Using social media to bypass state control

– A study about social media's effect on individuals' trust in
the ruling party in dominant party systems

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Abstract

This paper will study the effect that consumption of news through social media has on individuals' trust in the ruling party. The focus is African countries that are defined as having a dominant party system. The theory stipulates that consumption of social media should be an addition to models that investigate trust in parties in dominant party systems, and the hypothesis is that news consumption through social media has a negative effect on individuals' trust in the ruling party. The study is based on survey data from Afrobarometer. Twelve countries within Afrobarometer's data are identified as dominant party systems, and these are analysed using OLS regressions. The results indicate, in line with the hypothesis, that social media has a negative effect on individuals' trust in the ruling party. However, further research is needed to establish the causal direction.

Key words: social media, dominant party systems, Africa, Afrobarometer, trust, parties, government, media, regression analysis

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1 Introduction

Africa is the only continent where dominant party systems (from now abbreviated as DPS) is still a common form of political system. DPS is, in brief, a system where one party has ruled for a long period and become institutionalised, which affects most areas of society, including media. This often results in a media system that is tilted in the dominant party's favour, with little room for citizens to criticise the political rulers (Salih & Nordlund, 2007). Parallel to this, the digital revolution has reached African citizens. Mutiga and Flood (2016) writes that there are now more mobile phones than adults in most African countries and the mobile phone industry will, according to reports, account for one tenth of the total GDP on the continent by 2020. With mobile phones come mobile internet and the internet connectivity rate is rising rapidly. With mobile internet comes social media, which is starting to gain political importance in many African countries (Ogola, 2018). Social media opens up room for critical news in DPS, as it makes it possible for citizens to bypass state controlled media (Mare, 2015). Thus, news on social media is believed to be more critical toward the ruling party than news on other sources, as follows there is reason to believe that consuming news through social media has a negative effect on individuals' trust in the ruling party in DPS.

This paper will investigate if news consumption through social media affects individuals' trust in the ruling party in DPS. This has not been tested before on a general level, and the paper will as a result contribute to the existing literature on individuals' trust in parties and government, as well as the literature on DPS. Freedom of speech and free press are important components of a functioning democracy (EIU Democracy Index, 2018) and this study could help build knowledge of what role social media can play in democratisation.

The study builds on previous research on DPS in general, as well as the system's effect on media and media's general effect on individuals' political attitudes. In addition, it draws from case studies that have shown that social media's political influence is growing in DPS in Africa. In short, the theory and proposed causal mechanism builds on three conclusions from previous research: that media has an effect on individuals' political attitudes (Prior, 2007), (Entman, 1989), that the traditional media system is biased toward the ruling party in DPS (Salih & Nordlund, 2007) and that social media has become an arena where negative news toward the ruling party is more common than in traditional media (Mare, 2015), (Iwilade, 2013), (Kalyango Jr & Adu-Kumi, 2013).

The empirical analysis is quantitative and Ordinary Least Squared-regressions are used. Twelve African countries that are defined as DPS are included and the material is based on survey-data from Afrobarometer.

The results indicate, consistent with the hypothesis, that consumption of news through social media has a negative effect on individuals' trust in the ruling party. However, the risk of reversed causality cannot be ruled out, which has implications on the conclusions that can be drawn from this study.

The paper is structured in the following way: part 2, that follows after this introduction, presents background, previous research and the theoretical framework. In part 3, the research design and method is accounted for, where the data, operationalisation and regression model is explained. Next, in part 4, the empirical analysis and results are described and analysed. The paper ends with a conclusion.

2 Theory and previous research

This section will define this study's theory and the previous research it is based on. It is initiated with a background, where DPS as a concept is explained. Then follows a summary of previous research on topics relevant to this paper. Primarily, studies on the media's effect on individuals' political attitudes, the media system in DPS in Africa and social media's role in African countries are described. The theory is then introduced and explained. Finally, the research question is presented with its underlying hypothesis.

2.1 Background and previous research

DPS can briefly be explained as a political system where multiparty elections are held, but where one party is very dominant, making it improbable that any other party could seize power. One of the most famous examples is Mexico, where the PRI held power for 71 consecutive years, the longest running dominant party in world history (de Jager & du Toit, 2013). Other examples of countries with a history of DPS are Taiwan, India, Trinidad and Tobago, Israel and Luxembourg. Some political scientists also classify Sweden as a case of DPS during the Social Democrats regime from 1936 to 1976 (Greene, 2013). But what is really a DPS? The phenomenon is widely discussed and many definitions have been suggested. One of the older definitions is Duverger's (1954), stipulating DPS as a system where one party's "doctrines, ideas, methods and style coincide with those of the epoch […] Domination is a question of influence rather than specific strength" (Duverger, 1954 p:308). Generally, five different criteria are used when trying to define a dominant party system: the political system, the threshold for dominance, the nature of the dominance, the inclusion of opposition features and time span (de Jager & du Toit, 2013). An important distinction within DPS is made by Kenneth Greene (2013), who categorises DPS into "dominant party authoritarian regimes" (DPAR) and "dominant party democratic regimes" (DPDR). Most DPS position themselves somewhere in between these two extremes of democracy and authoritarianism. Because of one party's long dominance in DPS, it is unlikely that full liberal democracy as an ideal is reached. However, there are big differences between the countries classified as DPS, with some closer to the DPAR-extreme and others closer to the DPDR-extreme (de Jager & du Toit, 2013).

A definition of DPS that is frequently used is Giovanni Sartori's (1976). His definition stipulates that a political system is classified as DPS when one party has won a parliamentary majority in three consecutive multiparty elections, and the

same party has also controlled the presidency during the same period. In a review of different definitions of DPS, Matthijs Bogaards (2004) finds that Sartori's definition is the strongest. In addition, it is clear and easy to grasp, and as such facilitates a dichotomous selection of cases. Inspired by Sartori (1976) and Bogaards (2004), this paper will use the same definition.

The only continent where DPS is still a common form of political system is Africa. According to Salih and Nordlund (2007), as the African continent was decolonised, the liberation movements transformed into political parties that started to govern their respective countries. Some began by constructing a one-party state and ruled without political challenge. However, with time, a process of democratisation started and most countries today allow for opposition parties, but the level of democracy varies (EIU Democracy Index, 2018). In several states, the liberation movement turned party is still dominant, regardless of the fact that it now operates in a multiparty system. As Mohamed Salih (2003) puts it: *"[liberation movements turned parties] behave like one-party systems, often blurring the distinction between party and the state. They continue to be an embodiment of nationalist/populist politics in which the person of the president and the liberation struggle are constant reminders for voters to stay the course. This has in many instances created a situation whereby the opposition forces, the media and even genuine critics were either silenced or forced to defect to the opposition"* (p:18). This dominance depends on several factors, but research often points to the fact that parties dominate in part due to their historical achievements of liberating the country and as such are seen as the legitimate rulers (Southall, 2019). In addition, as controllers of the state, they have been able to construct state institutions to serve the party's interests. African dominant parties have become so rooted to power, that they often are seen as synonym to the state (Salih & Nordlund, 2007).

As the dominant party influence practically all parts of society, it also affects the media. It is a usual trait in DPS that media is bias in favour of the dominant party and against opposition parties, which is one important explanation to why these parties can keep on ruling without significant challenge (Salih & Nordlund, 2007).

However, the media system in Africa is changing rapidly, and social media is a growing political arena on the continent (Ogola, 2018). A few case studies address social media's influence in countries that are classified as DPS on the African continent. Admire Mare (2015) studies how Facebook has become an arena where youth consume news and voice political opinions in Zimbabwe and South Africa, making it able for them to bypass state control. The interviewees in the study claim that they felt more secure reading critical news and discussing political matters online compared to in traditional media.

Social media's ability to provide a platform for citizens to voice critical opinions in another DPS is illustrated by Akin Iwilade (2013). In Mozambique, protests about the government's decision to remove subsidies started through mobilisation through social media. In addition, traditional media refrained from covering the protests, but social media was used by protesters to put the events in international spotlight. Iwilade (2013) suggests that this would have been

impossible without social media and that it shows how important it has become for political discussion and mobilisation.

In a paper based on interviews, Yusuf Kalyango Jr and Benjamin Adu-Kumi (2013) investigates, inter alia, Ugandan citizens that are frequent social media users. The study highlights how individuals believe that social media is a safer environment to voice critical opinions. One Ugandan citizen is quoted saying: *"If these statements I posted the last six months to bring down President Museveni and his other cronies like his military men were to be published in the newspapers and television here, the reporters would be prosecuted for treason and for tarnishing the president"* (p:15). Both Iwilade (2013), Mare (2015) and Kalyango Jr and Adu-Kumi (2013) point out the importance of social media, as it has become an arena where criticism can be expressed more freely compared to traditional platforms.

Other examples of studies on the media system in DPS are, apart from the above mentioned, Nicola du Jager (2013), David Sebudubudu and Mokganedi Zara Botlhomilwe (2013) and Helge Rønning (2015) – studies that highlight the control that the ruling party has on traditional media in DPS.

