



Agenda-Setting theory in African contexts: A Jekyll and Hyde in the Zambian Presidential elections

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Abstract

This study aims at contextualizing the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of agenda-setting theory amidst cultural traditional values in Africa. First, it tests the influence of agenda-setting theory in the Zambian presidential elections, and then asserts perceptions of what the voters believe influences their choices for a presidential candidate. The study investigates the plausibility and applicability of agenda-setting theory at a global context. It questions how the ruling governments that own(ed) and control(led) the mass media and its agenda (in the 1991 and 2011 Zambian presidential elections) could lose to the opposition governments that barely created a media agenda for their campaigns. Findings suggest that cultural variables were more statistically inclined to voters' behaviors in the Zambian elections when compared to agenda-setting theory.

Keywords: agenda-setting, cultural values, Zambian elections, Africa, voter's choices

Introduction

The present ferment in the field of media studies exacerbated by the 2016 US presidential campaigns, and the subsequent reign of President Donald Trump, appear to be akin to what Thomas Kuhn (1970) [18] described as a crisis of the dominant paradigm. Media studies nowadays tend to exhibit some proxies of mere theoretical red-herrings designed to perpetuate anachronistic tendencies of political partisanship, while glossing over the core intentions of the theories. In trying to explain the behaviors of the status quo, a number of theories have ended up with inconclusive results (Pickard, 2016) [33] that grapple with the assumptions of weak findings and no definitive direction of influence of the theory (Toshio, 2006; Kwansah-Aidoo, 2001). Such challenges are consistent with the usual struggles of many African scholars that have attempted to explain the unfolding events in Africa using agenda-setting theory.

In light of these events, the study leverages the first and second level agenda-Setting theory against two Zambian presidential elections that saw the opposition political parties win with a landslide victory. It seeks to discern on how the ruling governments that owned and controlled the mass media and its agenda (Hyden, Leslie & Ogundimu, 2017; Nyamnjoh: 2004) [8, 38] lost to the opposition governments that barely created a media agenda for their campaigns. In such a situation, how would we account for the fact that opposition political parties (with less resources) in Zambia manage to hijack media agenda and propose theirs? To what extent is agenda-setting a powerful tool in African presidential campaigns? To answer the questions, the study used content analysis to examine the direction of influence of agenda-setting and surveys to determine what shaped the choices of the Zambian voters in the 2011 presidential elections.

The significance of this study lies in providing an exploratory alternative to why agenda-setting theory seem to yield inconclusive results in most African studies. For this

reason, the study hopes to fill a gap in literature by highlighting the major conundrums that characterize the dearth of research on agenda-setting in Africa. It, therefore, suggests not an extension of the levels of the theory as most studies have shown, but an accommodation of other variables as well as methodological approaches that are necessary for studying the theory. In this way, we assert that the theory will continue to thrive and yield more studies not only in the United States, but in Africa and other continents facing similar challenges.

Theory and Literature Review

Agenda-setting theory and the African context

Agenda-setting theory as a recourse for African scholarship is increasingly becoming a crucial topic of concern. When McCombs & Shaw first introduced the theory, their ideas did not fathom a global village as Innis (1950) and McLuhan (1964) [25] had perceived the world. The idea that traditional cultural values could possibly become driving forces for why voters chose one candidate over the other was essentially inept and a terra-incognita. Initially, agenda-setting was conceived in terms of a relatively simple paradigm where salient issues of the mass media were reflected in the issues of the audience (McCombs & Shaw, 1972: p.185). The second level agenda-setting theory on the other hand, emerged to acknowledge the aspect of media effects. McCombs, et. al. (1997) content that at the second level, agenda-setting theory assumes the influence of 'attribute' salience, therefore, suggesting media effects. The logic lies in the fact that the influence of 'attributes' (effects) could only be ascertained if the salient issues in the media were reflected in the issues of the audience (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey, 1997) [24]. Such a quest to ascertain the direction of influence and effects has been the challenge of many African scholars who have sought to apply agenda-setting theory to their circumstances. A number of studies have been discredited

them as not following the procedural standards of operating and applying agenda-setting (Kwansah-Aidoo, 2001), and many other have yielded inconclusive results, leading to a dearth of research on the theory of agenda-setting in Africa.

