

Social Media and Electoral Law Violation in Cameroon: The Case of the 2018 Presidential Election

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ABSTRACT

Most presidential elections in Africa, especially in the central African sub-region have always ended up in some form of violence. Ever since the social media became a key tool in elections including those organized in African countries, it has been used as a platform to either decrease or escalate election violence, given its characteristics. The social media is not regulated, the law governing its use is difficult to enforce, everybody can create contents, it has a wider reach and it can be used to spread information instantly. The 2018 presidential election in Cameroon was marked by violence. The violence was blamed partly on the way the social media was used by different actors during the 2018 presidential election. This paper examines how the social media was used by actors of the election to violate the electoral code. The theoretical assumptions of this research are based on agenda setting which deals with the prioritization of stories or issues, their treatment and their place in the media. The paper used a quantitative research approach. A total of 176 questionnaires were distributed to voters. They were based in Douala and Buea. Key findings reveal that social media was used to violate the electoral code during the 2018 election as 103 (58.5%) respondents received or read campaign messages before the official campaign. The findings equally reveal that the social media was used to spread fake news, and misinformation which played a role to incite and facilitate violence. The implication of this finding is that it will get election stakeholders to understand the dangers of the social media especially during elections and see what needs to be done to make the social media a better tool for election management.

Key words: Social Media, Electoral Law, Violation and Presidential Elections

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1990s the internet became a good delivery system for political contents (Davis and Owen, 1998). Political actors started using it to convey messages to the public, to influence their constituents, to recruit volunteers and donors and to mobilize voters (Davis and Owen, 2017). In 2008 Barack Obama won the presidential election in the U.S. After his historic victory a good number of post-election analyses credited Obama's victory to the extensive use of the social media (Jarmin, 2008). The social media however was not only used in the U.S. It was equally used in other parts of the world after proving its strategic importance to election. Cameroon also made use of the social media during its 2011 and 2018 presidential elections. In 2011 only a handful of candidates made use of the social media (AFP, 2018). In 2018 the number grew tremendously (AFP, 2018).

According to Ngange and Elonge (2020), candidates used the social media to campaign, to mobilize voters, to interact with voters, to raise funds and to collate results. Ngange and Elonge (2020) further state that top contenders made use of the social media before, during and after the presidential election. They share footage, texts messages, and pictures to show their every move along the campaign trail to show their participation and engagement (Africanews, 2018). However, some of the activities on social media went

contrary to the electoral code. Texts from journalist, academicians, activists and civil society actors spoke in terms that stigmatized ethnic groups (International Crisis Group, 2018). In terms of the publication of results, many observers stated that the social media published several results with different winners even before official results were published (The Washington Post, 2018). According to ICG report, while the social media has been a vector for free speech it has some weakness. There is no regulation. Throughout the world, elections are governed by laws or codes to ensure that electoral processes are fair, balanced, and transparent and that the playing field is level for every candidate. Election laws regulate who votes, when and how they vote, how campaigns are conducted and how votes are recorded, counted and allocated (U.S. Constitution, 1870). In Cameroon there is the Electoral Code. According to section 45 those to vote during presidential elections are Cameroonians of either sex, who are 20 years and above, registered on the electoral register and is free from all cases of disqualification by law, shall be entitled to be an elector (Electoral Code, 2012). Section 87 states that campaign shall open on the 15th (fifteenth) day preceding the election and close at midnight on the eve of Election Day (Electoral Code, 2012). Section 92 states that it is forbidden for anyone to circulate or cause the circulation of any ballot papers, circulars, documents, articles or objects related to the election in any way whatsoever, on election day. Section 137 states that the Constitutional Council shall adopt and proclaim the results of the presidential election within no more than 15 days of the close of the poll (Electoral Code, 2012). Section 278(1) states that it is forbidden for any political parties to receive subsidies or funding from abroad, foreign persons, organizations, powers or states. Section 288- (1) Section 122-1 of the Penal Code shall apply against any person who;

-through false information, slanderous statements or any other fraudulent acts, cancels or diverts votes or causes one or several voters to abstain from the vote;

-through assault, violence or threats against an elector, either by making him fear to lose his job or expose himself, his family or fortune to a danger, influences his vote.

