

National and International Media Use: Implications for Political Interest, Efficacy and Participation in Municipal and Legislative Elections in Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

The study reveals that though a majority of those surveyed indicate an interest in politics, this interest was neither translated into high political efficacy nor high turnout in the June 2002 municipal and legislative elections. Avid users of the national media tend to gain mostly from political cognition. Government control of the media has tended to erode the credibility of government-owned national media (CRTV and *Cameroon Tribune*). Consequently, most people turn to international media: BBC, CNN, VOA, RFI, for political information about Cameroon. The implication is that respondents who rely on international media tend to assess the nascent democracy in Cameroon using standards from older democracies in North America and Western Europe as portrayed in the Western media.

Key words: Emploi des médias nationaux, Emploi des médias étrangers, Intérêt politique, Connaissance politique, Participation politique, Pluralisme politique

RÉSUMÉ

La présente étude met en évidence le fait que la majorité des personnes interviewées s'intéressent à la chose politique. Toutefois, cet intérêt ne se traduit ni par une connaissance approfondie de la chose, ni par une participation massive lors des dernières élections municipales et législatives de juin 2002. Plutôt, la main mise des pouvoirs publics sur les médias au Cameroun altère la crédibilité des médias publics qui ne sont autres que la CRTV et *Cameroon Tribune*. Par conséquent, la plupart des personnes se tournent vers les médias étrangers tels la BBC, CNN, VOA, RFI pour s'informer de la situation politique au Cameroun. Il en ressort que les personnes interviewées qui dépendent des médias étrangers jugent la situation démocratique au Cameroun sur la base des normes éditées par les vieilles démocraties de l'Amérique du Nord et de l'Europe de l'Ouest.

Mots clés: Emploi des médias nationaux, Emploi des médias étrangers, Intérêt politique, Connaissance politique, Participation politique, Pluralisme politique

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INTRODUCTION

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Cameroon like most African countries could no longer resist the democratic wind of change that swept across Africa, sequel to the collapse of the communist empire in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s. The clamour for democracy was linked to press freedom. The government of Cameroon signed decrees No. 90/052 and No. 90/056 of December 19th, 1990 granting freedom of mass communication and freedom of association respectively.

Since the re-introduction of multi-party democracy in Cameroon in 1990, and the partial liberalisation of the press, the media have played a key role in political cognition, providing a forum for public debate and democratic pluralism. One will expect the advent of democratic pluralism to generate not only high interest in politics but engender high political efficacy and participation.

As a corollary to national media exposure, international communication scholars have added their voice to media use by asserting that the high dependency on international media by most Third World countries is due to lack of communication logistics and hardware, poverty and inefficient means of communication (Mogekwu, 1982). In the context of Cameroon, the tight control of the press for over three decades might erode the credibility of the government-owned media and give rise to partisan, pro-establishment journalism and dependency on international media.

Theoretical Framework

Katz et al. (1973) posit that media use is most suitably characterised as an interactive process among media contents, individual needs, perceptions and values, and the social context in which a person is situated. The emphasis that individuals use media to meet "needs" has been much reduced since the concept of "needs" has proved theoretically and methodologically ambiguous and to a certain extent redundant. (McQuail, 1983).

Donohew et al. (1987) posit that uses of the media are most often consistent with lifestyles, and indicators of needs would constitute additional construct validity for uses and gratifications formulation. They provide support for this assertion in a study of television use by members of different groups having particular clusters and needs.

Donohew et al. (1987:257) note that "individuals have

an optimal level of arousal at which they feel most comfortable". Those with high optimal levels will tend to expose themselves to media output. Therefore, the explanation of media consumption choices is the need for arousal. Besides, the media have also been said to set the agenda. McCombs and Shaw (1972) in Griffin (1991) state that we look forward to the media for information and we consider as important whatever the media emphasises as important. This goes to establish the fact that the media prioritises issues in the minds of the audience. Cohen (1963) in Griffin (1991:333) observed that "the press may not be successful in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling the audience what to think about." Siebert et al. (1956) observe that the media take the form and coloration of the socio-political ideologies and structures within which they operate.