Agenda-setting in the face of African Traditional Culture

To comprehend the above challenges of the theory of agenda-setting amidst cultural and socio-psychological perspectives, one needs to understand the history and molarity that shape the society under study. An application of the general concept of the theory poses dilemmas in the findings, therefore, yielding either inflated findings, or null hypotheses. In a quest for a normative framework, Francis Kasoma (1996) called for a consideration of primordial African ethics that still pose as a hallmark for African societies in decision making behaviors. Given the historical background, Kasoma argued that African culture perceives the media as “driven by selfish motives of profit maximization or political expediency...that pounce on victims in the name of democracy and press freedom” (95). The press is largely seen as incorrigible organ that has often forgotten or simply ignored the fact that it badly needs cleansing (Kasoma, p. 95). Such perceptions of the media underscore the argument that the media is for the elite minority and not poor majority who represent the voting populations. For this reason, agenda-setting finds it hard to thrive in the African minds in the sense that people see themselves detached from the media conglomerates.

Other scholars have argued that the status quo of the African media today is the result of the “copy and paste” syndrome, where African journalists choose to replace the African values and traditions with the western theoretical concepts. International communities and donor countries are especially blamed as supporting the muckraking media in pursuit for what they believe are normative frameworks for freedom of expression and ‘professional journalism’. What underpins this argument is that “Africa could not afford the luxury of a muckraking, adversarial press (Musa & Domatob, 2007, p. 324). Ansah (1988, p. 19), and Traber (1989, p. 93) bemoan the lack of *Africanness* in African journalism arguing that most journalists and their content are “foreign bodies in the cultural fabric of Africa”. They have embraced the western concept of reporting that essentially plays to the gallery of political parties as they engage in character assassination and jostle for political power. Such anachronistic tendencies have hampered the recourse for mutual understanding and believability between the media and its audience.

Traditional cultural values are rooted in John S. Mbiti’s (1975) ideology of “I am because we are; since we are, therefore, I am”; a principle that seeks to emphasize community morality. Mfumbusa (2010) develops this principle by arguing that the yardstick for good morals is confounded in whether what is being reported serves the community or not. For this reason, it is hard for media agenda to shape or affect the African society, except in situations where Agenda-setting theory deliberately accommodates traditional cultures based on participatory and communal approach. Kwansah-Aidoo (2001), argued in favor of a new methodology to test Agenda-setting theory as opposed to the dominant quantitative approach. For Kwansah-Aidoo, a normative approach to Agenda-setting in Africa only yields anecdotal evidence. For this reason, the

author suggested a broader perspective in operationalization agenda-setting theory.

In his seminal works, Kwansah-Aidoo used a qualitative approach to test the evidence of how “the media in Ghana set the environmental agenda of educated city dwellers” (p. 533). For Kwansah-Aidoo, this approach established agenda-setting effects in a consistent manner, therefore, avoiding major criticisms of the theory such as the difficulties that have always existed in the establishment of correlations and “proving the direction of influence and causality” (p.533). In other words, the study levelled against the inconclusive attributions of the traditional agenda-setting, arguing that with the old methodological design, anything could be attributed to agenda-setting as a number of studies have shown and argued. In quest for a normative framework, many African scholars have universalized the procedures of mass communication theories without seeking to understand the contextual effects (Gondwe, 2018; Mfumbusa, 2008). This has posed a challenge to the plausibility of such theories, therefore, rendering useless most African studies because of the failure to conform to the fetters of western designed theoretical strategies. This trend has led to a dearth of research on studies about agenda-setting in Africa. In this way, we argue and hypothesize that agenda-setting in African politics is plausible only if rooted in the historical antecedents and conditions of the people it seeks to serve. Underlying this hypothesis is that:

H₁: During the 2011 Zambian presidential elections, agenda-setting theory as the function of the mass media had less/no influence in determining the direction of causality among the voters’ choices for a presidential candidate.