Further research important to this study are papers that show that media has an effect on political preferences and attitudes. Two examples are Robert Entman (1989) and Markus Prior (2007), that show the media's importance when it comes to shaping individuals' political thinking and, therefore, the importance to study media's effect on politics.

This section has highlighted that social media does have a role to play in the political landscape in African countries that are classified as DPS. They can work as a tool to bypass state control, and thus become a place where people feel safer to air any negative thoughts they might have of the governing party.

2.2   Theory

As shown in section 2.1, previous research demonstrate that one aspect that contribute to the continued dominance of the ruling party in African DPS is their control over traditional media. With the digital revolution, this might change. As internet is growing rapidly in African countries, social media is becoming an arena where the dominant party's control over media is challenged. Based on the three following aspects: 1. *That media influences peoples' political attitudes* (Prior, 2007), (Entman, 1989), 2. *That traditional media in DPS is biased in favour of the ruling party* (Salih & Nordlund, 2007) and 3. *That social media is an arena where negative news toward the ruling is more common than in traditional media* (Mare, 2015), (Iwilade, 2013), (Kalyango Jr & Adu-Kumi, 2013), it is evident that the introduction of social media in DPS is important and something that needs investigation.

As traditional media is tilted in the dominant party's favour, it is likely that citizens' trust in the dominant party is affected positively by consuming news. Hence, traditional media consumption becomes an action that is presumed to

further fuel the party's dominance (Salih and Nordlund, 2007). However, with more and more people connected, social media is changing the way that political news emerges and is consumed (Ogola, 2018). Where people previously had to rely on established media, political discussion and sharing of news can now be done in large scale between citizens, without the need to go through the party-biased media (Mare, 2015), (Iwilade, 2013), (Kalyango Jr & Adu-Kumi, 2013). Social media could thus become an arena where the dominant party is challenged, as it has less opportunity to control the narrative compared to the traditional media system.

Combining the above discussed factors, it is reasonable to think that African citizens, in countries with DPS, that consume news through social media become less trusting in the dominant party compared to others. The causal mechanism is believed to be as follows: when citizens start using social media for news consumption, they are confronted with criticism towards the dominant party, criticism that is not brought to the agenda in traditional media. When confronted with this, their attitudes change and become more negative towards the ruling party – ultimately citizen's trust in the ruling party decreases. This is the causal mechanism that will be investigated in this paper.

Trust in parties and government has been discussed in numerous studies in political science, both generally and in DPS specifically. A number of different factors have been proposed to have an effect on trust, for example age, education, socio-economic status and party affiliation. This paper's proposed causal mechanism does not aim to overthrow previous models and claim that social media is the critical factor to examine when analysing trust in parties. Instead, it suggests that consumption of news through social media might be an important addition to previous models, that can help increase our understanding of trust in parties and government in DPS, together with previous factors that have been proposed by other scholars.

To the best of my knowledge, no study has yet been conducted that specifically addresses news consumption though social media's effect on individuals' trust toward the ruling party in DPS. The proposed relationship between the consumption of news through social media has indirectly been investigated in case studies, however, it has not been analysed specifically and on a broader lever, a gap that this paper intent to fill. It aims to look at individuals and quantitatively analyse whether the proposed relationship can be shown.

The implications of the proposed causal mechanism might be big – with lower trust political change can occur (van der Meer, 2017). However, this study does not aim to speak about possible implications.

2.3   Research question and hypotheses

The research question is as follows: *Does consumption of news through social media affect trust in the ruling party in dominant party systems?*

The hypothesis, that this study aims to prove, is that news consumption through social media has a negative effect on individuals' trust in the ruling party in DPS-states in Africa.

3   Research design and method

This part will describe the method that has been used to answer the research question. It begins with a description of the sample, first by defining the operationalisation of DPS and then by a presenting the included countries. The operationalisation of main variables and control variables is then outlined. Finally, the regression model is described, along with a presentation of its limitations.

3.1   Sample

3.1.1   Definition of dominant party systems

For this paper's operationalisation, it is important to choose a clear dichotomous definition that makes it easy to categorize countries as DPS or not. The chosen definition in section 2.1 is Sartori's (1976), where DPS is classified as a country where one party has won a parliamentary majority in three consecutive multiparty elections, and that party has also controlled the presidency during the same period. Being simple, clear and dichotomous, the same definition is also chosen to operationalise DPS.

Certainly, choosing this definition has consequences. An obvious effect is that the distinction between dominant party authoritarian regimes or dominant party democratic regimes (Greene, 2013) is not investigated and both types of regimes will be included. The main reason for this is that the theory described in section 2.2 applies to both types of DPS, as the dominant party is believed to be institutionalised in both systems. Whether a country is democratic or authoritarian would not have any major implications on the proposed causal mechanism and as such is relevant to control in countries belonging to both groups.

3.1.2 Africa

Most DPS have today failed. The one continent where they are still common is Africa, which makes Africa a suitable continent to focus on given this paper's research question. To limit the analysis to African countries is also beneficial for the model. Even though there is great variation between the African countries included in the paper, many dominant parties share a somewhat similar history.

They generally emerged in a similar fashion and in some ways operate comparably (Salih & Nordlund, 2007).

To sum up, this paper will analyse African countries where a single party has won the presidential power and a majority of seats in parliament in the three last multiparty elections. The data sources used to categorise the African countries into DPS are the Swedish Institute for International Affairs (UI) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

3.1.3 Material

The main data source for this paper is Afrobarometer, which is a non-partisan research network that regularly conducts surveys in 37 African countries. It is the largest survey program on the African continent and is widely used in political science literature (Logan & Gyimah-Boadi, 2016), (Afrobarometer 1). Afrobarometer conducts surveys in countries if three conditions apply: 1. *There must be a local partner in the country with whom Afrobarometer can cooperate to conduct the surveys,* 2. *The country must be safe enough to conduct the surveys without risk,* and 3. *Citizens in the country must be able to speak freely without the risk of consequences* (Afrobarometer 2). Due to this, six countries that are defined as DPS according to this paper's definition are not analysed, as data on these countries is missing in Afrobarometer. These are Angola, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Chad (UI), (IFES), (Afrobarometer 5). Undoubtedly, the results of this paper will be less representative as these countries are not included. However, if Afrobarometer cannot guarantee that people are able to answer their questions freely, to include them would risk the reliability of the paper's results. In addition, as Afrobarometer states that the included countries fulfil the above conditions, there is reason to believe that we can trust that the respondents in this paper answer the questions truthfully, which makes the data more reliable.

The dataset used is Afrobarometer Merged Round 6 data from 2016, which is the most recent survey conducted. The dataset is cross-sectional and downloaded from Afrobarometer's official website (Afrobarometer 3).

The countries that are defined as DPS according to the chosen definition, and included in the Afrobarometer dataset are the following 12 countries[1]: Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Sudan[2], Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zimbabwe (UI), (IFES), (Afrobarometer 5).

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[1] See Appendix (header number 1) for a list of the ruling parties in the included countries.
[2] During the work with this thesis, the Sudanese president was removed from power in a coup d'état and the ruling party was dissolved. Sudan is still included, as the data-collection by Afrobarometer was done before this and thus the results will not be affected.

3.2   Operationalisation of main variables

3.2.1   Trust in ruling party

Individuals' trust in the ruling party is this paper's dependent variable. It is operationalised through the answers to the following question in Afrobarometer: *How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The Ruling Party?* (Afrobarometer 4: Q52F). There are four possible answers, coded from low to high: 0 = Not at all, 1 = Just a little, 2 = Somewhat, 3 = A lot. There are three other possible variable values in the data: don't know/haven't heard enough, refused to answer and missing answer. Individuals that have been coded as any of these three have been removed from the sample[3]. As the variable is constructed with a low amount of trust coded with a low number, positive coefficients for the independent valuables will indicate that they lead to higher trust in the ruling party, and vice versa.

3.2.2   News consumption through social media

The independent variable of this study is news consumption through social media. To measure this, the answers to the following question in Afrobarometer are used: *How often do you get news from the following sources: Social media such as Facebook or Twitter?* (Afrobarometer 4: Q12E).

   The answers to the question are: 0 = Never, 1 = Less than once a month, 2 = A few times a month, 3 = A few times a week, 4 = Every day. In addition, there are two other possible answers: don't know and refused to answer. Individuals that have given any of these two answers or have a missing answer in the data have been removed from the sample[3]. The way the variable is constructed, a positive coefficient means that news consumption through social media has a positive effect on the individual's trust in the ruling party, and a negative coefficient represents a negative effect.

3.3   Operationalisation of control variables

Control variables are important to include to ascertain that any relationship between the independent and dependent variable is not spurious (Teorell & Svensson, 2007). Below, the control variables age, education, socio-economic

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[3] See Appendix (heading number 6) for the number of removals.

status and interest in public affairs are outlined – why they are included and how the operationalisation is done. Then follows a description of the dummy variables included.

3.3.1 Age

In previous literature, age has been shown to have an effect on voting behaviour and political participation. It is also believed to affect news consumption through social media, as younger people are more frequent users of social media compared to others. A study by Bachmann et al (2010) investigates both the above statements, and finds that young adults in the United States are disproportionately more active when it comes to political consumption online compared to older citizens. To consume news online had effects on voting behaviour and level of political participation and the effect was stronger among young citizens, even compared to older citizens that consumed political news online. In Africa, a young citizen is more likely to be online compared to others (Silver & Johnson, 2018).

