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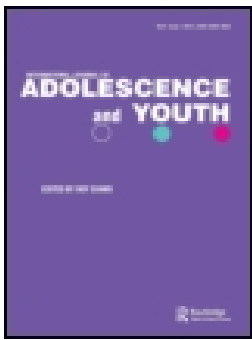
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Identity, values and norms of East Africa's youth

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ABSTRACT

With a median age estimated at 18 years, East Africa is one of the youngest regions in the world. However, relatively little research has been conducted to understand how they identify themselves and what values and norms shape or influence them. About 7,000 individuals between the age of 18 and 35 were interviewed in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda. Youth constructed their identity along four dimensions; youth (age-associated); nationality; faith; family. However, country, religion, gender and age influenced the ordering of identity. With the exception of Rwanda, East African a tolerance for rule violation and corruption was prevalent among East African youth. This difference offers hope because it demonstrates that respect for the rule of law, unequivocal commitment to integrity and public accountability can be enforced and transmitted to the next generation, the youth. Values and norms are shaped by and co-evolve with institutions and norms of the wider society.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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East Africa; youth; identity; values; attitudes; ethics; rule violation

Introduction

This paper focuses on four member states of the East African Community (EAC), namely: Kenya; Rwanda; Tanzania and Uganda. Like other sub regions of Africa, the EAC is in the early stages of demographic transition, which is characterized by high fertility rates, and a significant decline in infant and child mortality rates. Consequently, this has created an unprecedented youth bulge. Based on available national level population census data, about over 70 percent of the population in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda are below the age of 35. The median age across the region is estimated to be 18 years, with Uganda, the second youngest country in Africa having a median age of about 16 years, two years younger than Africa's median age, which is projected to raise only modestly to about 25 years in 2050 (Canning, Raja, & Yazbeck, 2015).

Politicians and public sector policy makers have tended to view the youth in terms of the social and political risk and/or the potential economic boon or dividend potential they present for their societies. The EAC youth policy recognizes that the youth are critical to developing and sustaining the Community (East African Community, 2014). Moreover, youth are associated with values, norms and identities that considered deviant or at odds with mainstream, or more traditional cultures values or norms. For example, Tanzania's youth policy is wary of, and seeks to respond to changing and deviant lifestyle – new cultures, new values and orientations – associated with the youth (United Republic of Tanzania, 2007). Similarly, the Rwandan youth policy recognizes the need to continuously educate the youth on Rwandan culture and values (Republic of Rwanda, 2015). Uganda's youth policy laments that urban youth have an inclination to cultural identity or values in conflict with society and established structures and traditions (Republic of Uganda, 2001).

As such this policy backdrop is critical to connecting the political and social structures that undergird and shape youth subjectivity. To a large extent, the tenor of patronage that permeates national policy frameworks influences how youth think about their own agency in navigating pathways of transition. East African youth are largely perceived by adults as vulnerable to the pervasive influence of western cultures, and more recently, radicalization by terrorists groups. The generational contestation of values and norms; what is acceptable and what is abhorrent is gathering steam in the East Africa region and Africa in general, especially in the wake of globalization, surge in global terrorism (Devine, 2017) and the rise of what more conservative segments of society might consider as permissive inclinations.

Literature review

Early writings, philosophical writings (Katuin, 1920) suggest that values are functional and are relevant to the concrete conditions or context in which they are formed and shaped. Moreover, empirical work identify a 'cultural shift' in the Western cultures, towards more individualistic orientations signified by the decline in the influence of traditional and social institutions in shaping values (Heelas, Lasch, & Morris, 1996a; Inglehart 1990). The surge in dominance of self-efficacy has grown in parallel with the diminution is external authority and allegiance to tradition and agency and decision-making power on what is wrong or right increasingly vested in the individual.

The framing of the objectives youth policies, around safeguarding tradition, cultural values, identity and preventing deviance speaks to an intergenerational contest of values. What is an authentic and independent (as opposed to dominant societal norms attitudes and values) remains a complex, enduring question. Mannheim, (1928) advanced the concept of generation, in which the formative years, especially adolescence is shaped by profound and long-lasting effects of social circumstances and historical events. Moreover, the proliferation of mobile technologies, especially the exchange and dissemination of images have become a medium for production and transmission of youth peer culture, where youth are in the active enterprise of constituting, negotiating and reconstituting their sense of self (Buckingham, 2008).

Giddens (1991) uses the disembedding to represent shifting alignments and restructuring of norms and values across time and space. Henrich and Boyd (1998) argues that processes of conformist transmission of values, beliefs and influence individuals strongly and hence can produce differences across space and time. Furthermore, Thomas and Holland (2004) suggest that framing of values is associated with beliefs, identities, attitudes, norms and practices, which reflect fungible material assets, status, and aspirations. Hence economic systems and social institutions and business cultures can shape values (Bowels, 2011).

What is the prevailing socio-economic and cultural context in which East African youth are being raised? Wiegatz and Cesnulyte (2016) observed that in Kenya and Uganda a money rationale, individualism, self-interested and fraudulent practices are increasingly recognized as acceptable necessary or legitimized because they aid people's urgent need for prosperity, success and status in an environment fraught with uncertainty. Experiments show that incentives that appeal to material self-interest often undermine interpersonal trust, reciprocity, fairness, and public generosity (Bowels, 2011).

Markets and other neo-liberal institutions tend to erode family and traditional norms and privilege self-interest, materialism, individualism and rule violation as new sites for moral configuration (Bowels, 2011; Thomas & Holland, 2004). While market-led systems do not inevitably generate the requisite supportive norms and values, the corrosive effects of self-interested strategic mode of reasoning are counterbalanced by the rule of law and strong institutions. But the counterbalancing effect of the rule of law East Africa and Africa in general is limited. The Ibrahim Index of African Governance 2017 report shows that the rule of law has declined in 37 out of 54 African countries. Many negative forces such as weak institutions, impunity, state capture and corruption undermine efforts to attain the rule of law. More specifically, the scourge of desecrates the principle of the rule of law and systematically destroys the fabric of society and good governance in a majority of African countries.