Gilboa (2002:34) brings out the traditional media which includes the newspaper, television, and the radio and the new media which is basically the internet. Gilboa states that the internet is fast contributing to public debate as far as social issues are concerned. According to the Dakar Declaration, formulated by UNESCO in 2005, on media and governance, it calls on the media to be independent in promoting good governance and democracy (UNESCO, 2005). For Schramm (1964) the media can help bridge the gap between different communities while upholding the national values and aspiration of a country. Such values could include the truth, respect of the law, fairness, integration and living together. In this light Daramola (2001) stresses that the media should be able to inform the population about the misconduct happening in the society. Misconducts like corruption, cheating, favouritism and partiality.

Shruti (2016: 1-9) argue that the role of the media including new media, has to be positive when it comes to spreading and instilling moral values like, fellow citizens loving themselves, citizens respecting the rights of members of different communities and spreading high morals. The media has to play this role in every aspect of national life. During the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria for example, the social media was described as a formidable force for campaign, mobilization of voters, collation of results as well as the proclamation of winners by the Independent National Election Commission (INEC) (Oseni, 2015). This means that the social media can be an instrument for peace and collaboration if it is properly used. It can equally be an instrument to uphold the law by raising awareness on the importance of respecting the law. According to Oseni (2015) and Elegbede (2015) without the social media voters would not have been able to engage or participate the way they did in the 2015 election in Nigeria and again the collation of results might not have been transparent.

Owen (2017) the new media facilitates networking, collaboration and community building as well as active engagement. While the social media contributed to the enhancement of the electoral process in Nigeria, in Cameroon, many observers argue that it did not heal the same result especially in the area of implementing the law. Texts from journalist, academicians, activists and civil society actors spoke in terms that

stigmatized ethnic groups (International Crisis Group Briefing, 2018). In terms of the publication of results, many observers stated that the social media published several results with different winners even before official results were published (The Washington Post, 2018). According to ICG (2020), while the social media has been a vector for free speech it has some weakness. The report further points out that activists of all political persuasions during the 2018 presidential election used the social media to propagate misinformation, publish results, widen ethnic divide, and even incite violence. Inflammatory content online pitting Bulu and Beti against Bamileke stoked tensions. Many believe that these things were able to happen because there are no proper rules regulating activities on the social media. Many observers argue that the social media did not only provide an avenue for violent content, it also made it easier for election actors not to respect the electoral code. It is from the foregoing that the paper examines the extent to which the outcome of the 2018 presidential election was affected by social media violation of the electoral law.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Developed by Walter Lippmann in 1922, the theory of Agenda Setting expressed concern on the vital role that the mass media can do in influencing the setting of certain image on the public's mind (Lippmann, 1922: 9:16) In portraying the influence of mass media, Lippmann gives an example of individuals who supposed to be enemies while their countries are at war. Instead of becoming enemies, without having access to information about the war through media, those individuals are able to live harmoniously in a secluded island. Lippmann indicates on how mass media can set a particular agenda which can influence the opinion of the public. However, he never used the term agenda setting theory (Zain, 2014). Proper research was only done on this theory by McCombs and Shaw, in 1972. They observed the capacity of mass media in influencing the voter's opinion on the presidential campaign of 1968 in the United States of America (Zain, 2014). Their analysis of the news and media coverage found a strong correlation to the opinion held by the voters in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. In brief, the mass media may not be successful in telling us "what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about" (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) cited by (Filipova, 2006).

The relevance of the theory could be seen as the social media is a communication platform that creates new challenges and opportunities for political agenda-setting. Social media do not just add a layer of complexity to agenda-setting dynamics potentially, they change their nature. Candidates and legislators use social media to communicate with journalist and the public and to engage with (or even attack) their political opponents.

The theory is relevance to this article as portrays the role played by bloggers, citizen journalists and influencers in setting the agenda. When key bloggers focus on a new or neglect issue-blogs can socially construct an agenda or give the frame that "acts as a focal point for mainstream media, shaping and constraining the larger political debate (Gina, 2018). The social media plays the role of a component in the agenda-setting process both by providing alternative content to traditional media and by determining the object traditional media outlets opt to cover (Goldzweig and Lupion (2019).