Tom Christensen and Per Lægreid (2005) carried out a study on what influences trust in government, and finds that age is one of the explaining factors and is shown to have a positive effect on individuals' trust. The authors believe that the explanation to this is that older people tend to be more collectively orientated compared to younger citizens.

Case studies on social media usage and its political effects in African DPS also highlight the fact that young citizens tend to be the drivers of the political consequences of increasing social media usage. Mare (2015) describes how social media has become an arena where youth are able to bypass state control to discuss political matters in South Africa and Zimbabwe and Iwilade (2013) writes about how social media was used by Mozambican youth to organise demonstrations. Yusuf Kalyango Jr and Benjamin Adu-Kumi's (2013) interview-based paper on social media and political participation in, among others, Uganda shows how young citizens is the main group that both uses social media and are affected by the usage's consequences on political behaviour.

In summation, the literature show that age is a factor that is worth including as a control variable. The relation between age and trust in the ruling party is believed to be positive, i.e. that older citizens tend to have a higher trust in the ruling party. This is in accordance with the study by Christensen and Lægreid (2005).

Age is operationalised through the answers to the following question in Afrobarometer: *How old are you?* (Afrobarometer 4: Q1). The answers range from 18 to 103. Individuals that have answered that they don't know, or have a missing value, have been removed from the sample[4]. As the variable is constructed, a positive coefficient indicate that older people tend to trust the ruling party more and a negative coefficient proposes the opposite effect.

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[4] See Appendix (heading number 6) for the number of removals.

3.3.2 Education

In studies on political behaviour and voting patterns, education has proven to be one of the best predictors (Fesnic, 2008). Education is additionally believed to have an effect on social media usage, as higher educated individuals in African states tend to be more frequent users of social media than others (Silver & Johnson, 2018).

It is hard to predict the direction of the possible effect that education might have on the dependent variable, as there are contradictory theories in the literature. Bouckaert and Van de Walle (2001) claim that higher education has a positive effect, as educated people have greater knowledge of how politics and government work, which is believed to fuel trust. Arguments pointing to a negative effect claim that higher education leads to a more critical attitude toward government (Christensen & Lægreid, 2005). In a study by Nicholas Charron and Bo Rothstein (2015) higher education is believed to increase trust generally. However, in societies with greater levels of corruption and favouritism, higher educated citizens tend to instead become more critical of the system.

Education is operationalised through the answers to the following question in Afrobarometer: *What is your highest level of education?* (Afrobarometer 4: Q97). The possible answers are: 0 = No formal schooling, 1 = Informal schooling only (including Koranic schooling), 2 = Some primary schooling, 3 = Primary school completed, 4 = Intermediate school or Some secondary school/high school, 5 = Secondary school/high school completed, 6 = Post-secondary qualifications, other than university e.g. a diploma or degree from a polytechnic or college, 7 = Some university, 8 = University completed, and 9 = Post-graduate. Individuals that did not know how to answer the question, that refused to answer or that have missing data in the dataset have been removed from the sample[5]. The type of education that is believed to be at the lowest level is coded by Afrobarometer with the lowest number and vice versa. When analysing this variable's results, a positive coefficient would indicate that higher education leads to more trust in the ruling party, and a negative coefficient would indicate the contrary.

3.3.3 Socio-economic status

Socio-economic status, a measurement of an individual's economic and social position, has shown to have effects on both political preferences and social media usage, which has been demonstrated for example through a study on South African voter preferences (Patel et al, 2018), and a recent World Bank report by Mahler et al (2019). Due to this, it is relevant to include in the model as a control variable.

As this study is based on data from Afrobarometer, no standard measurement can be used, as no question specifically addressing socio-economic status is

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[5] See Appendix (heading number 6) for the number of removals.

included in the questionnaire (Afrobarometer 4). Instead, a number of questions have been combined to try to determine the respondent's socio-economic level. The five questions used are the following: *Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without enough food to eat?* (Q8A), *Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without enough clean water for home use?* (Q8B), *Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without medicines or medical treatment?* (Q8C), *Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without enough fuel to cook your food?* (Q8D), *Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without a cash income?* (Q8E), (Afrobarometer 4). The answers to the following questions is the tool used to operationalise. Every question is followed with the same five possible answers: 0 = Never, 1 = Just once or twice, 2 = Several times, 3 = Many times, 4 = Always. Individuals that did not know how to answer the questions, that refused to answer or that have missing data have been removed from the sample[6]. The answers to these five questions have then been added together, creating a new variable with a possible value ranging from 0 to 20. If the respondent scores 20 on the new variable, this means that he/she has responded "always" to every question above – the individual has always been lacking food, water, medicines, fuel and a cash income during the past year. On the other hand, if the score is 0, the individual has not once been lacking any of the above during the last year. As follows, a higher value indicates an individual with a lower socio-economic status and vice versa, which means that the analysis of the regression coefficient is reversed. A positive coefficient would indicate that low socio-economic status increases an individual's trust in the ruling party, and a negative coefficient instead indicates that high socio-economic status leads to more trust in the ruling party.

This operationalisation has obvious flaws. Never lacking food, water, medicine, fuel and a cash income does tell us something about socio-economic status. However, an individual that never lacks any of the above is graded as having the highest possible socio-economic status. There is more nuance to socio-economic status than that, and within the group that will receive 0 as a value, big variation is to be expected and grouping them together will have implications on this study's results. In spite of this, using data from Afrobarometer limits the available toolbox and the above approach is the best available in that it, at least in part, captures the concept of socio-economic status. On the other end of the spectra, individuals with the highest scores will be well captured by the operationalisation – lacking food, water, medicine, fuel and a cash income indicates a very low socio-economic status. The best possible line of action is to be aware of the operationalisation's weaknesses when analysing the results.

As with education, it is hard to predict the direction of the possible effect on trust in ruling party. On one hand, it is reasonable to believe that a higher socio-economic status would mean that an individual would trust the ruling party, as

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[6] See Appendix (heading number 6) for the number of removals.

he/she has been doing well during their regime. On the other hand, higher socio-economic status could lead to a better informed individual which could speak in the favour of a negative effect (Charron & Rothstein, 2016).

3.3.4 Interest in public affairs

Several studies have indicated that individuals' interest in politics and public affairs has an effect on political attitudes and behaviour. One article that proposes this relation, conducted in an American context, is written by Norval Glenn and Michael Grimes (1968). A more recent study by Riezebos et al (2011) tested various variables to find which had the largest impact on voting behaviour, and found that political interest was the sole determinant. Research also suggest that it is the already politically interested that are shaped by news consumption on social media (Kim et al, 2013). Based on this, it is relevant to include it as a control variable in the model.

Interest in Public Affairs is operationalised through the answers to Afrobarometer's question: *How interested would you say you are in public affairs?* (Afrobarometer 4: Q13). The possible answers are: 0 = Not at all interested, 1 = Not very interested, 2 = Somewhat interested, and 3 = Very interested. Individuals that have answered either that they don't know or that refused to answer have been removed from the sample, as well as those individuals where data is missing[7]. As the question's answers are coded from a low to a high, a positive coefficient would indicate that higher interest in public affairs leads to more trust in the ruling party, and a negative coefficient would indicate the opposite.

3.3.5 Party affiliation

An important factor when analysing trust in the dominant party is to control for party affiliation. Often, an individual becomes affiliated with a party early in life, which is oftentimes inherited from older family members. This affiliation tends to guide citizens' political behaviour regardless of changes in the party's representatives or policy decisions (Dalton 2016). It is also reasonable to believe that party affiliation can affect consumption of news through social media, as people who feel close to the dominant party may be more inclined to accept and approve of the traditional media channels as they generally are biased in favour of the ruling party (Salih & Nordlund, 2007).

Party affiliated is operationalised by the construction of dummy variables. They are built through the answers to the two following questions in Afrobarometer: *Do you feel close to any particular political party?* (Q90A), with the possible answers "Yes" or "No", and *Which party is that?* (Q90B),

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[7] See Appendix (heading number 6) for the number of removals.

(Afrobarometer 4). The possible answers to the second question are many – a number of different political parties in the included countries are listed. In addition to the explicitly mentioned parties, there are two other possible answers: "Other" and "Not applicable". "Other" indicates that the individual feels close to a party that is not included as an alternative by Afrobarometer, and "Not applicable" means that the individual answered "No" to the first question (Q90A), and therefore does not feel close to any party.

The first dummy variable includes individuals that does not feel close to any party. These are coded as 1, and individuals that feel close to a party, regardless of which, are coded as 0.

The second includes individuals that feel close to the ruling party. The answer that indicates this for each country has been coded as 1, and any other answer has been coded as 0[8].

The third dummy variable includes individuals that feel close to any other party but the ruling one. All answers with a value connected to parties included in the dataset that are not ruling in each specific country have been coded as 1, as well as the answer "Other", as this indicates that the individual feels close to a party that is not ruling but missing from the dataset[9]. All other answers have been coded as 0. In the analysis, the first dummy variable (where the individuals that does not feel close to any party are coded as 1) is the reference category.