For example, stories about corruption, dishonest behavior and the use of deception for economic gain abound in print, electronic and social media in three of East Africa's largest economies. The National Youth scandal in Kenya,¹ the Tegeta Escrow Account scandal in Tanzania² and the Bidi Bidi refugee camp scandal in Uganda.³ Moreover, examination fraud is now widespread, eroding confidence in the education system at all levels in Uganda,⁴ Kenya⁵ and Tanzania.⁶ Other forms dishonest behavior such as include tax evasion, counterfeiting and sale of unlicensed and illicit brews is rampant in East Africa. It is estimated that Uganda and Tanzania governments lose \$1.4 billion and \$1.5 billion in annual revenues to illicit trade respectively, while Kenya loses over \$350 million.⁷

Mutunga (2014) argues that the crisis facing Kenya, like other African countries – tribalism, corruption, weak governance, poverty and underdevelopment – are a reflection of the quality of the elite (politicians, businessmen, clergy, civil servants, academics, police and judges), who are largely driven by self-interest, greed, opportunism and materialism. These elite are also highly regarded as role models, hence their dishonest practices can set bad examples for the youth and society in general (Cohn, Fehr, & Marechal, 2014). Moreover, since they are well connected in society, the elite who engage in dishonest practices including corruption and tax evasion often manipulate or subvert the rule of law and often go unpunished. The unethical behavior of socially and economically dominant elite can influence in a negative and corrosive way of ordinary, less powerful or privileged citizens. More importantly, together with the material gains to be made from dishonesty, and the fact that the rule of law is flexible or malleable, individuals engage in a cost benefit analysis, which determines that corruption or fraud is profitable.

In a conversation, an editor for a leading Ugandan newspaper remarked that corruption stories do not drive readership and circulation anymore. In a sense corruption or fraud is not sensational or outrageous but rather normal. Since perpetrators of corruption go unpunished or buy protection and thus insulated from due process. Moreover, because the categorization of theft or plunder of public resources or financial impropriety is ambivalent, and people think of their own dishonest actions as justified or socially acceptable, and somehow re-calibrating their moral self-image (Schweitzer & Hsee, 2002).

How East Africa's youth understand and navigate their world; their attitudes, values and norms are predicated on and influenced by saliency of dishonesty and the abundant perception that corruption is profitable and aids access to enormous privilege and power. The ubiquity of dishonest behavior of all forms, as evidenced by coverage in social, print and electronic media directly influences and changes the understanding of norms, values and attitudes related to ethics and morality in general. What Edmund Burke wrote in the 18th century is particularly pertinent to countries experiencing a youth bulge. 'Tell me what are the prevailing sentiments that occupy the minds of your young men, and I will tell you what is to be the character of the next generation.' Fundamentally, youth attitudes, values and norms will determine the character of East Africa now and its place in the global community of nations.

The study draws from the understanding that social context, which reflect material assets and associated status influences values, attitudes (Thomas & Holland, 2004), and determines the types of norms – what is commonly done (normal to do) or what is commonly approved (socially sanctioned) that people will attend to. Equally instructive is the emergence the social and economic pressures associated with primordial neo-liberal market order – mundane basic survival needs and the glamor and luxury of a globalized consumer market – tends to displace or erode trust, integrity, reciprocity and fairness, especially where rule of law is feeble and insufficient to engender civic cultures (Bowels, 2011; Wiegratz & Cesnulyte, 2016).

This study aims to provide a more nuanced basis for engaging and supporting the youth through their transition to adulthood and to serve as an impetus for both an intergenerational as well as a multi-stakeholder dialogue about a Kenyan or Rwandan or Tanzanian or Ugandan character. Are there similarities or differences – in identity, values, norms and aspirations – among youth in the four East African countries, and why? Moreover, the study seeks to contribute to building a coherent understanding of how East African youth navigate dynamic

socio-economic and institutional contexts in constructing or deconstructing or conforming to dominant structures of identity, values, and norms.

Methodology

The questionnaire

Prior to developing the questionnaire, a one-day regional consultation was held in Nairobi Kenya, which brought together four youth leaders (two females and two males) from each of the four countries – Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The purpose of the dialogue was to canvass youth perspectives on what was relevant to determining their current circumstances and what will shape their future. A wide range of issues emerged; family, faith, unemployment, entrepreneurship, poverty, attitude, integrity, corruption, education, citizenship, security, sex and reproductive health, globalization, regional integration politics and government. A more detailed exploration and analysis of what would determine their agency to influence the present and the future revealed four issues; identity, values, norms and aspirations. These issues were used to design the questionnaire.

One consultation was held in each of the four countries, bringing together 50 youth leaders to provide local nuance and validation of the perspectives and issues that emerged in regional forum. The detailed questionnaire questionnaires administered in each country explored questions around eight themes. These were: i) identity; ii) values; iii) norms; iv) empowerment (sense of inclusion, and civic participation); v) the media; vi) sexual and reproductive health; and, vii) aspirations; viii) the future. Review of similar studies was used to further inform the survey design (British Council, 2013; Ono, 2005).

Validity was established by a panel of reviewers who agreed that items in the questionnaire were of sufficient readability, clarity and comprehensiveness and from a content perspective, represented fully the domains of identity, values, norms and aspirations. A pre-test or pilot was conducted in each country to assess the clarity of the items and to ascertain that the respondents interpreted and answered the questions as intended. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards in all the four countries. The study goals were explained to all the respondents and written informed consent was obtained.

Sample

The universe of the sample is individuals, male and female, between the age of 18 and 35 in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The African Youth Charter and the EAC Youth Policy define youth as persons aged between 15 and 35 years. The definition of youth, by age, varies among the countries of the EAC. Rwanda defines youth as persons aged between 14 and 35 years while in Kenya, youth are individuals aged between 18 and 35 years (Republic of Kenya, 2006). In Tanzania youth are persons aged between 15 and 35 years. In Uganda youth are individuals aged between 18 and 30 years. A total of 6984 individuals between the age of 18 and 35 years were interviewed. The sample size in each country was based on the proportion of the population between 18 and 35 years old in each of the four countries. Due to lack of recent, up to date census data, we relied upon the most recent population projections. The sampling was distributed as follows: Kenya, 1,865; Rwanda, 1,335; Tanzania, 1,939; and, Uganda, 1,845. The sample size in each country was derived bases on a 95% Confidence Level and a Confidence Interval of $\pm 3\%$. Overall, 57% of the individuals interviewed were male and 54% of the total sample was drawn from urban areas.