Media Use in Cameroon

Few empirical studies on media use in Cameroon exist. Ndangam (1996) in a study of media use patterns in Cameroon found that radio is the most used source of information in rural areas. This, she explained is because radio is unaffected by inaccessibility and it is easily affordable. Ndangam also suggested that the low degree of exposure to books and newspapers as sources of information could be attributed to a poor reading culture and high levels of illiteracy in rural areas, which affects the degree of media use in Cameroon.

According to Eben (1996), 23% of rural Anglophone women and 26% of rural Francophone women own radio sets. Among radio set owners, it was found out that not all of them used it on a daily basis. 20% of Francophone rural women listen to the radio daily while 14% of Anglophone rural women do same on a daily basis.

Benchep (1997) asserts that literate people in rural and urban areas in Cameroon read newspapers irrespective of the staleness of the information when it gets to them, and they disseminate it to other less literate members of the community. He adds that the lower literacy levels of the rural dwellers acts as a barrier to the reading of newspapers.

Sekoh (2001) notes that 27.8% of rural women are exposed to international media. She, however, observes that the level of education is a powerful intervening variable in international media use.

Government and Press Relations in Cameroon

The history of the press in Cameroon is inextricably linked to the political evolution of the country from 1960, when Cameroon gained political independence. Public attention to the media has led to vertical and horizontal developments in the media landscape.

The media in Cameroon today are a reflection of the country's colonial heritage. They serve as channels for the dissemination of information in support of various causes and political platforms. The historical development of the media in Cameroon is not unconnected with the policies of the two regimes (Ahidjo 1960-1982, Biya 1982-present) that have ruled the country since independence. For four decades, government-press relations have been those of "love-hate". Love is perceived when the government needs the press to promote its interests: politics, economy, national unity etc., and hate, when the press is critical of government policies and decisions. In all, the hate relationship seems to dominate; physical harassments, imprisonment of journalists particularly those in the private press, have always taken centre stage in the relationship between the press and the government (Nyamnjoh, 1996).

Wache (2003) posits that the media in Cameroon is highly polarised. The composition of the media both public and private media does not allow for greater flexibility in media practice in Cameroon. According to Wache, the government always attempts to muzzle the critical private press who have resorted to the practice of 'journalism of liberation'.

The Press Under the Ahidjo and Biya Regimes

Under the authoritarian dictatorship of President Ahmadou Ahidjo (1960-1982), the press suffered tremendously from harassment, pre and post-publication censorship, seizure and banning of newspaper houses. In spite of the seemingly mixed ownership of media (government and private) particularly newspapers, the development of the media was extremely slow in both structure and content, as the government did not encourage the development of the private media. As a result the role assigned to the media was closely tied to the promotion of government policies albeit in the guise of the media's obligation towards society through its surveillance, social responsibility, correlation and entertainment functions. Government-press relations during the Ahidjo regime reached an all time low in 1966, when President Ahidjo established a one-party dictatorship with the

draconian press law No 66/LF/18 of December 21st, 1966, in a bid to consolidate national unity. Most Cameroon media watchers described it as the most repressive in Africa because of its pre- and post-publication censorship. This law made life very difficult for the press and retarded the development of the media. Newspaper editors were arrested and imprisoned without trial. A case in point is Patrick Tataw Obenson, Publisher of *Cameroon Outlook*, who served several stints in jail for his satirical write-ups, which were critical of government policies at the time. News media that held alternative views to government's policies were banned instantly, and, in most cases, closed indefinitely. The life span of media organisations was relatively short depending upon government decisions. Media development under the Ahidjo regime witnessed stagnation and decline.