3.3.6 Country specific factors

As one of the regressions that will be carried out includes all individuals in the sample from all of the different countries, it is important to control for country specific factors. This has been done by coding 12 dummy variables for each country. To exemplify, when creating the dummy variable for Mozambique, every individual interviewed from Mozambique has been coded as 1, and everyone else as 0. This has been done for every country. In the analysis, Botswana is the reference category.

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[8] See Appendix (header number 1) for a list of the dominant parties that have been coded as 1.
[9] See Appendix (header number 2) for a list of the other parties that have been coded as 1.

3.4 Regression model

3.4.1 Explanation

A quantitative analysis will be conducted to answer the research question. A multivariate regression analysis is used and the model is Ordinary Least Squared (OLS). Regression analysis is suitable as this study builds on data on individuals and as such is based on a large number of cases and large-N studies is something that regression analysis handles well. Linear regression such as OLS is a good type of regression model as it presents clear, distinct and easily comprehendible results (Teorell & Svensson, 2007). IBM SPSS Statistics 25 is the statistical software package used to carry out the analysis.

The aim of the study is to analyse whether news consumption trough social media has a negative effect on individuals' trust in the ruling party. Cross-sectional survey data on individual level from 12 African countries are analysed. The regression model is the following:

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{1,i} + \Sigma \beta_j x_{j,i} + \varepsilon_i$$

The dependent variable is y_i, which is the level of trust in the ruling party and i represents one of the included individuals, acting as respondents in the survey. β_0 is the intercept of the regression, $x_{1,i}$ is the level of news consumption through social media, and β_1 is the regression coefficient of the variable. $\Sigma \beta_j x_{j,i}$ represents the control variables, and j indicates which control variable. ε_i is the regression's error term.

The R^2 is an important factor when analysing the regressions, and is called the coefficient of determination. This value says how much the model is able to explain the dependent variable, that is, the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is predictable from the independent variable. This analysis uses adjusted R^2 for the multivariate regressions to avoid the problems of an exaggerated R^2-value, which is a risk when conducting a multivariate regression (Teorell & Svensson, 2007). It is important to note that regression models in social sciences rarely display an adjusted R^2 value of over 0.4 (Dougherty, 2016).

Tests of the data has been carried out. To rule out multicollinearity, the variables have been controlled for correlation and a collinearity diagnosis has been executed to calculate the variance inflation factor. No variables show a correlation that is too high.

A scatterplot graph test has been used to rule out heteroscedasticity. The test's null-hypothesis was that there is homoscedasticity, which has not been rejected. The data is thus assumed to be homoscedastic.

To control for non-linear relations, a SPSS Linearity test was used. The null-hypothesis is that no non-linear relations exists, and this has not been possible to reject.

3.4.2 Limitations

This paper's theory proposes a causal mechanism where an individual's consumption of news through social media decreases her trust for the ruling party. However, it is possible to imagine that the reversed causality could be the case instead – that individuals who already have low trust in the ruling party start using social media as a news source, as it is less controlled by the state. To predict causality is hard, as the regression model builds on cross-sectional data, meaning that the cases are only observed at one point in time. Therefore, no definitive conclusions can be made regarding the causal direction. However, previous studies appear to point to the direction proposed in this paper. In the study by Kalyango and Adu-Kumi (2013), people first started using social media, and then followed a change in their political attitudes. In general, it is probable that the majority of people that start using social media does not do it with the initial intention to discuss and consume politics, as social media usage in Africa goes way beyond political news consumption (Parke, 2016), which would make it reasonable to believe that consumption of news through social media comes first. To summarize, the regression model used cannot conclude that the causal direction is the one stipulated in the theoretical framework. However, as previous research point in the proposed causal direction, there is reason to believe that the causal direction is the same as this paper proposes.

Country specific factors are important when analysing political issues and trust (Schneider, 2017). This paper's regression model is general, and constructed to, as good as possible, suit every country in the sample. The limited time and space makes it impossible to construct separate models for each country. In the regression model when all of the countries are combined, dummy variables are used to control for country specific factors. However, when analysing the separate regressions on every country, it is important to remember that country specific factors not included could be a factor that explain the results.

4   Results

In this section, the results are presented. It begins with a review of the descriptive statistics. Then follows a display of the regressions that have been carried out. Finally, the results are discussed and analysed.

4.1   Descriptive statistics

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media	18 837	0	4	.87	1.512
Age	18 837	18	103	36.72	14.357
Education	18 837	0	9	3.84	2.040
Socio-economic status	18 837	0	20	6.0312	4.59
Interest in Public Affairs	18 837	0	3	1.58	1.068
Trust in ruling party	18 837	0	3	1.62	1.148
Close to Dominant Party	18 837	0	1	.4301	.49510
Close to Other Party	18 837	0	1	.1671	.37309
Close to No Party	18 837	0	1	.4028	.49047

In table 1, the descriptive statistics of the data of all included countries is presented[10]. The mean value for the independent variable is 0.87. Linked to the variable's operationalisation, the question asked is *How often do you get news from the following sources: Social media such as Facebook or Twitter?*, and the mean is located between the answers "Never" and "Less than once a month". When it comes to the dependent variable, the mean is 1.62, and is located between the answers "Just a little" and "Somewhat" – the question asked was "*How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The Ruling Party?*". The mean age of the respondents is 36.72. When it comes to education, the mean value (3.84) is located between the answers

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[10] See Appendix (heading number 3) for a presentation of the descriptive statistics for all the individual countries separately.

"Primary school completed" and "Intermediate school or Some secondary school / high school". The socio-economic status mean is 6.03, which indicates that the average answer to the five questions "*Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without (1. food/2. water/3. medical treatment/4. cooking fuel/5. cash income)?*" is located between the answers "Just once or twice" and "Several times". Regarding interest in public affairs, the mean is 1.58 and located between the answers "Not very interested" and "Somewhat interested". Looking at the three dummy variables linked to party affiliation, it is interesting to note that closeness to the dominant party has the highest mean among the three. This is further proof of the dominant parties' influence in the analysed countries.

Figure 1: Graph of mean values of trust in ruling party in each individual country
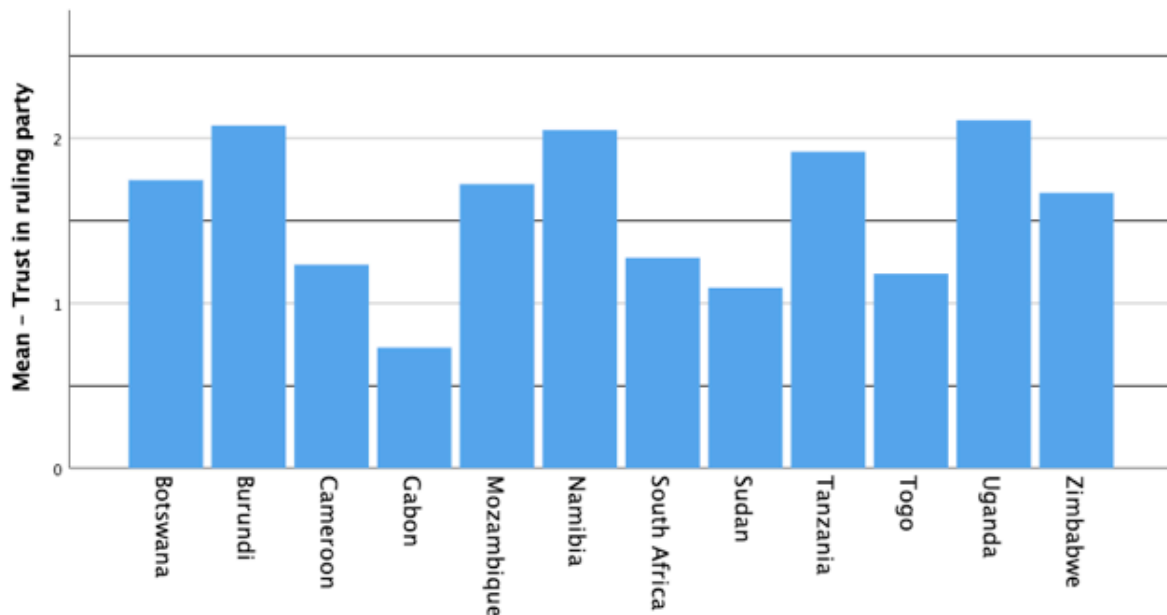
As figure 1 tells, when it comes to the dependent variable "Trust in ruling party", only three countries show a mean above 2 (corresponding to the answer "Somewhat") – Burundi, Namibia and Uganda. Gabon stand out as the only country with a mean below 1 ("Just a little"). Four other countries have a mean value under 1.5 – Cameroon, South Africa, Sudan and Togo.