A multi-stage sampling approach was applied as follows:

Stage 1: Selection of the primary sampling unit, which in this survey was country and its official administrative units for the country e.g. region in Tanzania and Uganda and province in Kenya and Rwanda were used as the primary sampling units.

Stage 2: Selection of secondary sampling unit. In this case the lowest administrative (e.g. parish, sub-location, wards, sectors) unit was selected. A random selection of such a unit with equal probability of selection was considered representative of all other units contained in the higher order administrative units (e.g. district). We considered sample take or minimum of 8–10 interviews per randomly selected secondary sampling unit. By dividing the sample take with the sample allocation at the primary sampling unit, the number of required secondary sampling units was determined.

Stage 3: Selection of tertiary sampling units within the secondary sampling units, which in this case are households. The starting point for every cluster of households was identified with reference from a landmark starting point, and following the left hand rule a household was identified by the calendar date of the survey. For example, 23rd would be the 5th house (2 + 3) to the left of the identified landmark. After completing the interview at each selected household, the left hand rule was applied and every 5th household was selected.

Stage 4: The selection of the respondent. All the adults, aged between 18 and 35 years, in the household were listed and where there was more than one eligible youth the Kish Grid selection table (Kish, 1949) was used to select an eligible respondent, this case youth (male or female) between 18 and 35 years.

Data analysis

All analyses were conducted using R (Available from: <http://cran.r-project.org/doc/manuals/R-intro.html#Making-data-frames>). To understand the relationship among response categories we used correspondence analysis (CA). CA is based on the analysis of the contingency table through the row and column profiles. Row profiles correspond to the relative frequencies of the different response categories among variable categories. The column profiles correspond to the relative frequencies of different response categories within each variable.

We use CA to represent the relative frequencies in terms of distances between individual row and column profiles and the distance to the average row and column profile, respectively, in low dimensional space (Johnson and Wichern, 2007). CA decomposes the variance or dispersion by identifying the most important deviations from independence (Friendly, 2000). Typically Dimension 1 represents the largest amount of explained variance, while dimension 2 explains the second largest. The determination of the number of dimensions to retain is based on the same rules applied in Principle Components Analysis, where the number of dimensions retained represent more than 70 % of the variability. More importantly, the interpretation of a CA map reveals relationships that would otherwise not be detected through a pairwise comparison.

More importantly, a key advantage of CA is that no underlying distribution assumptions are required, hence it can take any type of categorical variable, binary, ordinal or nominal (Higgs, 1991). Moreover, CA goes beyond pairwise correlations or tests of association as the graphical display shows how response categories from two or more variables cluster together.

Results

Youth and identity

East African youth identify themselves along five dimensions, namely: youth (age-associated); citizen; faith; family and tribe or ethnicity. About 40 % of the respondents said they were youth first, 34% identified first as nationals or citizens of their respective countries; 11% identified themselves by their faith first; 6% identified as members of their family first and 3.5 % of the youth (in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) identified by their tribe or ethnicity first. Correspondence Analysis (CA) revealed different patterns in ordering of identity among the four countries (Figure 1). The Tanzanian youth identified predominantly as young person or youth while Ugandan youth identified more with family. The identity of Ugandan the Ugandan youth was associated with family, place of residence (town or

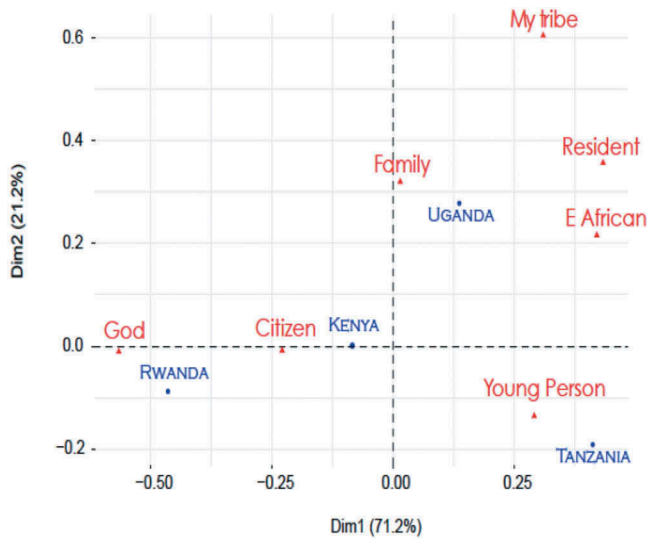


Figure 1. Ordering of identity by country.

village), a sense of belonging to East African and their tribe. In both Kenya and Rwanda nationality or citizenship and faith were the most important dimensions of identity.

While rank ordering was observed of identity among East African youth, such identities were not static. East African youth were indeed reconfiguring their identities or the essence of who they are between age 18 and 35 years, which was perhaps related to progressive developmental shifts and life-stage needs associated with transition out of the youth age band. Figure 2 shows that between the ages of 18 and 25 years, the respondents identified themselves as strongly as youth. During this period dimensions of identity such as family, faith, nationality and were less salient.

Conversely, respondents in the 26–35 age band identified the least as youth. The study revealed that the proportion of youth who identified as youth first declined by 52% between the age of 18 and 35 years. This is despite the fact that the legal definition of youth in East Africa extends to 35 years. Moreover, youth aged 26–30 years had a close association with community or country, projecting a strong sense of allegiance to country. They were also provincially inclined, associating with their towns, cities or villages. This suggests an orientation to connection to place, whether country or community (village or town).

Our data suggests that ethnic, familial and religious dimensions of identity were amplified between 18 and 35 years. There was an ascendance in the salience of tribe, family, faith. Youth aged 31–35 years identified with faith, family and tribe. A sense of belonging to East Africa was also stronger among youth aged 31–35 years. This apparent family and clan centric tendency is in contrast with the more nationalistic and sense of connectedness to community exhibited by youth in the 26–30 years age band.