Rationale

The 1991 and 2011 presidential elections happened in a period when the ruling governments had massively controlled and used the media to communicate their agenda. However, there was a lack of physical interaction between the people and the government officials (Diakonia, 2013). In both cases, the ruling governments were confident of winning the elections (McDonald, 2014).

The Zambian Media, Agenda-setting and Politics

Zambia has invariably been characterized as a ‘media-phobic state’ underpinned by the ‘reluctant to liberalize’ media policies (Moyo, 2010) ^[30]. The idea of the liberal democratic media as we know it, is relatively new in Zambia. Radio broadcasting, that had, for decades been a major source of information, only became liberalized in the early 1990s (Gondwe, 2018; Hamasaka, 2008, p. 40) ^[13]. Like anywhere else, radio was the first mass medium that was introduced by the colonists. Its role was essentially designed to inform and entertain the British colonial masters. For Africans, owning a radio cassette and receiving AM waves from BBC was a status quo of the privileged elite (Murphy & Hussain, 2010) ^[31]. Such a trend was advanced after independence in 1964 when Zambians not only inherited the government, but also desired to live like the colonial masters, sustaining a status quo that likened them to the British; “immersing property and smoking a cigar” (Gondwe, 2018).

Therefore, the media in its entire development was more a symbol of wealth and elite identity than a source of information. The state media, while officially state-owned, operated under the fetters of the ruling government, UNIP

with all editors appointed and demoted by President Kenneth Kaunda's presidential decree. The government strongly opposed not only the opposition parties, but also the independent media (Andreassen, Geisler, & Tostensen, 1992)^[1]. According to the *African Business* newspaper, the editors of the Zambian media were appointed to the strength of their UNIP allegiance and warned against covering opposition party news items or accepting opposition party adverts (February 1991). This led to civil society detaching themselves from media information, where they barely saw themselves as participants, but as only recipients (Soko & Shimizu, 2011)^[35] of entertainment and not objective information (Note that the media was especially not for information of the Zambian populace, but for entertainment, and a symbol of wealth). Subsequently, the media as a tool to discuss serious issues and politically mobilizing the audience became a challenge.

Similar studies have pointed to the fact that political participation in Zambia is multifaceted to include not only the entire process of how and why people get involved in politics (Chilcote, 1981)^[5] but also consisting of "those legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take" (Verba, Nir & Jae (1978). Such participation is not limited to media messages but attending community meetings and rallies. In a factor analysis study, Bratton, Alderfer, & Simutanyi (1997)^[37] found out that Zambian voters' participation was punctuated by three dimensional elements: "Contacting, and Communing, Voting". According to the authors, community-based action and face-to-face interactions with political representatives (contacting) were regarded more important than the messages they received from the media (Baldwin, 2013)^[3].

On the other hand, the study found out that institutional arrangements such as chiefdoms, tribal and religious affiliations, were the second important in characterizing how people chose to vote for one candidate over the other: Voter registration and political party membership were not a driving factor. This argument affirms Gondwe (2018)'s recent study on whether people in Zambia voted based on policy or not. Gondwe's findings indicated that policy did not matter for the Zambian people because their decisions were influenced by either the life conditions of their experience and the candidate they were choosing, or the tribe of the candidate they were voting for. His findings indicated that many people in Zambia were inclined to vote on tribal lines. To this end, the study suggested that it was hard for people with a tribal affiliation to have a shift of paradigm as a result of agenda-setting. The closest influence would come from what Katz, Lazarsfeld & Roper (2017) perceive as the influence of opinion leaders. As Bratton, Alderfer, & Simutanyi (1997)^[37] has argued earlier, Zambia's tribal chiefs indicated more influence on the political choices people made. This is because chiefs have always been regarded as opinion leaders with authority and close interaction with their people. The influences were achieved not through media agenda, but by communing and direct contacts (Baldwin, 2013)^[3].