The 2018 Presidential Election in Cameroon and the use of the Social Media

Since 2008 the social media has become a very key instrument in election. Owen (2017) argues that new media have triggered changes in the campaign strategies of political parties, candidates, and political organizations; reshape election media coverage; and influenced voter's energumen. She affirms that campaign websites have become full-service multimedia platforms where voters could find extensive information about candidates as well as election logistics, access and share videos and ads, blogs and provide commentary, donate and take part in volunteer activities (Owen, 2017). The benefits of the social media according to several literatures are not bound by region, ethnicity, culture or religion (Adamu, 2018). He persists that the elevated position of the social media in Nigerian society and public life can be seen from the changing nature of news websites which have informed Nigerians about the 2015 election (Adamu, 2018). Jamie et al., (2015) found that Twitter was ten times more active over the election period in Nigeria

than at “normal” time. In Nigeria the 2011 general elections were the first in which social media was actively employed throughout Nigeria’s electoral process by a wide range of stakeholders that included civil society organizations, political parties and candidates, the police, citizens, traditional media outlets and Nigeria’s election management body, INEC (Umar, 2020). In Cameroon the social media was first used in the 2011 presidential election and only a handful of candidates made use of it (AFP, 2018). During the 2011 presidential election, social media use was very limited, with no presidential candidate using more than two of the three dominant social media tools (Facebook, Twitter and You Tube). Edith Kahbang Walla, presidential candidate for the Cameroon People’s Party (CPP), used social media, especially Facebook and You Tube more actively than all other candidates (Ngange, 2020). Ngange (2020) holds that, all candidates did very little to provide feedback to comments posted on social media, hence using the media primarily as a one way channel to deliver messages to audiences. In 2018 the social media was used in a more intense fashion during the 2018 presidential election by different stakeholders. According to AFP (2018) the number of stakeholders who used the social media during the 2018 presidential election had grown tremendously. It was the first time the social media networks were at the heart of the political process (Ngange, 2020). As part of their efforts to prevent violence, in addition to a social campaign encouraging people to vote, the international NGO, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, WILPF Cameroon, established an election Call Centre with a toll free number, operational from the 4th October to 8th October 2018 (OCHA, 2018).

The election management body Elections Cameroon, ELECAM, equally made use of the social media to inform voters and other stakeholders to issues pertaining to the conduct of the election. When the internet was clouded by a series of posters and messages alleged to have been printed and published by Elections Cameroon prohibiting the use of mobile phones and other digital communication tools in polling stations on Election Day, ELECAM officials organized a press conference, and equally used the social media to refute the allegation. The Director General of Elections, Dr. Essousse Erik, held a press conference on September 26th, 2018, during which he refuted all allegations of all the information circulating on social media indicating that ELECAM had proscribed the use of mobile phones in polling stations on voters’ days. He explained that Elections Cameroon has never taken such a decision for there are no provisions in the Electoral Code that stipulate that handsets are forbidden in polling stations. He voiced that as a credible, independent and law abiding body in charge of organizing free, fair and transparent elections, they could not feature items that are not part of the Electoral Code (Cameroon-Report.com, 2018).

Candidates used You Tube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp to campaign, to mobilize voters, to interact with voters, to raise funds and for the collation of results (AFP, 2018). Ngange and Elonge (2020) affirm that top contenders for the election made use of the social media before, during and after the election. The incumbent Paul Biya announced his candidature for re-election on Twitter on July the 13, 2018 (Ombe, 2018). The message read;

“Dear compatriots in Cameroon & the Diaspora, aware of the challenges we must take up together to ensure a more united, stable & prosperous Cameroon, I am willing to respond positively to your overwhelming calls. I will stand as your candidate in the upcoming presidential election” (Ngange, 2020).

The announcement was equally posted on his Facebook page. The other eight candidates also used the social media to announce their candidature (Ombe, 2018). The candidates did not only use the social media to announce their candidacy but also for other political activities. In September 2018, a month to voting, social media use was highest (104 posts). The two leading candidates, Paul Biya and Maurice Kamto, had a bulk of the posts (Ngange, 2020). Other candidates equally had impressive postings on their accounts or party website. Opposition Presidential candidate Joshua Osih of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) used his new internet based campaign to reach more Cameroonians (Africanews, 2018).