Upon accession to power, President Biya (1982 to present date) embarked on a dogma of "rigour" and "moralisation". It is not clear which role President Biya assigned to the media in his rigour and moralisation policy. However, the harsh and repressive 1966 law was very much in place. The political evolution of Cameroon's media landscape and the attendant public agitation for democracy led to a new press law that partially liberated the media in 1990. This new law No. 90/052 was supposed to put an end to the 1966 emergency law, which hitherto destroyed the liberty of the press. The 1990 law on freedom of mass communication updated and repealed the 1966 law but administrative censorship was maintained. It was not until 1996 that the censorship clause was finally deleted from law books (Muluh, 2002).

Mass Media and Democratisation in Cameroon

The media in Cameroon, both the official and private, have always played a leading role in political cognition in a bid to enhance the democratic process. The official media (Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation -CRTV) and *Cameroon Tribune* (the official daily tabloid) are pro-government. These pro-government media have served as government mouthpiece in what has been described by media critics as 'pro-establishment journalism' (Muluh, 2002).

In 1990, during the launching of the Social Democratic Front (SDF), the most vibrant opposition party in the country, six people were shot dead by security forces. But the official media decided to conceal the truth. Nyamnjoh (1996) posits that according to CRTV's senior journalist Zacharie Ngniman, he received a

press release from the hierarchy to report that six people had been trampled upon. He later on confirmed the allegation saying he had received intelligent information from government not to reveal the true cause of the incident.

CRTV serves as a government public relations institution, a status which has been largely criticised by Anglophone Journalists who have in turn often been criticised for practising Anglophone journalism of liberation and described as "enemies in the house" by their French speaking colleagues (Muluh, 2002). The content of *Cameroon Tribune* is fraught with ego massaging of political leaders. This according to *Jeune Afrique Economie* (1993) has led to a drop in sales from 60,000 to less than 20,000 copies as the conventional readership audience (civil servants and government officials) has fallen for the critical private press.

Most of the private press on its part has adopted an anti-government and pro-democratic stance. The private press was rigidly controlled until the passing of the 1990 law on freedom of mass communication. (Nyamnjoh, 1996). Nyamnjoh asserts that the private press saw democracy in purely political terms and defined the democratic process as the struggle between those who have Cameroon's interest at heart and those who were out for self-aggrandizement. They saw Cameroon as being divided into two diametrically opposing camps. Depending on what side of the political spectrum a paper found itself, truth was either from the opposition or from the government. At another level, there is a certain amount of partisan press, promoting partisan journalism.

Nyamnjoh (1996) opines that if the official media especially CRTV are to make an active and positive contribution towards democratisation, they have to detach themselves from their prior values and beliefs by seeking to report facts with utmost objectivity. Their prejudices, biases and idiosyncrasies should be shoved aside or else they will misrepresent or distort the very democracy they claim to be promoting.

In the current democratic process, the general public has accused journalists of both the public and private sector of professional impropriety. The press has assumed a partisan, highly politicised and militant role, which has greatly affected their role as democratic participants - tolerant, critical and accessible to all and sundry. Epule (1995) asserts that, unless the press is

absolutely free, that is, independent of political and economic control, partisan journalism cannot be abolished.

Tanjong (1999) states that for the civil society to actively participate in the democratic process, it requires the healing of psychological and physical scars. The many years of intimidation, subjugation and oppression by the dictatorial regimes in sub-Saharan Africa could be avoided.

The Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation (CRTV) to an extent also played a role in the democratic process in 1990. Prior to the launching of the Social Democratic Front (SDF), the CRTV radio English programme "Cameroon Calling" of Sunday, May 6th 1990 devoted to "multipartism and democracy" led to the detention and arrest of journalists as well as administrative sanctions against the crew.