The age-associated re-configuration of identity reflects conformity with mainstream societal norms. Moreover, this reconfiguration of identities also revealed differences between countries. In Kenya for example, the proportion of youth who identify by ethnicity increased by 95% from 4% to 7.8% between the ages of 21 and 35 respectively. These findings suggest strong ethnic inclinations in the Kenyan society. Similar patterns of amplification of the salience of ethnic identity were observed in Uganda where the proportion of youth who identified first by their ethnicity increased by 65% between 18 and 35 years. The converse was true Tanzania where ethnicity as a dimension of identity remained stable between 18–35 years. Since the genocide questions that require citizens to reveal ethnic identity are not permitted by Rwandan authorities.

In Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda religion or faith was an important factor in ordering identity among East African youth (Figure 3). Tribal or ethnic identity was more salient among Muslim

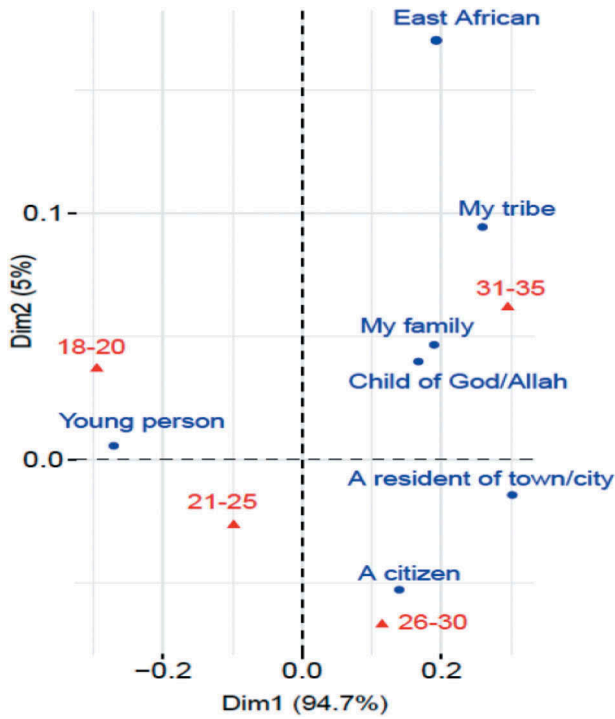


Figure 2. Age-associated differences in identity.

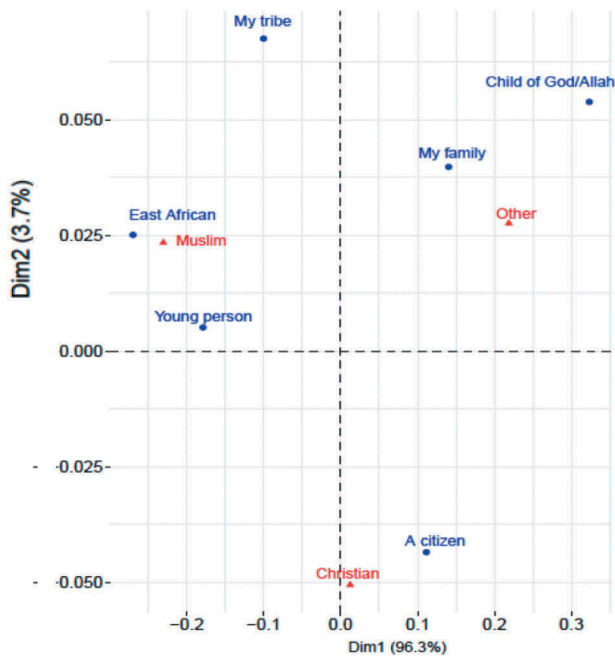


Figure 3. Association between religion and identity.

youth compared to youth who professed the Christian faith. Identity among Muslim respondents was constructed around their tribe, being East African and a strong sense of being youth. Respondents of the Christian faith constructed their identity around family and citizenship.

The or role influence of religion in ordering the dimensions of identity was more prominent in Kenya. For example, while a majority (41%) of Kenyan respondents identified as Kenyans first, 22% of Kenyan Muslim youth respondents identified as Kenyans first. About 54% of youth respondents of Islamic faith identified as youth first compared to 34% of youth respondents of Christian faith who identified as youth first. Similarly, 29% more youth of Islamic faith identified by their ethnicity compared to youth who professed the Christian faith. Conversely in Tanzania faith did not influence how youth identified themselves – as youth, citizens or by ethnicity. For example, an equal proportion (24%) of Christian and Muslim youth identified as Tanzanian citizens. Similarly, 59% of Christian respondents and 60% of Muslim respondents identified as youth respectively.

Values, norms and aspirations

About 80% of the youth interviewed valued faith first; 50% valued work and family first; 37% valued wealth first and, 25% valued freedom first, while integrity was the most important value for 7% of the respondents. Although the values structure was broadly similar among youth in the four countries, there were age associated differences in values structure (Figure 4).

Youth aged 18–20 years associated with values around freedom, friend, while the values of youth aged 21–25 were associated with country or their nationality. Youth aged 26–30 associated with the values of integrity, family and faith. Moreover, 31–35 year old youth valued work and wealth most.

Our results suggest substantial gender differences in value priorities between male and female respondents (Figure 5). Female respondents were strongly associated with family, freedom and faith, while male respondents gravitated toward values like work and wealth. The value orientations reflects a dichotomy based on concern and responsibility for others by females, and an orientation to transaction and material benefit by male youth.