In an interview a party official said;

You have a poll that looks at the campaign strategy, which also defines the strategy and planning. You have a poll that looks at all social media activities and in this case it means, tracking all information and news that is released on the candidate on all social media platforms. You have a poll that looks at marketing as well as e-mails that are sent to potential voters. Today, we have sent over 1 million e-mails,” said Patrick Tomi, the social media manager for Joshua Osih’s campaign (Africanews, 2018).

Politicians are already engaging in online chats with supporters to answer potential voter’s questions and many young people are also using the platform to show support or argue out their views, as well as easily keep track of their politicians online. In an interview an official of the CPDM party explains how they have been using the social media during the campaign,

“You know, today, social media is the main source for news. So even for us, we have to give it 100 percent, and ensure that young people can see what our candidate is doing. For the last seven years, since his victory in 2011, we have had one goal and it’s to see him (Paul Biya) win the elections in 2018,” said Jacob Kiari, President of the youth wing of the ruling party People’s Democratic Movement (RDPC) (Africanews, 2018).

According France 24 (2018), the campaign has sparked an online war of images as one side posts pictures of roads in disrepair, the other responds with photos of huge construction projects, such as the motorway between Yaoundé and Douala. With less than three weeks to voting, Biya’s supporters who see him as best placed to handle the separatist crisis and the threat posed by Boko Haram maintain that footage of alleged abuses by the army was put online in order to sabotage his re-election bid (France 24, 2018). As incumbent, president Biya’s posts spared no effort to in embellishing acts done in Cameroon for his over thirty six years as president (Ngange, 2020). Opposition leaders posted messages for self-praise and for the condemnation of the regime of the incumbent. They decried the failure of the regime (Ngange, 2020). Africanews (2018) posit that politicians shared footage, text messages, and pictures of their every move along the campaign trail to show their participation and engagement. According to Ngange (2020) the language of the posts was generally abusive, degrading, provocative, frank and bias. AFP (2018) concurs with Ngange by stating that, footage of abuses was published on Facebook. Social media content of the election was equally filled with fake news and hate speech. This increase in hate speech and the spread of “fake news” are “a threat to our right to good information, especially during the election period,” said Issa Tchiroma Bakary, Minister of Communication as cited by Cameroon-Report.com (2018). The campaign on the social media was not only done by Cameroonians. Foreigners too were involved. On his Facebook page, Ivorian Reggae musician Tiken Jah Fakonly wrote;

To vote against Paul Biya is to show the love you have for your country Cameroon.

In the video he further tells Cameroonians that they should vote against Biya because he is an old man who can die at any time. That if Biya dies Cameroon will go into crisis like Cote D’Ivoire (You Tube, 2018). The video had about 329000 views, about 8000 likes and about 1900 commentaries (Facebook, 2018). Nigerian Blogger Adeola was equally active online about the election in Cameroon. On her Facebook page she says;

Keep in mind that this man (Biya) spends more time outside than in his country...he has not stopped harassing the English speakers of Cameroon yet he wants to be president...the police, the soldiers have killed a lot of English speakers who have been demanding for Paul Biya to step down...ehh is so sad because we know that the man is going to try to rig this election...this man has been in power for like 42 years is that not enough? If you ask me I think it is enough” (Facebook, Oct. 5th, 2018). The video had 34000 views, 475 likes and 111 comments. Some of the comments called on Cameroonians to wake up and to protest.

Apart from using the social media for campaign and interacting with voters, Cabral Libii candidate for the UNIVERS party used the social media to also raise funds. In an interview he granted to the press Cabral Libii said his team has been able to raise funds online to help pay the 30 million francs caution required

from each presidential candidate (Journal du Cameroun.com, 2018).

Apart from the candidates, the social media equally gave the electorates an unlimited and uncensored chance to exchange views with candidates seeking election (Ngange, 2020). Some of the text messages from journalists, academics, activists and other civil society actors spoke in terms that stigmatized ethnic groups (International Crisis Group, 2018). The brief of the group affirms that some of the campaign activities on the social media created tension within ethnic groups (ICG, 2018). The group persist that activists of all political persuasions used the social media to propagate misinformation, widen ethnic divides and even incite violence. Separatist leaders and fighters were also active online warning inhabitants of the South West and North West regions not to take part in the election, promising retribution and bloodshed.