Figure 2: Graph of mean values of news consumption through social media
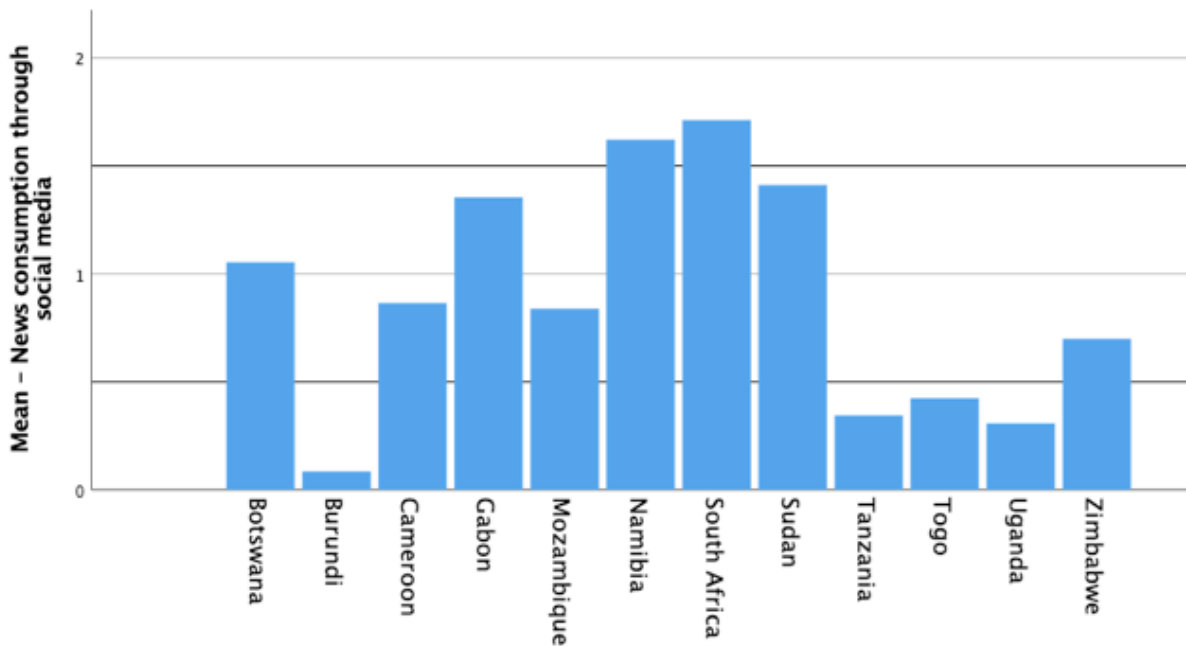
Turning to the independent variable, two countries hold a mean value over 1.5 – South Africa and Namibia. Looking at the lower values, four countries have a mean under 0.5 – Burundi, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda. Burundi's value is notably low – diving in to the frequencies, the data tells us that 97% of the respondents in Burundi answered "Never" to the question on social media, while only 2% said that they use social media to consume news "A few times a week" or "Every day".

4.2   Main results

In table 2 below, regressions are based on data where all the individuals from the 12 different countries have been included. Dummy variables are used to control for country specific factors.

Model 1 is a bivariate OLS regression using social media as the independent variable and trust in ruling party as the dependent.

Model 2 is a multivariate OLS regression using the full model. Trust in the ruling party is the dependent variable and news consumption through social media the main independent variable. Age, education, socio-economic status and interest in public affairs are included as control variables. In addition, two types of dummy variables are included. The first is linked to party affiliation – if the respondent feels close to the dominant party, any other party or no party in her specific country. The dummy variable for no closeness to any party is the

reference category. Second, dummy variables for each country are included, but not presented[11]. Botswana is the reference category.

Model 3 includes everything that model 2 does, except the independent variable social media, to see how the results change without it.

Table 2: Regressions – all countries combined

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social Media	-.141*** (.005)	-.044*** (.006)	–
Age	–	.000 (.001)	.001** (.001)
Education	–	-.062*** (.004)	-.073*** (.004)
Socio-economic status	–	-.017*** (.002)	-.016*** (.002)
Interest in Public Affairs	–	.055*** (.007)	.052*** (.007)
Close to ruling party	–	.671*** (.017)	.680*** (.017)
Close to other party	–	-.436*** (.021)	-.435*** (.021)
Constant	1.738*** (.009)	1.843*** (.044)	1.806*** (.044)
Adjusted R^2	.034 (not adjusted)	.291	.289
N	18 837	18 837	18 837

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** $p<.01$, ** $p<.05$, * $p<.10$
In model 2 and 3: Dummy variables for party affiliation: dummy variable for individuals with no party affiliation is the reference category.
Dummy variables for countries not presented, but included in the model[6].

The first number represents the regression coefficient for each variable. The stars indicate whether the regression coefficient is significant, and if so, at what level. The standard error is written below the regression coefficient in parenthesis. The constant, adjusted R^2 and sample size are presented below the regressions.

The variable for social media is significant at the 0.01-level in both models where it is included. The regression coefficient is negative in both models. This indicates that news consumption through social media has a negative effect on an individual's trust in the ruling party, in line with the predictions in the hypothesis. The effect is -0.141 in model 1 and decreases to -.044 in model 2 when the control variables are included.

The control variable "age" is not significant in model 2 and has no effect on the dependent variable according to the coefficient. In model 3 it is significant and

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[11] See Appendix (heading number 5) for the full regression model with the dummy variables for countries presented.

has a positive coefficient, which indicates that higher age has a positive effect on an individual's trust in the ruling party, which was the theoretical assumption.

Education as a control variable is significant at the 0.01-level in both models where it is included. The regression coefficient is negative which indicates that higher education leads to lower trust in the ruling party. The effect is -0.62 in model 2, and increases to 0.73 in model 3.

Socio-economic status is significant at the 0.01-level. The coefficient shows a value of -.017 and is negative. As the variable is reversed, it means that lower socio-economic status decreases an individual's trust in the ruling party. The effect does not change much between the models.

Interest in public affairs is also significant at the 0.01-level in both models. The regression coefficient is positive and the effect in model 2 is 0.55 – an increase in interest in public affairs leads to an increase in trust for the ruling party. There is no notable change in model 3 when social media is excluded.

As expected, individuals that feel close to the ruling party show a higher trust for it compared to those not close to any party, the regression coefficient is positive and the effect is .671 in model 1. The result is significant at the 0.01-level. Also, as predicted, individuals that feel close to another party show less trust in the ruling party, compared to those with no closeness to any party. The regression coefficient is negative and -.436 in model 2, with no notable change in model 3. Both results are significant at the 0.01-level.

The adjusted R^2 value .291 in model 2 and .289 in model 3. When social media is the only independent variable included, the value falls to .034, which indicates that social media can only predict a small part of the variance in the dependent variable. The difference between model 2 and 3 is small, and the adjusted R^2 increases with only 0.02 when social media is included.

In table 3 below, the separate results for the individual countries are presented. Model 1 is, just as in table 2, a bivariate OLS regression with news consumption through social media as the independent variable and trust in ruling party as the dependent. The regression coefficients are presented in the same way as in table 2. In the next column follows the R^2 value for model 1 (adjusted R^2 is only used when there are two or more independent variables), (Teorell & Svensson, 2007). Model 2 is a multivariate OLS regression with trust in ruling party as the dependent variable, social media as the main independent variable. Age, education, socio-economic status, interest in public affairs and dummy variables controlling for party affiliation are included as control variables, but not presented below[12]. The adjusted R^2 value follows in the fourth column. The sample size is presented in the last column.

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[12] See Appendix (heading number 4) for the full regression model on all the individual countries where all of the control variables are presented.

Table 3: Regressions – all countries individually

Countries	Social Media Model 1	R^2 Model 1	Social Media Model 2	Adjusted R^2 Model 2	N
Botswana	-.162*** (.020)	.055	-.068*** (.021)	.252	1176
Burundi	-.330*** (.060)	.027	-.091 (.059)	.201	1115
Cameroon	-.092*** (.022)	.015	-.068*** (.024)	.118	1077
Gabon	-.048*** (.016)	.008	-.048*** (.017)	.107	1186
Mozambique	-.109*** (.018)	.020	-.092*** (.019)	.132	1867
Namibia	-.001 (.016)	.000	.041** (.019)	.116	1190
South Africa	-.052*** (.013)	.007	-.016 (.014)	.187	2334
Sudan	-.141*** (.019)	.048	-.099*** (.020)	.158	1060
Tanzania	-.119*** (.020)	.016	-.041** (.020)	.177	2309
Togo	-.100*** (.033)	.008	-.070** (.033)	.173	1080
Uganda	-.180*** (.023)	.028	-.037* (.021)	.315	2135
Zimbabwe	-.182*** (.017)	.049	-.067*** (.015)	.382	2308

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** p<.01 ** p<.05 * p<.10
Included control variables in Model 2 that are not presented above: Age, Education, Socio-Economic Status, Interest in Public Affairs and dummy variables controlling for party affiliation[13].

The results of the bivariate regression (model 1) indicate that social media has a negative effect on trust in the ruling party, in line with the theoretical assumptions. The regression coefficients are negative and show significant results in 11 out of 12 countries. The exception is Namibia, where no significance is reached.

R^2 is quite low in all regressions in model 1 – Botswana has the highest value (.055) and the lowest, except Namibia, is found in the regression on South Africa (.007).