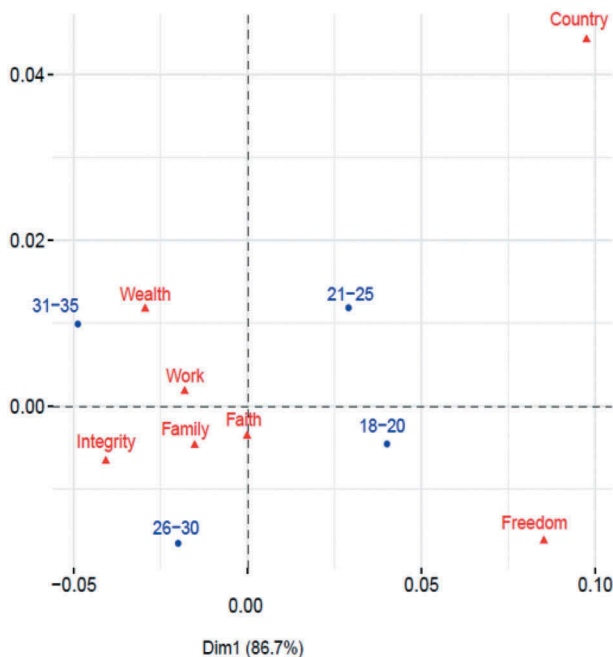


Figure 4. Age-associated differences in values among East African youth.

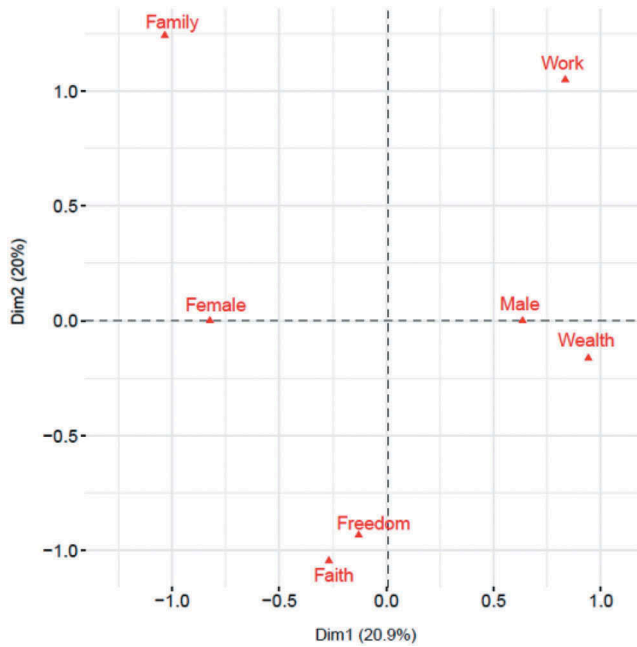


Figure 5. Gender-associated differences in values priorities among East African youth.

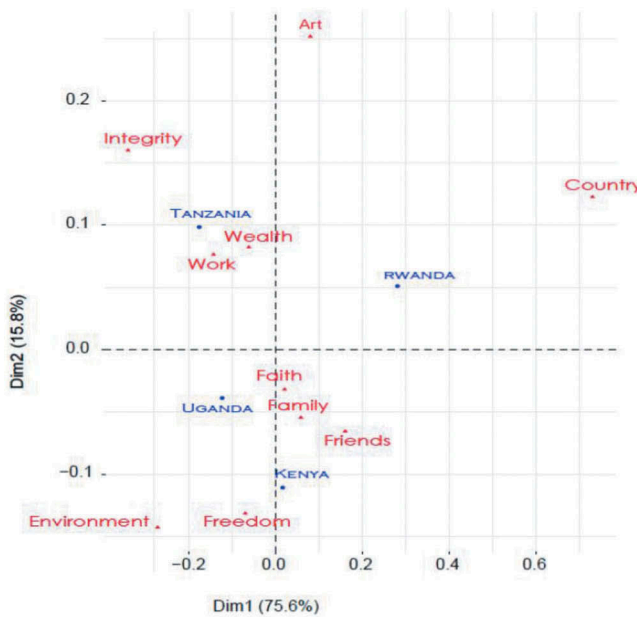


Figure 6. Country-level differences in values among East African Youth.

Country difference in value priorities were observed, in four distinct quadrants as illustrated in the Correspondence Analysis biplot (Figure 6). Tanzanian youth valued integrity, wealth, and work. Rwandan youth were strongly associated with allegiance to country; they valued nationalism first. Kenyan youth associated with family, faith and friends. Ugandan youth were associated with

the values of environment, and freedom. Moreover, their adjacency to the values of faith and family were significant.

In further explorations of values and norms, the study probed perceptions and choices or actions to determine whether youth: i) admired people who use get rich quick schemes; ii) would do anything to get money; iii) would easily take a bribe; iv) would easily take a bribe; v) believed it did not matter how one made money; vi) believed there was nothing wrong with corruption; and, vii) electoral bribery.

The study revealed that about 60% of the youth admired those who use get rich quick schemes; 55% believed it did not matter how one made money; 53% would do anything to get money; 37% would take or give a bribe; 35% believed there was nothing wrong with corruption. While 74% of the youth believed it was important to vote about 70% were vulnerable to electoral bribery and about 40% would only vote for a candidate who paid them.

Youth in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda were broadly similar with regard to: i) taking a bribe; ii) giving a bribe; iii) perception that there is nothing wrong with corruption. Between 35–44% youth in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda would take or give a bribe. For Rwandan youth, corruption was wrong and a majority of Rwandan youth strongly disagreed with the proposition that they would easily take or give bribe.

Figure 7 illustrates differences and similarities in the perceptions among youth with regard to taking or giving a bribe, on corruption, and how one made money. Kenyan youth did not agree with the proposition that it did not matter how one made money, and that they would do anything to make money. Conversely, Tanzanian youth said believed it did not matter how one got money, and they would do anything to made money.

Rwandan youth would not take or give a bribe. Conversely, Ugandan youth would easily take or give a bribe, and believed there was nothing wrong with corruption, a perception that was shared by Tanzanian youth. On the contrary, Rwandan and Kenyan youth did not agree that with the proposition that there was nothing wrong with corruption.