Nyamnjoh (1996), argues that the private press was at the forefront of the democratic struggle in Cameroon long before any legally recognized opposition parties came into the scene. For instance *Cameroon Post* and *Day Dawn* were seized in Bamenda on May 26th, 1990. More so, they were banned for over two months for carrying articles critical of monolithism especially a front-page story announcing the imminent launching of the SDF. These are indicators of the press playing their watchdog role in the process of multiparty democracy in Cameroon.

Given the current difficulties facing the media in their democratic responsibility vis-à-vis the Cameroonian society, one is bound to think of the best way forward. If democracy is what Cameroonians want, it could be advocated that the media assume the responsibility of facilitating this process by adequately explaining the importance of democratic pluralism, and by socializing, coordinating, informing, educating and helping the people towards a democratic consensus. The media should provide a forum for the democratic debate.

Political Interest, Efficacy and Participation in Cameroon

Political interest in this study refers to the amount of attention an individual gives to political activities, ranging from political discussions to active political participation in the political process such as voting, political campaigns, rallies, political violence etc. The resultant effect in this case is to achieve positive

change in the political and democratic system.

Defleur et al. (1988) reveal that the categories of people or their personal characteristics would provide the best index of their interest in elections. Familiarity with the political situation at stake, socio-economic status of the individual with education being the strongest factor, predicts an individual's level of interest in politics.

Political efficacy is the ability of each citizen to influence government. This should be equal to that of every citizen, so that differences on personal resources do not work against poor citizens. Elections serve this goal – one person, one vote. Barriers to political efficacy are synonymous to disenfranchisement and restrictive voting registrations.

Ngwa (1999) points out that political communication is the basis of human interaction; such interaction being formal or informal, verbal or non-verbal, public or private but always persuasive in nature. Political communication therefore can be thought of as a means by which participants (of communication) disseminate or exchange politically relevant ideas or information within a political system (Tambe-Ebot, 2000).

In a nutshell, various strategies have been put in place in an attempt to ensure a free and fair election in Cameroon. The last of these strategies employed by the ruling government was the setting up of a National Elections Observatory (NEO), which has been seen as a veritable arm of government. This was against popular expectation. The public rather wants an independent electoral commission, to guarantee free, fair and transparent elections in Cameroon.

Tambe-Ebot (2000) defines political participation as those voluntary activities by which members of the society share in the selection and directly or indirectly in the formulation of public policy. The extent of political participation is usually adopted by measures of the extent of democracy in a society.

To have a government by the people, the people must participate in politics. Janda et al. (1983) defines political participation as those actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or support government and politics. People participate in politics as support for their country or seeking particularized benefits. Political participation may require very little political knowledge or personal initiative or may demand a great

deal of both.

According to Janda et al. (1983), the tendency to participate is simply related to socio-economic status with education being the single strongest factor predicting conventional political participation. Political participation entails two major forms: Conventional and unconventional.

Conventional participation is a relatively routine behaviour that uses the institutional channels of a representative government especially elections (Janda et al. 1983). Conventional participation consists of organisational participation, which is the act of participating in legal political parties of their choice. In addition, professional participation is the act of participating as a leader. This comprises those who seek political authority through paid positions.

Unconventional participation is a relatively uncommon behaviour that challenges or defies government channels and is personally successful to participants and their opponents. (Janda et al. 1983). Forms of unconventional participation include sit-down strikes, rioting, blocking traffic (Magstand and Schoten, 1982).

The most tangible form of political participation are elections. Janda et al. (1983) define elections as an institutional mechanism that implements democracy by allowing citizens to choose among candidates or issues.

In Cameroon, political participation by way of general elections in the first-ever multi-party elections in 1992 paved the way for democratic pluralism. In terms of democratic transparency, elections have been a pale shadow in Cameroon and have increasingly become an (in)effective mechanism for conveying public preferences in the articulation of public policy.

Democracy is a game of numbers wherein the participation of the citizens makes for eventual quality and responsive government. If those for whom the governments are voted to serve boycott the polls, the democratic process would be subverted and good governance will suffer a consequence.