When it comes to social media and its effect on trust in the ruling party, generally the same conclusion can be made in model 2. The effect is generally negative, which is consistent with the hypotheses, and significant. Significance decreases in most countries when control variables are included, but the results are still significant in 9 out of 12 countries. For Uganda, the results are significant at the 0.1-level. In South Africa and Burundi, significance is lost. As in model 1,

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[13] See Appendix (heading number 4) for the full regression model on all the individual countries, where all of the control variables are presented.

Namibia is an exception, but in a different way. When including the control variables, the results become significant, which they were not in model 1. However, it is the only country with a positive coefficient, indicating that increased news consumption through social media increases a Namibian's trust in the ruling party, which is contrary to the hypotheses.

It is interesting to note that Namibia, Burundi and South Africa are the three countries that stand out in table 3 when the control variables are included. Going back to the descriptive statistics, it is possible to tell that the same three countries stand out in figure 2, where the variable on news consumption through social media is presented. South Africa and Namibia have the highest mean, while Burundi's mean is distinctly lower than the rest of the sample. A possible explanation to the deviating results might be found here. Looking at Reporters Without Border's press freedom index of 2019 (RWB, 2019), Namibia and South Africa have the lowest score out of the included countries in this study (low scores indicate high press freedom). Namibia has a score of 18.95, and South Africa receives 22.19. The next country is Botswana, that scores 25.09, three points behind South Africa. Even though the use of social media as a news source is high in Namibia and South Africa, it is possible that traditional media already act as an arena where criticism of the ruling party is possible, thus breaking the causal mechanism described in section 2.2. If traditional media has the same amount of critical voices as social media, there is no reason to believe that citizen's using social media would become influenced to trust the ruling party less by using social media compared to traditional news sources. Regarding Burundi, the percentage that uses social media as a news source is very low (3%, totalling 34 individuals), which could be one of the explanations why no significance could be measured.

As the control variables are included in model 2, the adjusted R^2 value increases drastically in all regressions, which again indicates that social media only predicts a small part of the variance in the dependent variable. The highest value can be found in the regression on Zimbabwe (.382), and the lowest in Gabon (.107).

Linked to the discussion on the distinction between dominant party democratic regimes and dominant party authoritarian regimes in section 2.2, no notable difference can be found in the results when comparing countries using the EIU Democracy Index (2018). This indicates that the effect does not vary depending on the country's democracy level. However, as discussed above, regarding the deviant cases Burundi, Namibia and South Africa, press freedom could be a factor that has implications, which is one component of the EIU Democracy Index (2018). Press freedom could not be included in the model as the study is based on data on individuals.

It is important to remember that the model cannot conclude the causal relation, only argue theoretically that the predicted relationship is correct. Therefore, it is important to be humble when analysing these results linked to this limitation. However, if the causal relation is the opposite, it might still say something interesting about social media use and its effects. If it is so that citizens first become critical of the ruling party and then turn to social media for news

consumption, it would highlight that social media is important to study as it is an arena for citizens critical of the ruling party and a possible seedbed for political change. It is also possible that the relation could be bidirectional, and that both the stipulated theory in this paper is correct, as well as the above mentioned reversed causal relation.

Also, country specific factors not included in the model can potentially have affected the results in table 3, which is important to keep in mind linked to the discussion in section 3.4.2.

To summarize, the findings in both the regressions on the combined dataset and on the separate countries are consistent with the hypothesis stipulated in section 2.2 and 2.3. In the combined regressions, the variable for social media has a negative coefficient in both models where it is included, and the results are significant at the 0.01-level. However, it is also evident that news consumption through social media is not a main predictor when it comes to trust in the ruling party. When it is the only independent variable included, the adjusted R^2 is low. When included in the full model, adjusted R^2 only increases slightly when the social media-variable is included compared to when it is not. The effect is however still there, which is interesting. The full regression model (presented as "model 2" in table 2) seems well thought out. The adjusted R^2 is close to 0.3 and all control variables except age show significant results.

Turning to the individual regressions, the same trend appears. Social media has a negative, significant effect in 9 out of 12 regressions. An analysis of why South Africa, Burundi and Namibia's results are either insignificant or show an unpredicted direction can be found above. That some countries do not follow the general pattern is not something that undermine the general results. It only shows, as described in section 3.4.2, that contextual factors are important to fully grasp the relationship investigated in this paper.

5   Conclusion

This paper has analysed individuals' trust in the ruling party in DPS. As media affects people's political attitudes, and as the media in DPS is generally tilted in favour of the ruling party, it has suggested that news consumption through social media should be included as a factor in models trying to explain trust in the ruling party in DPS, as it has shown to have become an arena for opinions and ideas critical of the ruling party, opinions that are not published in traditional media channels.

The empirical analysis show, as expected by the theoretical framework and consistent with the hypotheses, that news consumption through social media indeed affects individuals to trust the ruling party less. The findings are consistent in the combined analysis of all countries as well as in the individual analyses, except in three countries. However, news consumption through social media is far from a sole predictor of individuals' trust in the ruling party in DPS, but this paper's results indicate that it is reasonable to look to, among other factors, in future studies of trust in ruling parties in DPS. The results points to the importance to continue to analyse social media as a political phenomenon in African DPS-states. As it continues to grow rapidly and gain influence on the African continent, there is reason to believe that its effects and consequences will only get bigger with time.

The results of this paper raises questions linked to enhancing democracy in DPS in Africa. That there is room for criticism toward the political rulers is a vital part of a well-functioning democracy (EIU Democracy Index, 2018). If social media can create such room in countries that previously have been lacking objective journalism, this should be welcomed by advocates for democracy. In addition, it might also be an arena where opposition parties can make their voices heard – an opposition that is a capable and possible alternative to rule is also an important condition for a healthy democracy (Salih & Nordlund, 2007). Hence social media should be viewed as an important tool in democracy building in DPS, and further studies should be conducted on how to fully reap the benefits of it.

This paper's ambition was to add news consumption through social media as a potential predictor to already existing models analysing individuals' trust in the ruling party in DPS. The results of this paper has done so, indicating an interesting negative relation between news consumption through social media and trust in the ruling party in DPS, results consistent with the hypothesis. Further research would be needed to fully establish it and to understand the potential consequences for this relationship. An important task for future studies is to investigate the direction of the causal relation, which cannot be concluded by this research design. A next step, to make future scholars able to investigate social media's political effects

more in depth, would be for Afrobarometer to include additional questions specifically addressing social media, to better understand the way citizens use it and how they are affected by it.

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7   Appendix

1. Ruling parties in the included countries

Botswana	Botswana Democratic Party (BDP)
Burundi	Conseil National Pour la Défense de la Démocratie – Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD-FDD)
Cameroon	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM)
Gabon	Parti Démocratique Gabonais (PDG)
Mozambique	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO)
Namibia	The South-West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO)
South Africa	African National Congress (ANC)
Sudan	al-Mu'tamar al-Waṭanī (NCP)
Tanzania	Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM)
Togo	Union pour la République (UNIR) *(previously named 'Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais' (RPT)*
Uganda	National Resistance Movement (NRM)
Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF)

2. Other parties in the included countries (answer "Other" also coded as 1)

Botswana	Botswana Congress Party (BCP), Botswana Movement for Democracy, Botswana National Front (BNF), Marx Engels Lenin Stalin Movement (MELS), Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC)
Burundi	FNL (Agathon Rwasa), UPRONA, FRODEBU, CNDD (Léonard Nyangoma), MSD, UPD-ZIGAMIBANGA, SAHWANYA FRODEBU, MRC Rurenzangemero
Cameroon	Social Democratic Front (SDF), National Union For Democracy and Progress (UNDP), Union Démocratique du Cameroun (UDC), Mouvement Progressiste (MP)
Gabon	Union Nationale (UN), Union du Peuple Gabonais (UPG), Cercle des Libéraux Réformateurs (CLR), Rassemblement du Peuple Gabonais (RPG)
Mozambique	Resistência Nacional de Moçambique (Renamo), Movimento Democrático Moçambicano (MDM), Partido para Paz, Democracia e Desenvolvimento (PDD)
Namibia	All People's Party (APP), Congress of Democrats (COD), DTA of Namibia (DT A), Monitor Action Group (MAG), National Unity Democratic Organisation of Namibia (NUDO), National Democratic Party of Namibia (NDPD), Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), Republican Party of Namibia (RP), Swanu of Namibia (SWANU), United Democratic Front of Namibia (UDF)
South Africa	African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), African Muslim Party, Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), Congress of the People (COPE), Democratic Alliance (DA),

	Freedom Front Plus/Vryheidsfront Plus (VF Plus) , Independent Democrats (ID), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), Minority Front (MF), New National Party/ Nuwe Nasionale Party (NNP), Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP), United Democratic Movement (UDM), United Independent Front (UIF), African Independent Congress, Al Jama-ah, Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), Front Nasionaal, National Freedom Party (NFP)
Sudan	Popular Congress (Al Motamar Chaabi), Umma Party, Democratic Unionist Party (Original), Communist Party, Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North, Umma Renewal and Reform Party
Tanzania	The Civic United Front (CUF), Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo, National Reform for Construction and Reform (NCCR MAGEUZI), Tanzania Labour Party (TLP), United Democratic Party (UDP), Chama cha Haki na Ustawi (CHAUSTA)
Togo	UFC (Gilchrist Olympio), ANC (Jean-Pierre Fabre), CAR (Me Yaovi Agboyibo), CDPA (Professor Leopold Messan Gnininvi), PRR (Nicolas Lawson), OBUTS (Agbeyome Kodjo), ADDI, CST, Arc-en-ciel
Uganda	Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), Democratic Party (DP), Conservative Party (CP), Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC), Uganda Federal Alliance (UFA), The Justice Forum (JEEMA), The People's Development Party (PDP)
Zimbabwe	Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T), Zimbabwe African Union-Patriotic Front