The norms and attitudes of the youth were not without contradiction. While 60% of the youth admired those who use get rich quick schemes and 55% believed it did not matter how one made

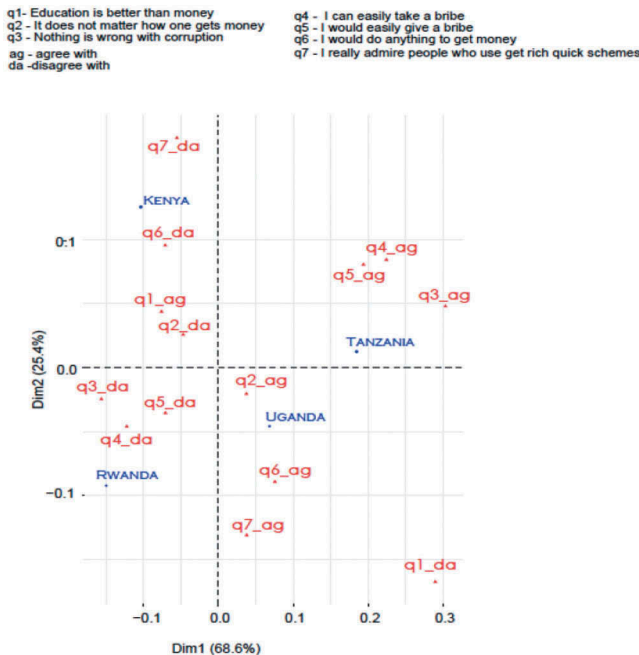


Figure 7. Perceptions of East African youth on corruption and bribery.

money, 76% believed they would succeed if they worked hard. When asked about the future, 58% of the youth believed their societies would be wealthier materially in the future, only 48% believed the future would offer more opportunities for them and 44% believed that their societies would reward hard work and 34% of East African youth believed their societies would be poorer in ethics and values. However, 80% are optimistic and see the glass as half full.

Overall, East African youth appeared somewhat uncertain about what the future had in store for them. However, Rwandan youth were unequivocal in their confidence in the future. About 85% of Rwandan youth believed their country was going in the right direction and would grow richer materially. Moreover, 70% believed their country would provide more opportunities for the youth and another 75% believed their country would reward hard work and 51% believed values and ethics would not deteriorate or erode in the future. Conversely, Tanzanian youth were pessimistic, less confident in the future, with less than 35% of Tanzanian youth believing their country would grow richer or offer more opportunities for youth. Furthermore, 34% of Tanzanian youth believed their society would be poorer in ethics and values while 24% of the youth believed hard work would be rewarded in their society.

The ordering of life aspirations or life goals among East African youth is illustrated in Figure 8. Youth aged 18–20 years are pre-occupied completing or furthering their education and finding a job. Moreover, youth aged 21–25 years were pre-occupied with starting a family. However, they were not totally free from the encumbrances of finding a job.

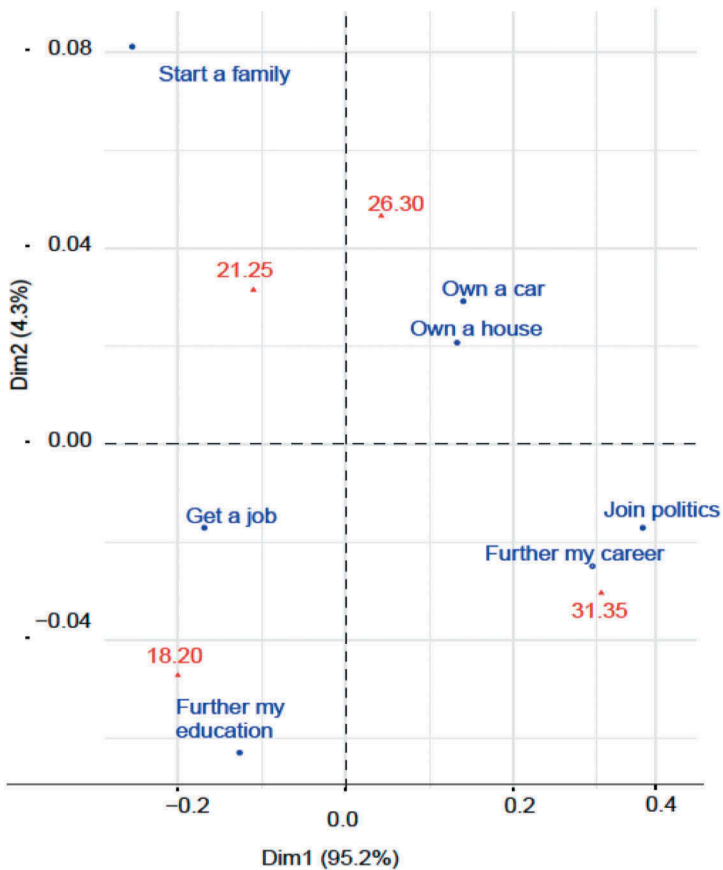


Figure 8. Age-associated differences life goals.

Youth aged 26–30 years wanted to own a car and house. Moreover, youth aged 31–35 were pre-occupied with career advancement and a desire to join politics. The divergence of their life goals or aspirations of youth suggests that perhaps the 18–35 years age band is too broad as a basis for determining reliable policy interventions as well as social mechanisms for supporting youth to transition fully into adulthood.

Discussion

Youth and identity

East African youth are in dynamic process of finding and re-configuring their identities along five key dimensions. First they identify as youth, providing a sense of internal cohesion and solidarity. Identity as youth is also consistent with the policy and legal categorizations by society and state that establish youth as socially distinct category. This distinct identity as youth bolsters a sense of esprit de corps; a sense of belonging that also confers a degree of social entitlement as well as shared grievance. It is not uncommon in East Africa to hear youth agitate for affirmative action to set aside special seats for youth in parliament or cabinet and prequalification for or ring fencing youth quotas for government tenders. Where youth perceive systematic disempowerment or disenfranchisement such strong group identity could pose social and political risks as sense of grievance solidifies around the age factor.

The study identified age-related changes with regard to rank-order of identity. As they grow older, citizenship, faith and ethnic dimensions of identity take prominence. This re-ordering of identities is perhaps influenced by the developmental changes as well as social, political and religious cultures of individual countries. For example, the age-associated surge in prominence of ethnic identity unique to Kenyan youth but consistent with the pre-eminence of ethnic identity in Kenya's political economy.

In Kenya's nascent democracy, political competition is essentially a duel among disparate and ephemeral ethnic coalitions for economic rents (Miguel, 2004; Kwatamba, 2008; Afrobarometer, 2008). Kenya's ethnic communities are expected to mobilize politically to support and protect powerful ethnic elites to retain power and in turn appropriate and allocate public goods and services as well as appointments in government. The reality in Kenya is that ethnicity is a significant determinant in allocation of public resources (public service appointments, government contracts as well as public services such as roads, schools and healthcare). Moreover, Kenya's political elite has preyed on ethnic division as mechanism for political competition.

