi belong to the Luos, let them vie where they come from.*

Economy and Poverty Discourse	
People buying narrative ya port kurudi huku, they don't understand that the port iko Rift Valley kwa Kalenjins, so Kalenjin president will take away that port from them airudishe Mombasa (laughs/scoffs)	*People buying the narrative of the port being returned here, don't understand that the port is in Rift Valley where Kalenjins reside, so a Kalenjin president will take away that port from then and return it to Mombasa? laughs/scoffs.*

Nimeishi Rift Valley sana haswa Nakuru na Naivasha, Eldoret, I have a better understanding of that area kushinda, that facility benefits Kalenjins more than anyone else I know. Kikuyu wako huko but Kikuyu don't value kazi za kuandikwa kama huku	*I have lived in the RiftValley for a while, specifically in Nakuru, Naivasha and Eldoret. I have a better understanding of that area than you. That facility benefits Kalenjins more than anyone else I know. Kikuyus are there but kikuyus don't value employment jobs like here.*
Fanya mpango wewe na Sonko muwaregeshe makwao, plz wameijaza Mombasa	*You should plan together with Sonko to return these people to their homelands/hometowns, please they have filled up Mombasa.*
Jamani pia kuna wanaoletwa. Few years ago nilikua Makadara. Duka la muhindi akanionesha gari pick up imekuja ikadrop watu hao <u>ombaomba</u>	*There are also those that are brough here. Few years ago I was in Makadara at an Indian shop. He showed me a pick up truck that had brought and dropped these beggars (beggar community)*
Insults against political leaders	
<u>Wote ni mashoga</u>, what kind of politic are they running	*They are all homosexuals, what kind of politics are they running*
Umaskini, ukosefu wa ajira kwa vijana, huduma duni katika vituo vya afya na hospitali, ukosefu wa maji safi, ukosefu wa uboreshaji wa ukulima. Haya na matatizo mengi mengineyo hayajui kabila, dini, rangi wala jinsia. Yanahitaji uongozi bora. Tukemee siasa za <u>Fisi Ra Kaya</u>. Chagua Kiongozi bora. Chagua Boga safi#inawezekana	*Poverty, lack of youth employment, poor services at health centers and hospitals, lack of clean water, lack of improvements in agriculture. These and other different problems dont know tribalism, religion, color or gender. They require good leadership. Let's rebuke <u>the politics of the home hyena.</u> Vote for a good leader. Vote for Boga Safi #It is possible.*
Huku Malindi Tumesema Hatumpigii Kura Amina Mnyazi Hadi Atafute Bwana awe na Mji Wake sio Kuishi kwa Mamake.	*Here in Malindi we have said that we are not voting for Amina Mnyazi until she looks for a husband and gets her own home not living with her mother.*
a. Institutional legitimacy	
Electoral Misconduct	
	...Tonight, Fatuma Mohamed Achani has Given village admins *500K* per village to bribe you so that she can continue to oppress you. Kindly I urge all of you to take the MONEY from

	Achani because it is your money. But vote for the right leaders tomorrow. 1. _To end Corruption in Kwale , Achani must go._ 2. _To bring medicine in our hospitals, Achani must go._ 3. _To create jobs four our youths, Achani must go._ 4. _To improve our infrastructure, Achani must go._ 5. _To restore dignity in leadership, Achani must Go._ *Take the money from Achani, But Vote for Prof Hamadi Idd Boga.* _Thank you._

1.	**Elections, Tallying and Counting**

a.	Institutional legitimacy

Electoral misconduct

I smell a rat chebuchietha is hiding something	*I smell a rat shitty Chebukati is hiding something*
Wewe huwa mtu mjinga sana….the mistake was that majina ya aspirants walikuwa wa kilifi county ..umbwa	*You are a very stupid person. The mistake was that the names of the aspirants were for the ones in Kilifi County..you dog.*
	You are one very lazy ill informed blogger. The ballot papers had already been printed bfo Sonko's revocation!!!
Kipii ni kipii tu	*An uncircumcised person is just an uncircumcised person.*
I was for Mike sonko but since hayuko debeni, Kura yangu Nampa kingi. Mijikenda amkeni mchukue county yenu kutoka kwa mikono ya Wala urojo......MIJIKENDA AMKENI.	*I was for Mike Sonko but since he is not on the ballot, I will give my vote to Kingi. Mijikenda wake up and take your county from the hands of those soup drinkers....MIJIKENDA WAKE UP.*
Warabu kwa warabu wapigana 🤣 😅	*Arabs are fighting themselves🤣 😅*
na bado kumbafu ,jicho chietha	*..and its not yet over idiot, shit eyes*
Akufe tu kwani yeye ni Mungu,apunguze	*Let him just die, does he think he is God, he should*