	(ZANU-PF), Movement for Democratic Change-Mutambara (MDC-M), Mavambo.Kusile.Dawn. (MKD), Zimbabwe African Patriotic Union-Dabengwa (ZAPU-Dabengwa), Movement for Democratic Change-Ncube (MDC-Ncube), MDC Renewal Team (PDP)

3. Descriptive statistics for the individual countries

Botswana

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media	1176	0	4	1.05	1.643
Age	1176	18	98	38.82	16.229
Education	1176	0	9	4.07	2.222
Socio-economic status	1176	0	20	5.1173	4.35546
Interest in Public Affairs	1176	0	3	1.83	1.03
Trust in ruling pary	1176	0	3	1.75	1.137
Close to dominant party	1176	0	1	.4370	.49624
Close to other party	1176	0	1	.2645	.44123
Close to no party	1176	0	1	.2985	.45778

Burundi

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media	1115	0	4	.09	.52
Age	1115	18	93	38.05	14.193
Education	1115	0	9	2.04	1.721
Socio-economic status	1115	0	19	7.4646	3.82275
Interest in Public Affairs	1115	0	3	1.54	1.116
Trust in ruling pary	1115	0	3	2.08	1.05
Close to dominant party	1115	0	1	.5435	.49833
Close to other party	1115	0	1	.1238	.32946
Close to no party	1115	0	1	.3327	.4714

Cameroon

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media	1077	0	4	.87	1.39
Age	1077	18	85	32.39	11.092
Education	1077	0	9	4.54	1.822
Socio-economic status	1077	0	20	7.2526	4.49238
Interest in Public Affairs	1077	0	3	1.49	1.116
Trust in ruling party	1077	0	3	1.23	1.03
Close to dominant party	1077	0	1	.3352	.47228
Close to other party	1077	0	1	.1012	.30174
Close to no party	1077	0	1	.5636	.49617

Gabon

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media	1186	0	4	1.35	1.686
Age	1186	18	90	33.89	13.145
Education	1186	0	9	4.75	1.739
Socio-economic status	1186	0	20	9.2875	4.15206
Interest in public affairs	1186	0	3	1.18	1.089
Trust in ruling party	1186	0	3	.73	.928
Close to dominant party	1186	0	1	.1661	.37233
Close to other party	1186	0	1	.118	.3228
Close to no party	1186	0	1	.7159	.4512

Mozambique

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media	1867	0	4	.84	1.477
Age	1867	18	85	34.42	12.662
Education	1867	0	9	3.17	1.932
Socio-economic status	1867	0	20	7.1061	5.13885
Interest in public affairs	1867	0	3	1.64	1.069
Trust in ruling party	1867	0	3	1.72	1.129
Close to dominant party	1867	0	1	.4515	.49778
Close to other party	1867	0	1	.1168	.32123
Close to no party	1867	0	1	.4317	.49545

Namibia

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media	1190	0	4	1.62	1.803
Age	1190	18	89	36.44	15.41
Education	1190	0	9	4.23	1.863
Socio-economic status	1190	0	18	3.4286	3.40428
Interest in public affairs	1190	0	3	1.81	1.023
Trust in ruling party	1190	0	3	2.05	1.003
Close to dominant party	1190	0	1	.5319	.49919
Close to other party	1190	0	1	.1782	.3828
Close to no party	1190	0	1	.2899	.45391

South Africa

Kolumn1	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media	2334	0	4	1.71	1.838
Age	2334	18	95	38.66	14.368
Education	2334	0	9	4.78	1.709
Socio-economic status	2334	0	20	3.1268	3.73228
Interest in public affairs	2334	0	3	1.55	1.051
Trust in ruling party	2334	0	3	1.28	1.133
Close to dominant party	2334	0	1	.4057	.49114
Close to other party	2334	0	1	.2528	.4347
Close to no party	2334	0	1	.3415	.47431

Sudan

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media	1060	0	4	1.41	1.65
Age	1060	18	95	34.45	12.283
Education	1060	0	9	5.18	2.516
Socio-economic status	1060	0	20	5.4594	4.7008
Interest in public affairs	1060	0	3	1.55	.987
Trust in ruling party	1060	0	3	1.09	1.061
Close to dominant party	1060	0	1	.2377	.4259
Close to other party	1060	0	1	.1283	.33458
Close to no party	1060	0	1	.634	.48195

Tanzania

Kolumn1	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media	2309	0	4	.34	1.04
Age	2309	18	93	38.35	14.251
Education	2309	0	9	3.21	1.598
Socio-economic status	2309	0	19	5.2897	4.03576
Interest in public affairs	2309	0	3	1.37	1.026
Trust in ruling party	2309	0	3	1.92	.995
Close to dominant party	2309	0	1	.5587	.49665
Close to other party	2309	0	1	.1923	.39419
Close to no party	2309	0	1	.249	.43254

Togo

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media	1080	0	4	.42	1.081
Age	1080	18	100	35.19	13.814
Education	1080	0	9	3.45	2.009
Socio-economic status	1080	0	20	9.3694	4.79338
Interest in public affairs	1080	0	3	1.32	1.148
Trust in ruling party	1080	0	3	1.18	1.17
Close to ruling party	1080	0	1	.2546	.43585
Close to other party	1080	0	1	.0935	.29129
Close to no party	1080	0	1	.6519	.4766

Uganda

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media	2135	0	4	.31	.976
Age	2135	18	96	36.43	14.396
Education	2135	0	9	3.06	1.847
Socio-economic status	2135	0	20	5.5803	4.0286
Interest in public affairs	2135	0	3	1.96	1.016
Trust in ruling party	2135	0	3	2.11	1.04
Close to ruling party	2135	0	1	.5944	.49113
Close to other party	2135	0	1	.1415	.34857
Close to no party	2135	0	1	.2641	.44099

Zimbabwe

Kolumn1	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media	2308	0	4	.7	1.384
Age	2308	18	103	38.89	16
Education	2308	0	9	4.12	1.764
Socio-economic status	2308	0	20	6.8297	4.02097
Trust in ruling party	2308	0	3	1.59	.984
Trust in ruling party	2308	0	3	1.67	1.137
Close to ruling party	2308	0	1	.3964	.48927
Close to other party	2308	0	1	.1937	.39526
Close to no party	2308	0	1	.4099	.49192

4. Regressions for the individual countries

Botswana

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social Media	-.162*** (.020)	-.068*** (.021)	–
Age	–	-.001 (.002)	.000 (.002)
Education	–	-.099*** (.018)	-.116*** (.017)
Socio-economic status	–	-.020*** (.007)	-.017** (.007)
Interest in Public Affairs	–	-.029 (.029)	-.031 (.029)
Close to ruling party	–	.822*** (.071)	.832*** (.072)
Close to other party	–	-.191** (.078)	-.189** (.079)
Constant	1.917*** (.038)	2.121*** (.163)	2.056*** (.162)
Adjusted R^2	.055 (not adjusted)	.252	.246
N	1176	1176	1176

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10
In model 2 and 3: Dummy variables for party affiliation: dummy variable for individuals with no party affiliation is the reference category.

Burundi

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social Media	-.330*** (.060)	-.091 (.059)	–
Age	–	.002 (.002)	.002 (.002)
Education	–	-.127*** (.020)	-.137*** (.019)
Socio-economic status	–	.002 (.008)	.003 (.008)
Interest in Public Affairs	–	-.022 (.026)	-.022 (.026)
Close to ruling party	–	.452*** (.064)	.457*** (.064)
Close to other party	–	-.528*** (.095)	-.520*** (.095)
Constant	2.106*** (.031)	2.114*** (.129)	2.125*** (.129)
Adjusted R^2	.027 (not adjusted)	.201	.200
N	1115	1115	1115

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10
In model 2 and 3: Dummy variables for party affiliation: dummy variable for individuals with no party affiliation is the reference category.

Cameroon

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social Media	-.092*** (.022)	-.068*** (.024)	–
Age	–	-.002 (.003)	.000 (.003)
Education	–	-.029 (.018)	-.048*** (.017)
Socio-economic status	–	-.045*** (.007)	-.046*** (.007)
Interest in Public Affairs	–	.086*** (.027)	.081*** (.027)
Close to ruling party	–	.427*** (.066)	.437*** (.066)
Close to other party	–	-.237** (.101)	-.235** (.101)
Constant	1.314*** (.037)	1.568*** (.135)	1.549*** (.136)
Adjusted R^2	.015 (not adjusted)	.118	.112
N	1077	1077	1077

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10
In model 2 and 3: Dummy variables for party affiliation: dummy variable for individuals with no party affiliation is the reference category.