Perhaps the surge in salience of ethnic identity among 30–35 year old youth is in conformity with the exigencies of adulthood – finding employment and or business opportunities. As they grow older, they realize that reciprocity is ethnically determined and networks are essentially ethnic. Hence, the age-related changes with regard to rank-order of identity dimensions reflect progressive developmental shifts as well as trajectories of conformity with mainstream adult orientations, attitudes and values. The age-related accentuation of ethnic distinctiveness observed in Kenya is in sharp contrast to a more stable and muted sense of ethnic identity in socially cohesive Tanzania.

Conversely, since its founding, unlike Kenya, Tanzania has focused on diminishing the prominence of ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is perceived as antithetical to social cohesion and the ideals of nation building. Shivji (2011) argues that Tanzania's first President, Julius Nyerere, projected nationalism as counter identity to ethnicity or tribalism, emphasized the need to weave a nation out of a tribe and resisted the politicization of ethnicity. Tanzania's ruling party elite has consistently drummed up the ethos of Ujamaa – equitable economic production and distribution of public resources to drive social cohesion and economic progress (Ibhawoh & Dibua, 2003) and insisted that civility and mutual respect must be the core of public dialogue and political debate.

In Rwanda, ethnicity as an identity has been outlawed following the 1994 genocide out of fear that it would cause a resurgence of interethnic tensions (Hilker, 2009). President Museveni

of Uganda believes that religious and ethnic based identity is primitive, and has argued that Uganda will be 'fully evolved' when tribal, clan, and religious identities are inconsequential (Museveni, 1997). Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai advocated for increased participation by youth to promote social cohesion based on shared identities that transcend ethnic lines (Maathai, 2008).

This study suggests that Muslim youth in Kenya, unlike their counterparts in Rwanda, Tanzania or Uganda are inclined to a separate identity that disassociates them from the Kenyan polity. Mwakimako and Willis(2014) argue that with limited economic prospects, Muslim youth believe they are victims of systematic and institutionalized discrimination by the Kenyan state. Kenya's anti-terror war has been characterized by bombing Al Shabab targets in Somalia and extrajudicial killings of Muslim clerics in the coast, arrest, detention of youth and women of Somali origin, who happen to be Muslims. It is therefore highly likely that historical discrimination coupled with extreme security measures in the name of fighting terrorism has emboldened a sense of alienation, a feeling of non-belonging among Muslim populations, who in turn cleave to their ethnicities and take refuge in the esprit de corps of being young Muslims. Although the collapse of the one-party hegemony has touched of an upsurge of conflict and social fragmentation in Tanzania (Campbell, 1999), ethnicity and religion have not been politicized to the same levels observed in Kenya.

The dimensions of identity are critical staging platforms for meaning and sense making and provide an important context for understanding the basis, origin and evolution of attitudes, norms and orientations, as well as practices. These results underscore the importance of understanding social context in the construction of youth identity. Our findings illustrate how meanings and practices derived from mainstream culture, political and institutional settings, normative and symbolic groupings of belonging (youth, religion) and historical path dependence determine the dimensions and ordering of identity.

Values, norms and aspirations

East African youth attach great importance to faith, work, family, wealth and freedom. Similarly, the youth attach great importance to tradition and consider their parents as vital role models. A majority of East Africans are adherents of Christianity and Islam. Prayer and deference to God/Allah is common both in public and in private. Religion for most East Africans is part of who they are; the expectation is religious affiliation and public expression or display of religious inclination rather than an adherence based upon acceptance of the canons of the faith they subscribe to.

Hence, it is not surprising that while youth say religion is important, they have no qualms about resorting to or deploying any means to make money, and they admire those who use get rich quick schemes. Only 30% of the youth surveyed were categorical about not taking bribe in exchange for their vote. This is consistent with the finding that about 37% of the youth would take or give a bribe and that 35% of the youth believed there was nothing wrong with corruption. Moreover, only 40% of the youth interviewed believed it was important to pay taxes. These findings point toward attitudes, which are tolerant of corruption and electoral fraud. According to the East Africa Bribery Index 2017, published by Transparency International bribery remains rampant in East Africa. The public services institutions surveyed were police, judiciary, local government, and education and tax services.

Rule violation, expressed through tax evasion and corruption is generally rampant and somewhat acceptable in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Tanzania's President John Magufuli campaigned on a platform of integrity and restoration of an ethos of hard work, '*Hapa Kazi Tu*'. Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta has said that he is frustrated by rampant and enduring corruption despite his best efforts to curb the vice (The Standard, 2016).⁸ Recognizing that corruption is an impediment to development and it poses a major challenge to good governance, President Yoweri Museveni has declared war on corruption and lamented that the fighting corruption has become complex because educated (elite) public officials are adept at concealing evidence.⁹

Headlines such as: ‘11 major scandals that hit the Jubilee government’; ‘How corrupt Tanzanian leaders hide their billions¹⁰’; ‘High-profile corruption scandals registered under NRM¹¹’, are not uncommon in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Mutunga (2014) has characterized the Kenyan elites, who are not different from the rest of East Africa’s elite, as embedded in a materialistic arms race, survival of the fittest, and without any moral qualms. Similarly, Wiegatz (2016) argues that fraud in its various manifestation, including corruption and rule violation are a manifestation of new liberal neo-liberal moral order especially among the powerful elite. Neo-liberal market-like incentives tend to erode the foundations of traditional ethical commitments (family, community and religion) in favour of self-interest and opportunism, especially where rule of law is feeble and insufficient to engender civic cultures.

This study confirms that attitudes tolerant or even approving of corruption exist side by side among the youth – without contradiction – with high levels of religious piety (over 80% of youth say faith is the most important value). To understand the apparent dissonance between high religious piety and tolerance and acceptance of corruption one needs to take into account the public sectors that have the highest prevalence of corruption and bribery. These include: the police, judiciary, health, registry and licensing, education, utilities and civil registration. While these sectors offer critical services to the public, onerous bureaucracy and inefficiency bog them down. Moreover, public officials who hold these positions are beholden to a virulent culture of ethnic and political patronage and petty rent seeking.