Ndi Chia (2002) points out that elections in Cameroon since 1992, have been characterised by horrendous rigging subterfuges comprising all forms of electoral fraud, corruption, stuffing of ballot boxes and disenfranchisement of voters.

Memories of the 1992 Presidential Elections in Cameroon can still be recalled, when the country witnessed a scale of an unprecedented wanton destruction of property. At that time, Cameroon came close to the brink of a civil war. Ghost town operations, civil disobedience, street demonstrations became the order of the day. A siege was placed in Bamenda, the North West Provincial Headquarters which has always been the melting point of violent political participation in the country.

Implicitly, it remains a contingent condition for democracy to be re-established without any hitches, a systemic approach has to be adopted to get the civil society to actively participate in political activities.

METHODOLOGY

(a) Sample

This study is based on a cross sectional probability sample survey of 15 neighbourhoods in the Buea Municipality in Cameroon. 525 questionnaires were administered by first and second year undergraduate students of the department of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Buea as partial requirements for courses in Communication Research Methods and International Communication respectively. 448 questionnaires were completed with a response rate of 85.3%.

According to a post-census modification (1988-1999), the population of the Buea Municipality stands at 65,853. Therefore, one out of every 125 persons was interviewed for the survey in the Buea Municipality. Data collection lasted for five days (June 1st to June 5th 2002) three weeks to the twin municipal and legislative elections.

(b) Research Questions

This paper examines participatory democracy in Cameroon through the prism of national and international media use. The following research questions were addressed:

- What are the national and international sources of political information in Cameroon?
- What is the level of interest in politics by the emerging civil society in Cameroon?
- Is there a relationship between national media use and political interest, efficacy and participation?
- Is there a relationship between international

media use and political interest, efficacy and participation?

RESULTS

(a) Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

From the sample, 54.7% of the respondents are male and 39.3% are female. 6.0% of the respondents did not indicate their gender. The gender distribution across males and females did not play any significant role in the responses of this survey. A further breakdown showed 34.4% of the respondents fall within 18-25 years age bracket, 42.4% are between the ages of 26-40 while 21% are in the age group of 41 years and above. Analysis of the respondents' level of education showed the following results: Primary education 13.4%, secondary education 19.2%, high school 18.3%, undergraduate 25.4%, Bachelors degree 14.7%, Masters Degree 4.9%, PhD 0.9%, those with no formal education constituted 1.6% and the no response rate was 2.6%. About 25 percent of the sample are undergraduates because the Buea Municipality is fast becoming a University town.

Also, the data revealed that the respondents come from all works of life comprising students, businessmen, medical and legal practitioners, engineers, housewives, cab drivers, civil servants, teachers, farmers, etc.

(b) Rank order of reported national and international sources of information

An index of prominence (rank order) of national media use and dependency revealed the following results: For radio, 52.6 % said they use the local FM station Mount Cameroon FM, 39.0% said they use CRTV Buea provincial radio station, 5.7% use Real Time Music (RTM) a private radio station and 2.6% use Radio Equinox another private radio house. From these figures, the high percentage registered by the commercial radio station could be attributed to factors of physical proximity and the station's wide scope as well as coverage of critical and timely national and international news.

For Television, the most used source of information was CRTV, the national TV station which had 73.7%, other private stations: TV Max had 2.9%, Canal 2 had 2.2%, SFV 1 had 0.7% and 20.5% of the respondents did not indicate the television medium they used as a source of information. The high percentage registered by CRTV is attributed to the fact that it is easily acces-

sible to the local audience due to its national outlook. The new stations are still on test broadcast transmission, even to a point clandestine since government is reluctant to issue licenses to these stations so that they go fully operational. For newspapers, the respondents said they made use of a plethora of national publications such as *The Herald* 27.9%, *The Post* 19.4%, *Cameroon Tribune* 17.6%, *Le Messager* 4.0%, *La Nouvelle Expression* and *L'Effort Camerounaise* 0.9%, *Popoli* 1.8% and *The Chariot* 0.2.