kiherehere hii siasa itaka makasiriko.	*tone down the nonsense, politics does not require anger.*
	Itumbi faked his abduction and it never worked, Ruto faked tears during prayers it never worked, so what will convince jicho pevu this will work??
nyinyi wabara ambao mnajukumu sonko hamjui mnachosema.	*You Wabaras that are judging Sonko, you have no idea what you are saying.*
Mwizi hapo sio nairobi wabara wezi hawa	*Thief, that is not Nairobi, you Wabaras are thieves.*
Let me help my friend sonko to insult them..matako wewe	*Let me help my friend sonko to insult them..you ass*
Matako wewe sikuogopi...wee n grandymothaaa takataka ghasiah	*You are an asshole, I am not afraid of you....you are a grandmother, trash, rubbish.*
Takakaka stop fake news billow kerrow is not vying anywhere in this Elections.	*Rubbish, stop fake news, Billow Kerrow is not vying anywhere in this Elections.*
Thats a wararo thing. Hio gaidi inapiga simu hapo kwa mti banaa 😜 😎, haishtuki	*That is a somali thing. That terrorist making a phone call at the tree is not afraid.whoa 😜 😎*
Umbea si kazi	*Gossiping is not a job*
Achan bwaaa	*Achani has fallen flat*
Lamu county has decided. Fahimu na vibaraka zake wamekwenda nyumbani. Kavuteni mabugizi sasa.	*Lamu county has decided. Fahimu and his puppets have gone home. Go and smoke bhang now*
Vibaraka za fahim hazina maana kabisa....wakalale	*Fahim's Puppets have no use at all. Let them go and sleep.*
Vibaraka nuksi wa fahim vipi mwahisi vipi sasa?	*You Fahim's problematic puppets, how are you feeling now.*
	It is all SMILES for Mun'garo in Kilifi, as Hon. Aisha Jumwa is left twisting her flat hips.
Munamba mambo ga fisi Ra kaya gasira?... Mambo ga mkabila huyo, Mzee ni mchawi huyo, Mzee ni muuza bursary huyo mudzigamala ta vino yukala murumwengu lung'anzi	*You are following the things of the Home Hyena? The things of that tribalist, that old man is a wizard, that old man sells bursaries, that one is lazy and not like Lunganzi.*

2.	Post-Elections

a.	Collective Polarization

Wapiga Kura Wote wa Mombasa County tunanyenyekea tena Kwa upole tukiwaomba kesho muamke asubuhi na Mapema Tuikomboe County yetu kutoka Kwa minyororo ya Uongozi wenye umetubagua Kwa miaka kumi kikabila,kidini na hata kirangi.Haya mageuzi yanawezekana tu tukimpigia Kura Hassan Omar Hassan wa UDA.Kura itachungwa msiwe na wasiwasi Hakuna Kura Hata Moja itapotea ama kuibiwa. Cc Mike Sonko.	*To all Mombasa County voters, we are humbly asking again with humility that tomorrow you wake up early in the morning so that we deliver our county from the chains of leadership that has discriminated by ethnicity, religion and color for ten years. These changes are possible if we vote for Hassan Omar for UDA. Do not worry, the vote will be protected, there is no vote that will be lost or stolen, not even one. Cc.Mike Sonko*
Hatuwezi kumpigia mtu aliyenachuki na wabara, very tribal and discriminative, Sarai is a No , na sisi Kama wabara tumeamua mtetezi wetu anayetujali ni Abdulswahmad Shariff Nassir,... #Kataa kutumika, #mwanamwema for Governor	*We can't for someone who has hate for people from the mainland, very tribal and discriminative, Sarai is a No, and we as the people from the mainland we have decided our advocate who cares is Abdulswamahmad Shariff Nassir, ….#Dont be misused #thegoodchild for Governor*
Nairobi County Women Representative Esther Muthoni Passaris arrested at Kongowea social Hall,bribing voters with ksh 200. Watu wa Mombasa wamemwambia hizo pesa angetumia kutafutia Igathe Kura Pale Kanairo. Sharing video shortly... Cc Mike Sonko	*Nairobi County Women Representative Esther Muthoni Passaris arrested at Kongowea social Hall,bribing voters with ksh 200. Mombasa people have told her that she should have used that money to look for votes for Igathe in Nairobi. Sharing video shortly. Cc Mike Sonko*
	Propaganda will not win you votes. 50 bob is pink not orange. Voters won't fall for your cheap theatrics. We would not try to buy voters as do you because we value them. We educate & allow voters to make informed decisions. @A_S_Nassir is the best Governor of and for county #001 (21)
Mbona munatudharau watu wa Mombasa munatupea 50bob? Raundi hii tumewawekea moles kila mahali	*Why do you despise people from Mombasa, you give us 50 shillings? This time we have planted moles everywhere*
Moses Kuria apatikana akipeana hongo mombasa.	*Moses Kuria found bribing voters in Mombasa*
Takataka ww na sura na na kiuno mbaya kama gari ya brobox	*You are trash, ugly and with a waist that looks like a probox car*