Somehow, these public officials, especially in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda believe they are entitled to eat; the public owes them *chai* (tea). On the other hand, the public generally believes there was nothing wrong with giving *kitu kidogo* (something small) in return for a service given to them by a public official. Essentially corruption, giving or taking a bribe, gets things done and often both parties feel reasonably satisfied with the transaction, which is often tacitly negotiated and mutually agreed upon. In a sense integrity, not taking or not giving a bribe, is an elastic value, which in these contexts is ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations. It is instructive to note that in ordinary parlance taking a bribe is viewed simply as ‘eating’, a normal physiological or biological need for which one must not find fault. Hence, corruption is not categorized purely as an ethical aberration; the circumstance under which one takes or gives a bribe determines the ethicality of the action. Schweitzer and Hsee (2002) have shown that when there is ambiguity in categorization of a particular action, one may justify and categorize their actions in positive terms thus avoiding updating ones moral self-image.

This study reveals that youth in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda generally admire people who use get rich quick schemes, would do anything to get money as long as they don’t go to jail and would do anything to get money. However, it is revealing that while youth in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda would go on to easily take or give a bribe, Rwandan youth would not. Why? Stories like policemen accused of corruption were fired in 2017 or civilians accused of bribing policemen arrested¹² or Ombudsman publishes the list of individuals convicted of corruption related offences¹³ are not uncommon. It is therefore likely that Rwandan youth engage in a cost benefit analysis, which informs the ultimate decision about dishonesty (taking or giving a bribe or a belief that there was nothing wrong with corruption).

The life goals or aspirations of the youth are instructive and provide insights into the dynamic. This further suggests that there is a dissonance between the legal and policy definitions of youth as a demographic category and how youth think about themselves and what they care about and aspire to. The pressures associated with achieving life goals or aspirations, and in general meeting societal expectations. These life pressures, as expected are inherently material and in many ways might provide motivation for engaging in rule violation. While this is untested, it is consistent with the work of Wiegatz and Cesnulyte (2016) who suggest that in Kenya and Uganda a money rationale, individualism, self-interested and fraudulent practices are increasingly recognized as acceptable necessary or legitimized because they aid people’s urgent need for prosperity.

Conclusion

This study suggests that social and institutional context, are critical determinants of the identities, values and norms of youth. In Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda where rule violation is prevalent and often goes unpunished youth believe that taking or receiving a bribe is justifiable and is not contradictory to their self-perception of integrity or honesty. The exception is Rwanda. While youth admire get rich quick schemes (personal disposition), the cost of engaging in corruption (social and institutional sanctions) – taking or receiving a bribe – outweighs the benefits and hence serves as strong deterrent. Accordingly, morals and values are acquired in the context of social interaction and emanate from a combination of socialization experiences, situational circumstances and group values.

In essence, youth people are the mirror image of the adult world around them. Rwanda's example offers hope. Any efforts toward changing or modelling positive values or norms ought to start the adults – from the family to community to the national level. Rwanda exemplifies the importance strong leadership and an unequivocal commitment to shaping the social and institutional context through that demand personal integrity and public accountability, hence influencing attitudes, values, norms and perceptions of the youth. More importantly, this study suggests 18–35 is perhaps too wide a demographic continuum along which to build coherent and responsive policies and programs to support the developmental needs and aspirational goals of a complex and diverse group. Moreover, the gender difference in how male and female define who they are, is critical especially in the light of the finding that women aged 26–35 don't consider themselves youth in the same way their male counterparts do.

Notes

1. Kenyan officials arrested in '90m' graft scandal. <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Kenya-suspects-arrested-in-NYS-scandal/4552908-4583732-a9h69m/index.html>.
2. Tegeta escrow will go down in history as a major scandal. <http://www.thecitizen.co.tz/News/national/-Tegeta-escrow-will-go-down-in-history-as-a-major-scandal-/1840392-2575094-oumj96z/index.html>.
3. The U.N. found only 7,000 refugees, despite Uganda's claim that thousands more needed aid <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/03/22/uganda-refugee-camp-united-nations-corruption/440047002/>.
4. Cheating in exams is sophisticated. <http://www.monitor.co.ug/OpEd/Commentary/Cheating-in-exams-is-sophisticated/689364-4277482-pckxb8z/index.html>.
5. Shocking details of KCSE exam cheating. <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001270003/shocking-details-of-kcse-exam-cheating>.
6. Curbing exam cheating in our schools. <http://www.thecitizen.co.tz/magazine/success/Curbing-exam-cheating-in-our-schools/1843788-3484752-4gr9xb/index.html>.
7. East Africa businesses gear up for fight against illicit trade. <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/business/East-Africa-businesses-gear-up-for-fight-against-illicit-trade/2560-3349150-m2vh1d/index.html>.
8. I am frustrated by corruption, says President Uhuru Kenyatta. <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000220200/i-am-frustrated-by-corruption-says-president-uhuru-kenyatta> [Accessed March 2018].
9. President Museveni vows war on corruption, 'its an open war'. <http://www.statehouse.go.ug/media/news/2017/04/13/president-museveni-vows-corruption-%E2%80%9Cits-open-war%E2%80%9D> [(Accessed January 2018).]
10. How corrupt TZ leaders hide their looted billions. <http://www.thecitizen.co.tz/News/How-corrupt-TZ-leaders-hide-their-looted-billions/1840340-3203016-1ck01a/index.html> [Accessed march 2018].
11. High profile corruption registered under NRM. <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/High-profile-corruption-scandals-registered-under-NRM/688334-1702448-ndh6w6z/index.html> [Accessed March 2018].
12. Rwanda fires 200 police officers accused of corruption <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/rwanda-fires-200-police-officers-accused-of-corruption-20170206> [Accessed January 2018].
13. Ombudsman list convicts charged with corruption <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/rwanda/News/Rwanda-names-corruption-offenders/1433218-3935184-fcmd05z/index.html> [Accesses March 2018].

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