27.2% of the respondents did not specify the newspaper they use to obtain political information. The high percentages recorded by *The Herald* and *The Post* is reflective of the fact that these papers are English publications, and this survey was conducted in a predominantly Anglophone region.

When the respondents were asked to specify the international media they rely on for (political) information the following results were obtained: For radio, BBC was rated first with 42.9%, followed by RFI which

had 30.1%, VOA had 3.2% and the Voice of Nigeria had 1.6%. The no response rate for this question was 22.2%.

The high percentage for BBC could be attributed to the fact that the medium now operates on frequency modulation, which gives it a wider audience. Also, its rich programme content buttressed by reliable information on the latest news and events around the world is another plausible reason.

For TV, CNN was rated first with 74.5%, followed by Canal Horizon with 21%, RTL 9, a French TV channel had 3.8% and AITV another French TV station had 0.9%. CNN high percentage could be as a result of its 24-hour news coverage of information around the world. For newspapers, *Le Monde* had 49.4%, *The Times* had 42.9, *The Concorde* 5.2% and the *New York Times* had 2.6%.

(c) Reported Respondents' Interest in Politics

When the respondents were asked "how interested are

Table 1: Rank order of reported National and International Media Use. n=448

| Medium | National | % | (n) | International | % | (n) |
|------------|------------------------|-------|-----|------------------|-------|-----|
| Radio | MC FM | 52.6% | 235 | BBC | 42.9% | 192 |
| | CRTV Buea | 39.0% | 175 | RFI | 30.1% | 135 |
| | Real Time Music | 5.7% | 26 | VOA | 3.2% | 14 |
| | Radio Equinox | 2.6% | 12 | Voice of Nigeria | 1.6% | 7 |
| | Total | 100% | 448 | No response | 22.2% | 100 |
| Television | Total | 100% | 448 | Total | 100% | 448 |
| | CRTV | 73.7% | 330 | CNN | 74.5% | 334 |
| | TV Max | 2.9% | 13 | Canal Horizon | 21.0% | 94 |
| | Canal 2 | 2.2% | 10 | RTL 9 | 3.8% | 16 |
| | STV 1 | 0.7% | 3 | AITV | 0.9% | 2 |
| | No response | 20.5% | 92 | Total | 100% | 448 |
| Newspapers | Total | 100% | 448 | Le Monde | 49.4% | 221 |
| | The Herald | 27.9% | 125 | The Times | 42.9% | 192 |
| | The Post | 19.4% | 87 | The Concorde | 5.2% | 24 |
| | Cameroon Tribune | 17.6% | 79 | New York Times | 2.6% | 11 |
| | Le Messager | 4.0% | 18 | Total | 100% | 448 |
| | Popoli | 1.8% | 8 | | | |
| | La Nouvelle Expression | 0.9% | 4 | | | |
| | L'Effort | 0.9% | 4 | | | |
| | The Chariot | 0.2% | 1 | | | |
| | No response | 27.2% | 121 | | | |
| Total | 100% | 448 | | | | |

- AITV- French Overseas Television Channel
- BBC - British Broadcasting Corporation
- CRTV - Cameroon Radio Television Corporation
- MCFM- Mount Cameroon Frequency Modulation.
- RFI- Radio France International
- RTL9- French Satellite Television Channel
- VOA- Voice of America
- Canal Horizon- French Satellite Television Channel

Table 2: Reported Respondents' Interest in Politics (n=448)

| Level of Interest | Percentage | (n) |
|---------------------|-------------|------------|
| Very interested | 16.3% | 73 |
| Interested | 24.1% | 108 |
| Somewhat Interested | 29.7% | 133 |
| Not Interested | 27% | 121 |
| Don't Know | 2.9 | 13 |
| Total | 100% | 448 |

Table 2 is based on the question: *How interested are you in politics ?*

you in politics" on a *likert* scale of 1-5 with 1 being 'don't know' 2 'not interested' 3 'somewhat interested' 4 'interested' and 5 'very interested', 16.3% said they were very interested in politics, 24.1% said they were interested, 29.7% somewhat interested, 27.0% not interested, 2.9% don't know. On the whole, a majority of the respondents 70.1% had varying levels of interest in politics.