Given the above challenges, we argue that the theory of agenda-setting could be best understood in the context of Klapper's (1960) quantitative multivariate analyses of media content that deflated the unlimited power conception of the mass media. For Klapper, "the mass media were not

ordinarily a direct cause of change in individual attitudes or social behavior, but rather, operated through a nexus of mediating conditions" (p. 29). Elihu, Blumler, & Gurevitch (1973), as well as other scholars expanded this thought by asserting that the audience deliberately chose the media that satisfies their needs. In other words, the theory assumed that the audience were not passive consumers of the mass media content, but that they played an interactive role with the media. Subsequent studies have extended this approach to consider the cultural aspects of the people and how they influence the choices they make in their media consumption. As White (1983) had ascertained, "media research has taken a paradigm shift from models based on direct reproduction of the mass media for the audience to the structural level analysis of media's social system effects and the analysis of sociocultural contexts of behavior". In other words, White is advancing the argument that the patterns of communication were always inherent in a given society and thus change could not be affected simply by changing the message of powerful media, but by enforcing an approach that accommodates the equitable distribution of social power" (p.283). In the context of agenda-setting, therefore, the issues that people choose as salient cannot be attributed to the power of the media because those issues that agenda-setting assumes as salient are inherent in the socio-cultures of every society. Based on the above arguments we, therefore, we hypothesize that:

H₂: *In the presence of taunting historical antecedents, the voters' choices for a presidential candidate are determined by the traditional and cultural values that shape their society.*

Rationale

The quest to implement a universal agenda-setting theory concept by African media practitioners is in conflict with the belief systems of the people they serve because agenda setting in Africa is only plausible if rooted in the cultural traditions and conditions of the people. African scholars have found it difficult to implement agenda-setting theory in their situations. In Kwansah-Aidoo (2001), the dominant structure of agenda-setting theory failed to yield reliable results unless with a modification that defied the traditional approach to include African traditional cultural approaches, as well as qualitative methods. Therefore, the author concluded that some questions surrounding agenda-setting theory can be wholly answers through simple justifications such as methodology. This leads to questions as to whether such modifications will still hold strong the paradigm of agenda-setting theory.

Materials and Methods

Two quantitative methods were leveraged for this study: Content analysis and Surveys. Given the fact that we were measuring past elections, content analyses were considered the appropriate primary research method for testing the presence of agenda-setting. Surveys, on the other hand, were designed to measure the people's perceptions on the past elections. The survey methods acted as a supplement to the content analysis because participants were asked to recall about the past elections. Strictly speaking, such an approach skews the relevance of testing agenda-setting theory. However, this method is primarily important because it confirms or challenges the results from content analyses. Testing of our hypotheses was exclusively contingent upon

media content and randomly existing documents of opinion polls. To this end, we argue, like other content analysis research methodologies that this study only provides inferential evidence of the prevalence of agenda-setting in the 2011 Zambian elections.

Sample Selection

Due to lack of well-established archives, the author and his coders painstakingly sought for stories in different places including online sources, University of Zambia archives and other similar places. All articles stipulating and published three months prior to the 2011 Zambian presidential elections were indexed and considered for the sample¹. A seemingly bottom-trawl method was used to collect all the stories available around the aforementioned time period, then carefully sifted for only stories pertaining to campaigns. The final sample from various media outlets yielded 118 articles in total.

Content Analysis Sample

For content analysis the study leveraged campaign stories between June to September 2011 for the two presidential elections. According to the Zambian constitution, the campaigns at all stages should last for three months. We coded all the mainstream media that had an optimal country-wide network coverage, while focusing on news related to recurring issues during the campaigns. Our content analysis of the 2011 stories were characterized by six themes: Corruption, unemployment, constitutional review, foreign policies, quality healthcare-especially HIV/AIDS, and economic reforms and stability. Two documents (the Afro-Barometer on the "Election quality, public trust are central issues for Africa's upcoming contests", and "The Common Wealth Observer Group" report on the Zambian 2011 general elections, were used to yield issues that correlated with content analysis data. For reliability purposes, other similar documents not mentioned were used to compare the pertinent issues. These supplement documents might not be as credible as the aforementioned due to source credibility. However, they were seen as addressing similar issues as those discussed in the credible documents.