Gabon

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social Media	-.048*** (.016)	-.048*** (.017)	–
Age	–	-.001 (.002)	.001 (.002)
Education	–	-.037** (.016)	-.049*** (.015)
Socio-economic status	–	-.018*** (.006)	-.016** (.006)
Interest in Public Affairs	–	.126*** (.025)	.120*** (.025)
Close to ruling party	–	.499*** (.072)	.499*** (.072)
Close to other party	–	-.345*** (.081)	-.354*** (.082)
Constant	.796*** (.034)	.978*** (.124)	.900*** (.121)
Adjusted R^2	.008 (not adjusted)	.107	.102
N	1186	1186	1186

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10
In model 2 and 3: Dummy variables for party affiliation: dummy variable for individuals with no party affiliation is the reference category.

Mozambique

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social Media	-.109*** (.018)	-.092*** (.019)	–
Age	–	.003 (.002)	.005** (.002)
Education	–	-.010 (.014)	-.034** (.014)
Socio-economic status	–	-.007 (.005)	-.002 (.005)
Interest in Public Affairs	–	.078*** (.023)	.072*** (.023)
Close to ruling party	–	.615*** (.042)	.638*** (.053)
Close to other party	–	-.349*** (.081)	-.345*** (.082)
Constant	1.815*** (.030)	1.410*** (.112)	1.324*** (.111)
Adjusted R^2	.020 (not adjusted)	.132	.121
N	1867	1867	1867

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10
In model 2 and 3: Dummy variables for party affiliation: dummy variable for individuals with no party affiliation is the reference category.

Namibia

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social Media	-.001 (.016)	.041** (.019)	–
Age	–	.002 (.002)	.001 (.002)
Education	–	-.038** (.018)	-.025 (.017)
Socio-economic status	–	.004 (.009)	-.001 (.009)
Interest in Public Affairs	–	.073*** (.028)	.078*** (.028)
Close to ruling party	–	.681*** (.065)	.683*** (.065)
Close to other party	–	.187** (.083)	.196** (.083)
Constant	2.051*** (.039)	1.518*** (.136)	1.587*** (.133)
Adjusted R^2	.000 (not adjusted)	.116	.113
N	1190	1190	1190

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10
In model 2 and 3: Dummy variables for party affiliation: dummy variable for individuals with no party affiliation is the reference category.

South Africa

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social Media	-.052*** (.013)	-.016 (.014)	–
Age	–	-.002 (.002)	-.002 (.002)
Education	–	-.052*** (.015)	-.058*** (.014)
Socio-economic status	–	-.002 (.006)	-.001 (.006)
Interest in Public Affairs	–	.146*** (.021)	.145*** (.021)
Close to ruling party	–	.702*** (.051)	.704*** (.051)
Close to other party	–	-.325*** (.056)	-.325*** (.056)
Constant	1.366*** (.032)	1.212*** (.114)	1.188*** (.112)
Adjusted R^2	.007 (not adjusted)	.187	.187
N	2334	2334	2334

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10
In model 2 and 3: Dummy variables for party affiliation: dummy variable for individuals with no party affiliation is the reference category.

Sudan

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social Media	-.141*** (.019)	-.099*** (.020)	–
Age	–	-3.919E-5 (.003)	.001 (.003)
Education	–	-.042*** (.014)	-.061*** (.013)
Socio-economic status	–	-.021*** (.006)	-.021*** (.007)
Interest in Public Affairs	–	.032 (.033)	.003 (.032)
Close to ruling party	–	.742*** (.073)	.784*** (.073)
Close to other party	–	-.231** (.093)	-.230** (.094)
Constant	1.293*** (.042)	1.368*** (.132)	1.316*** (.133)
Adjusted R²	.048 (not adjusted)	.158	.140
N	1060	1060	1060

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10
In model 2 and 3: Dummy variables for party affiliation: dummy variable for individuals with no party affiliation is the reference category.

Tanzania

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social Media	-.119*** (.020)	-.041** (.020)	–
Age	–	-.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)
Education	–	-.031** (.014)	-.041*** (.013)
Socio-economic status	–	-.006 (.005)	-.005 (.005)
Interest in Public Affairs	–	-.014 (.019)	-.018 (.019)
Close to ruling party	–	.506*** (.046)	.514*** (.046)
Close to other party	–	-.514*** (.058)	-.514*** (.058)
Constant	1.959*** (.022)	1.861*** (.086)	1.867*** (.086)
Adjusted R²	.016 (not adjusted)	.177	.176
N	2309	2309	2309

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10
In model 2 and 3: Dummy variables for party affiliation: dummy variable for individuals with no party affiliation is the reference category.

Togo

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social Media	-.100*** (.033)	-.070** (.033)	–
Age	–	.001 (.002)	.002 (.002)
Education	–	-.037** (.018)	-.049*** (.017)
Socio-economic status	–	-.022*** (.007)	-.020*** (.007)
Interest in Public Affairs	–	.086*** (.029)	-.085*** (.029)
Close to ruling party	–	.876*** (.077)	.887*** (.077)
Close to other party	–	-.598*** (.115)	-.607*** (.115)
Constant	1.221*** (.038)	1.216*** (.144)	1.188*** (.144)
Adjusted R^2	.008 (not adjusted)	.173	.170
N	1080	1080	1080

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** $p<.01$, ** $p<.05$, * $p<.10$
In model 2 and 3: Dummy variables for party affiliation: dummy variable for individuals with no party affiliation is the reference category.

Uganda

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social Media	-.180*** (.023)	-.037* (.021)	–
Age	–	.002* (.001)	.003** (.001)
Education	–	-.088*** (.011)	-.094*** (.011)
Socio-economic status	–	-.014*** (.005)	-.013*** (.005)
Interest in Public Affairs	–	.084*** (.019)	.085*** (.019)
Close to ruling party	–	.664*** (.045)	.675*** (.044)
Close to other party	–	-.741*** (.062)	-.738*** (.062)
Constant	2.165*** (.023)	1.926*** (.085)	1.910*** (.085)
Adjusted R^2	.028 (not adjusted)	.315	.315
N	2135	2135	2135

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** $p<.01$, ** $p<.05$, * $p<.10$
In model 2 and 3: Dummy variables for party affiliation: dummy variable for individuals with no party affiliation is the reference category.

Zimbabwe

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social Media	-.182*** (.017)	-.067*** (.015)	–
Age	–	-.001 (.001)	-.001 (.001)
Education	–	-.094*** (.012)	-.112*** (.012)
Socio-economic status	–	-.040*** (.005)	-.039*** (.005)
Interest in Public Affairs	–	.017 (.020)	.010 (.020)
Close to ruling party	–	.822*** (.044)	.845*** (.044)
Close to other party	–	-.788*** (.052)	-.785*** (.053)
Constant	1.797*** (.026)	2.230*** (.091)	2.218*** (.092)
Adjusted R^2	.049 (not adjusted)	.382	.377
N	2308	2308	2308

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10
In model 2 and 3: Dummy variables for party affiliation: dummy variable for individuals with no party affiliation is the reference category.

5. Full regression model (table 2) including all dummy variables

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social Media	-.141*** (.005)	-.044*** (.006)	–
Age	–	.000 (.001)	.001** (.001)
Education	–	-.062*** (.004)	-.073*** (.004)
Socio-economic status	–	-.017*** (.002)	-.016*** (.002)
Interest in Public Affairs	–	.055*** (.007)	.052*** (.007)
Close to ruling party	–	.671*** (.017)	.680*** (.017)
Close to other party	–	-.436*** (.021)	-.435*** (.021)
Burundi_Dummy	–	.085** (.041)	.102** (.041)
Cameroon_Dummy	–	-.436*** (.041)	-.421*** (.041)
Gabon_Dummy	–	-.734*** (.041)	-.741*** (.041)
Mozambique_Dummy	–	-.118*** (.037)	-.118*** (.037)
Namibia_Dummy	–	.209*** (.040)	.189*** (.040)
South Africa_Dummy	–	-.399*** (.035)	-.418*** (.035)
Sudan_Dummy	–	-.470*** (.042)	-.470*** (.042)
Tanzania_Dummy	–	.002 (.035)	.021 (.035)
Togo_Dummy	–	-.485*** (.042)	-.467*** (.042)
Uganda_Dummy	–	.109*** (.036)	.131*** (.036)
Zimbabwe_Dummy	–	-.051 (.035)	-.038 (.035)
Constant	1.738*** (.009)	1.843*** (.044)	1.806*** (.044)
Adjusted R^2	.034 (not adjusted)	.291	.289
N	18 837	18 837	18 837

Dependent variable: Trust in ruling party
Note: *** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.10
In model 2 and 3: Dummy variables for party affiliation: dummy variable for individuals with no party affiliation is the reference category.
Dummy variables for countries: Botswana is the reference category.

6. Data removals

Variable:

Trust in ruling party	575
Social media	366
Age	128
Education	67
Socio-economic status	243
Interest in public affairs	142
Original sample	20 358
Total removals	1 521
Selected sample	18 837