(d) Reported Respondents' Political Participation

Barely three weeks to the dual June 30, 2002 Municipal and Legislative elections, 46.7% said they would vote while 53.3% said they would not take part in the voting exercise. This is against expectation. It is not a good omen for a young and nascent democracy. One would have expected a high percentage of the population to be eager to vote. The nightmares of election registration, poor organisation, disenfranchisement of voters and civil disobedience might explain what discourages the electorate from taking part in elections in Cameroon.

This finding confirms what actually took place during the elections. The Ministry of Territorial Administration announced that out of a total population of 15 million Cameroonians, only about 4 million registered to vote and only about 2 million actually went to the polls. A figure which is very low. More so, out of the 4 million who registered to vote, more than half did not vote, according to a press release from the Ministry of Territorial Administration.

When controlled for level of education, the data reveal that those with low levels of education are more likely to participate in politics (56.3%). This is a vulnerable group. They are easily subjected to the whims and caprices of callous politicians.

The data suggest that, respondents who rely on the national media (54.2%) have a low opinion of the political system. This is even more serious when respondents

who rely on international media were examined. They reported a very low opinion of the Cameroon political system. In all, the level of political efficacy in Cameroon is very low regardless of national or international media reliance though efficacy decreases with international media reliance. Cosmopolitan Cameroonians tend to set higher democratic standards than Cameroonians with a limited worldview. Respondents who rely on international news use standards of older democracies in North America and Western Europe to judge Cameroon's budding democracy. As a consequence, international media use engenders very low efficacy of the Cameroon political system.

(e) Respondents Political Efficacy

A binomial probability test was carried out on some statements usually made as to the level of political efficacy in Cameroon:

- Whether I vote or not my vote does not count
- Even if I vote the elections will still be rigged
- Cameroonian Politicians are liars
- Elections in Cameroon have been free, fair and transparent
- Democracy has brought more problems to Cameroon than the pre-1990 one-party rule

These statements were designed to test believability in the political system. The results are particularly very worrying considering the fact that competitive democracy is very new and fragile. There is a dire need to build viable and strong democratic institutions. This effort can easily be frustrated by such low efficacy and participation in the electoral process. (see Table 3)

Some Conclusions

Throughout this paper, the concepts, political interest, efficacy, and participation have been used in an

Table 3: Reported Respondents Political Efficacy

| Items | Agree | Disagree | Pa. |
|--|-------|----------|-----|
| Whether I vote or not my vote does not count | .54 | .45 | .54 |
| Even if I vote the elections will still be rigged | .71 | .28 | .71 |
| Cameroonian Politicians are liars | .72 | .28 | .72 |
| Elections in Cameroon have been free, fair and transparent | .23 | .76 | .23 |
| Democracy has brought more problems to Cameroon than the pre-1990 rule | .51 | .49 | .51 |

df= 2x2 > .001 Test Proportion= .05

attempt to address the issue of participatory democracy in Cameroon. Democratic pluralism requires a very strong institutional base. The difficult question is how can this happen when the civil society holds a very low opinion of the democratic process? There is a need to re-examine some of our approaches and options with the view to turning around low efficacy /participation to high efficacy/participation.

Although a majority (70.1%) of Cameroonians surveyed indicated a keen interest in politics, however, this interest in politics neither translated into high efficacy nor high voting. Our challenge is to examine how we can use the national media to increase efficacy and participation in the electoral process.

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