Coding categories and measures

The coding procedure employed in this study recapitulates Furnham, Mak & Tanidjojo (2000) method, but in a varying way.

While the process is the same, the variables in the 2011 elections are different. In our study, we measured the following attributes as pertinent issues of the 2011 presidential elections.

Foreign Policies: All media stories pertaining to how Zambia seeks to connect with other nations in order to develop were categorized as foreign policy.

Economic Reforms and Stability: This referred to all media stories that sought to discuss how the political party was planning to stabilize the economy. The strategies presented were considered as important for the criteria.

Corruption: Refers to all stories about bribery and anti-corruption strategies

Quality healthcare: Refers to improved quality healthcare in Zambia, and especially on how to combat and take care of chronically ill patients. Improved health facilities were also considered.

Unemployment: Stories about unemployment and job creation were considered for the unemployment category.

Constitution Review: Refers to all stories about constitutional amendment with the view of serving the Zambian citizens.

Coding Reliability

We continued to replicate Furnham, Mak and Tanidjojo (2000) method in order for coding purposes. Therefore, two coders from the University of Zambia (UNZA) and National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA) were leveraged to help code 10% of the 1991 and 2011 presidential campaign stories as guided by the author. Overall percentage agreements for both the 1991 and 2011 issues were calculated using Holsti's (1969) method. The inter-coder reliability was 0.84 and 0.92 respectively. In an effort to assess individual variable percentage agreement, the Scott's pi, Cohen's kappa, and the Krippendorff's alpha were used with the aid of a beta version of the software package, the Program for Reliability Assessment with Multiple-coders (PRAM). To be considered reliable, each variable was required to yield a Krippendorff's alpha of 0.70 and above. However, the differences were discussed and reconciled, then merged with the rest of the coding before performing the final data analysis. At the end, none of the categories were collapsed, and the differences were very minimal among the coders. We report the results in Table 1. below.

¹ We acknowledge that it is almost impossible to test agenda-setting theory in the past elections. We, however, call for your understanding that we are only TESTING agenda-setting through Content Analysis. The follow-up surveys are designed to give the PERCEPTIONS of the people as well as support our content analysis findings. Thus, our approach is different from the traditional way of operationalizing of agenda-setting theory as ascribed by McCombs and Shaw.

Table 1: Inter-coder reliability, percentage, and means of the 1991 and 2011 variables

Variable	%Agreement	Krippendorff's alpha	Scott's pi	Cohen's kappa.	%(n) or Mean (SD)
2011 issues					
Corruption	.96	.93	.91	.90	93% (186)
Healthcare	.92	.89	.87	.89	83% (166)
Eco/Ref/Stab	.91	.84	.70	.84	82% (164)
Unemployment	.97	.95	.92	.93	94% (188)
Constitution	.87	.90	.87	.84	84% (164)
F/Policies	.89	.84	.88	.87	87% (174)

Note: Holsti's method was only used to calculate the overall percentages

Survey Operations

For surveys, the study used a standard question with questions on a Likert-scale measurement of 1-7. The questions were posted on various online platforms with a Zambian population. Facebook and WhatsApp groups were leveraged as resourceful platforms for the population of respondents, a total of 6,341 respondents were targeted for the sample. However, due to various circumstances, only 738 respondents were able to participate. Of the 738 eligible participants, 19% (n=143) participants qualified and respondents correctly to questions pertaining to the 1991 presidential elections. The remaining 81%(n=595) were for the 2011 elections. The 19 percent for the 1991 is considered overwhelming given the fact that many people that were eligible to vote in the 1991 elections are less active on social media. A research assistant was used to propel the participation of the 19 percent.

Data Analyses

Given the nature of the study, descriptive statistics were employed for both content analyses and surveys to record the frequencies and presence or absence of agenda-setting in the 2011 Zambian presidential election campaigns. For content analyses, we leveraged cross-tabulations and chi-squares to compare the coded issues from the media campaigns and opinion polls of the two elections. To test the presence of the agenda setting in the 2011 presidential elections, the values of each agenda-setting scale were coded as 0 (absence of agenda setting) or 1 (presence of agenda setting). Each of the issue items were summed up into categories so as to create correlation scores on a scale of 0 to 7 that were determined by the broadness of the story, amount of time and frequency, as well as the type of media source. A high score (7) on the scale of a particular news item (e.g. n=7) indicated a strong correlation with the opinion polls issues.

Results

Content Analyses Results

Our first hypotheses (H_1) sought to examine the presence of Agenda-setting in the 2011 presidential election campaigns. Essentially, the hypothesis held that during the 2011 Zambian presidential elections, agenda-setting theory as the function of the mass media had less/no influence in determining the direction of causality among the voters'

choices for a presidential candidate. Since these are past elections and would require people to recall, the study leveraged on content analyses of the pertinent media issues and those issues addressed in opinion polls.

Content analysis of the 2011 issues

An overall 82.7% (n=109) correlation coefficient was recorded for attitudes which alluded to the presence of media agenda in the opinion polls in regard to corruption, healthcare, economic reforms and stability, unemployment, constitutional review and foreign policy recording agreement percentages of 84.9%, 94.4%, 78.2%, 75.1%, 71.5%, and 80.4%. The chi-square was performed ($X^2 = 23.34, df=2, p<.061$) to indicate that the observed counts are different enough, therefore, suggesting insignificant tests with anecdotal evidence of the presence of agenda-setting in the opinion polls. In this case, the claim of our null hypothesis is valid. This implies that there is anecdotal evidence that the voters' choices for a presidential candidate in the 2011 Zambian presidential elections were influenced by the agenda-setting function of the media, therefore, suggesting less evidence of the agenda-setting function of the mass media.

Statistical significant differences were also recorded in the measure of agenda-setting among the variables Corruption, ($X^2 = 9.614, d = 2, p<.013$); Healthcare, ($X^2 = 4.437, df=2, p<.035$); Unemployment, ($X^2 = 9.651, df=2, p<.006$); Economic Stability, ($X^2 = 8.614, df=2, p<.012$); Constitutional Review, ($X^2 = 5.529, df=2, p<.019$); and Foreign Policy being ($X^2=4.439, df=2, p<.051$). In summary the chi-square results presented above, suggests overall statistical insignificant differences ($p<.061$) between the expected and the observed counts, indicating a strong presence of media agenda in the opinion polls. Foreign policy, however, although closely significant, suggests moderately less influence of its agenda on the opinion polls. The odds ratio ($OR>1$) clustered around 1 and not exceeding 1.9 in all the variables. This suggests that although there was an increased presence of Agenda-setting as compared to the 1991 elections, the frequencies of exposure are not very strong. In general, these findings suggest that the pertinent issues in the media agenda had a significant correlation with the opinion polls. Table 2 below presents the chi-square performance results

Table 2: Inter-correlations of the 2011 media issues with opinion polls Issue Type

Category	Media issue (n=118)	Opinion polls (n=109)	X ²	Significance
Issue Agenda			23.346	.061*
Corruption	28 (23.72%)	24 (22.01%)	9.614	.013*
Healthcare	15 (12.71%)	7 (6.42%)	4.437	.035*
Unemployment	31 (26.27%)	40 (36.69%)	9.651	.006**

Economic Stability	24 (20.33 %)	37 (33.94)	8,614	.012*
Constitution Review	10 (8.47%)	4 (3.67%)	5,529	.019*
Foreign Policy	9 (7.62%)	2 (1.83%)	4,439	.051

NOTE: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Survey Findings

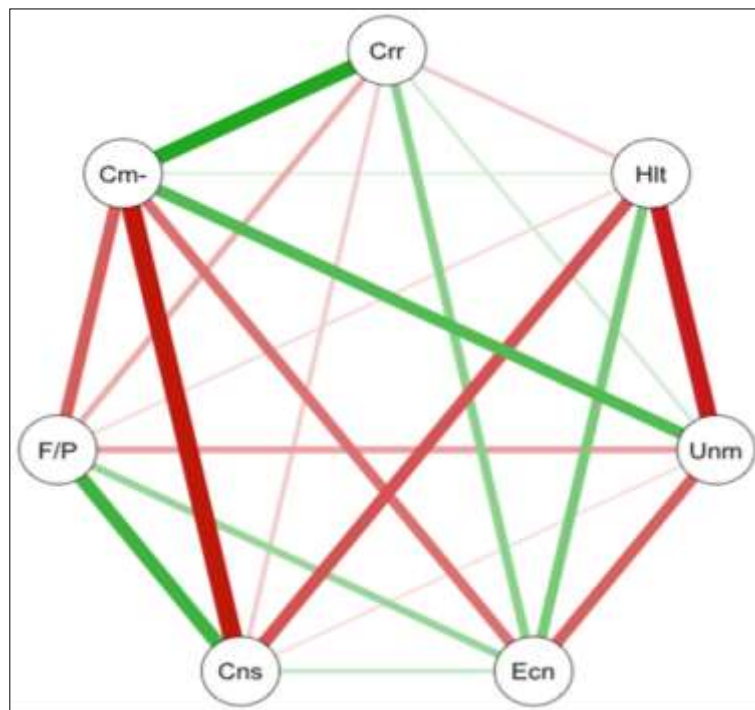
Our analyses of the relevant survey data had two objectives. First, they sought to test whether there were significant interaction effects of media agenda and traditional cultural values on the choices the Zambian people made for one presidential candidate over the other during the 2011 elections. The second objective sought to analyze whether media agenda and traditional cultural values had significant individual net effects on the choices made. Two-Way ANOVA tests and correlation matrices were therefore performed. This was done so as to determine the influence of culture on media agenda; what shaped Zambian people’s choices during the presidential elections, as well as the correlations between the cultural values and what content analyses identified as prevailing in the above findings.

The 2011 Survey Results

The second hypothesis (H_2) argued that in the presence of taunting historical antecedents, the voters’ choices for a presidential candidate are determined by the traditional and cultural values that shape their society. In other words, this hypothesis held that the voter’s choices for a candidate in the in the 2011 Zambian presidential elections were determined by traditional cultural values. The Two-Way ANOVA tests indicate an overall statistical insignificant value of $p < .095$ and an $F(7,475)$, $SD=3.81$ to suggest that

we cannot not reject our null hypothesis. Similarly, interaction effects between our independent variables indicated a value of $p < .058$ with an estimated marginal mean ($M=42.5$), to suggest that both the media agenda and the Zambian traditional cultural values were not acting separately from one another in informing the choices that people made for one candidate over the other. In other words, finding indicate evidence of agenda-setting theory in the choices that the voters made during the two elections. Since our F-ratio is model did not yield significant results, the post hoc test was not needed. However, we ran a correlation matrix and diagram 2 presents the summary results.

Despite the significant value of $p < .058$, the correlation matrices indicate a rather different story. Culture (Cm , $M=5.85$) and corruption (Crr , $M=4.90$) indicate strong correlations to each other as well as extending their correlations to unemployment (Unm , $M=3.30$), and the economy (Ecn , $M=3.40$). Foreign policy (F/P , $M=1.97$), healthcare (Hlt , $M=2.51$) and constitution review (Cns , $M=2.41$) indicate negative correlations in spite of being correlated to each other. While constitution review is strongly correlated to foreign policy, there is also a negative correlation between culture and the constitution. Figure 1 below provides the summary provided above.



Correlation matrices of media agenda and culture at $p < .05$

Fig 1: The 2011 correlations of media agenda and cultural values

Discussion

Overarchingly, this study aimed at showing us the influences that traditional cultural values and other taunting historical antecedents have on the choices that the voters make during the presidential elections as opposed to the influence of media agenda. Taking the 2011 Zambian

Presidential elections as a case study for analyzing the applicability of the influence of agenda-setting theory at a global level, this study leveraged on two main themes: To assess the impact of agenda-setting theory in the 2011 Zambian presidential elections which saw the opposition parties win over the ruling governments. Second, to measure

the perceptions of the Zambian voters about whether traditional cultures or media agenda influenced their decisions in choosing one for candidate over the other. In both content analyses and surveys, findings indicate anecdotal evidence of the presence of agenda-setting theory in the 2011 presidential elections, with a steadily growing effect.

The correlation matrices indicate relationships among the variables, Community-based (essentially representing culture), corruption, Unemployment, and the economy that stands as a central thrust for many variables. Such findings come as no surprise, given the history of Zambia in the 1990s. After his landslide victory in 1991, Frederick Chiluba reverted to Kaunda's anachronistic behaviors by situating himself as a political giant through some authoritarian tactics that continue to alienate the civil society from the media and recreated the patterns of elite clientelism (Von Soest, 2007). These tactics inevitably turned him into a corrupt leader, answerable to the London High Court Transparency International for embezzlement. Such charges were connected to the poor economy of the country as well as youth unemployment, which recorded the highest in the history of Zambia with a 23.5% rate (Statista, 2007-2017). This led to a higher turnout of the youth in the 2011 elections, voting for the opposition president who fervently spoke about unemployment. While issues of corruption and unemployment were common among the voters, the mainstream media failed to stress them out, as they were mainly challenging the ruling government for their failure to compact them. Given the impact that such issues had on grassroots, the opposition party (Patriotic Front) leveraged on them through face-to-face interactions as in the case of president Michael Sata and his arrest after meeting the unemployed youth in the Copperbelt province without permission to hold public campaigns (Mulla, 1991).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Feeble attempts to employ the theory of agenda-setting in African scholarship still remains elusive. Most studies are simply descriptive and continue to grapple in trying to offer an alternative normative vision of the dominant frameworks. A distinct dichotomy exists between what the media presents as pertinent, and what citizens find relevant and resonating within their everyday lives. Some scholars have argued that such normative contradictions are a result of the failure for "communication studies in Africa to build on a longstanding rich tradition" (Arnold De Beer, 2013), resulting into a post-colonial tendency to justify the validity of western conceptual approaches that appeal to validity and order of normative standards (Merrill, 1986).

The debates and discourse about what ought to be included in a normative theory suggest a number of lines of research that need to be taken up more strongly. First, there is a need to clarify what particularly shapes the agenda of the people in Africa. As suggested by our findings, traditional, cultural and the historical backgrounds of the people have a lot of influence on why people choose one candidate over the other. While the media might have a huge role to place in the western traditions, many Africans isolate themselves from the media. However, it would be interesting to advance this study by looking at the role of agenda-setting in some African countries where the citizens are now actively participating in creating content through digital media. Therefore, there is a need for a deeper exploration of what

Christians and Traber (1997) called the monumental challenge facing communication studies, namely, reconciling two contradictory trends of "cultural homogenization and cultural resistance" (Mfumbusa, 2010, p. 151).

Second, the idea of what methods characterize the operationalization of the theory of Agenda-setting require extensive analyses in terms of their capacity to yield strong and reliable results. As expressed earlier, the emphasis to test agenda-setting theory with quantitative methods. The importance of Kwansah-Aidoo (2001)'s finding cannot be overstated. While defying the normative standards he found strong evidence that was able to establish the correlations and prove the direction of influence and causality (p. 533). Similarly, the use of various methods in our study also provide strong evidence of both the presence and absence of agenda-setting. Specifically, the odds ratio helped provide the evident of steadily growing media agenda and the declining effects of traditional cultures. Such finding provide evidence to the world conjured up with a central thrust of cultural homogenization versus cultural resistance by Christians and Traber (1997). In this sense, the Kwansah-Aidoo (2001) is right to assert that agenda-setting could be achieved through an incorporation of both methodological and traditional cultural approaches other than obstinately sticking to the normative rules. Central to this argument, however, is whether these noble goals for African scholarship could be achieved through a return to the communal African traditional values as Traber (1989) and Kasoma (1996) suggest, or through the liberalization of the theory that seeks to incorporate broad perspectives. In other words, how can African values be nurtured in a context where there is no fundamental consensus on the binding values as well as cultural homogenization?

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