James Agbor writes on Baretanews online that;

As citizens of French Cameroun go to the polls tomorrow for an already rigged presidential election, the citizens of the sovereign state of Southern Cameroons/Ambazonia, which is witnessing an independence war declared by the colonialist Paul Biya, shall be observing the deadliest ghost towns operation ever. There has been a total boycott of the electioneering process and a complete shutdown in the territory since Sunday, September 30, 2018 (Baretanews, 2018).

The social media was also used during and after the election. On October 7th the presidential election took place and according to the electoral code and the country's constitution results were to be published only 15 days after voting. However the next day October the 8th, 2018, results were announced on the social media. Even before results came out the social media had published its own results. Social media is abuzz with unverified election results, many of which proclaimed various opposition leaders as winners of the election (The Washington Post, 2018). Cameroon opposition candidate Maurice Kamto declared victory in Sunday's presidential election, but incumbent President Paul Biya's party dismissed his claim as fantasy and accused him of breaking the law by making it. "I invite the outgoing president to organize a peaceful way to transfer power," Kamto, who leads the Movement for the Rebirth of Cameroon (MRC), told a news conference on Monday in the capital Yaounde cited by (McAllister and Kouagheu, 2018). The deputy secretary general of Paul Biya's Cameroon People's Democratic Movement, Labour Minister Gregoire Owona, accused Kamto of breaking the law. "It is not right at all to announce this. He hasn't won anything at all. It's totally illegal, he said, adding that it was too early to say if anyone had won." Kamto was not even represented at all the polling stations, it was impossible for him to count all the votes," he added cited by (Reuters, 2018).

Cameroon's Government Spokesman Issa Tchiroma Bakary told Reuters without elaborating that the government would take measures against Kamto. "The only body entitled to collect all tallies and publish results is the constitutional council, he said, adding they would be published within 15 days from the poll as required by law. Everyone must abide by the law." Minister of Territorial Administration Paul Atanga Nji had said on Sunday that, any form of challenge to the verdict of the Constitutional Council would not be tolerated. After announcing victory on the social media, authorities in Cameroon are appealing for calm after hundreds of youths marched through the streets of Yaounde, celebrating what they called the victory of their candidate, Maurice Kamto, in Sunday's presidential election. No results have been released yet from the election, in which eight candidates challenged longtime President Paul Biya (VOA, 2018). The VOA further reported that, hundreds of young people demonstrating in the streets of the capital sang songs urging President Paul Biya to step down. They sang that they believe their candidate, Maurice Kamto of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement Party, won Sunday's presidential election (VOA, 2018). Apart from Kamto, Cabral Libii of the UNIVERS party equally used the social media to declare victory. Kamto is not the only candidate claiming victory. Cabral Libii of the opposition Universe Party announced he is leading the vote count.

"There is no doubt that I have won the election and I am the elected choice of the Cameroonian people. It now remains for me to prove it" (Jeune Afrique, 2018).

Days after results were proclaimed online, opposition politicians in the economic city of Douala were placed under house-arrest to prevent them from leading planned protests. Local journalists reported that the homes of Jean Mitchel Nintcheu of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and Edith Kah Walla of the Cameroon People's Party (CPP) were under military siege (Africanews, 2018). Apart from journalists many people took to the social media to criticize and to protest the house arrest. Rebecca Enonchong a tech-entrepreneur based in Douala wrote on her Twitter page that,

“someone is quietly in her house on a Sunday and you send dozens of security forces for what purpose? Then you will say that people who want to march are disturbing the peace while you are the ones fueling the fire!” (Rebecca Enonchong, 2018).

She continues in another post on Twitter stating that;

“Here is the little woman that is so scary to the government. They are actually saying in this video that they are there for her protection. Protection from who? #Etoudi2018.

When Cameroon's ace footballer Samuel Eto'o announced on social media that he was supporting President Biya, he was seriously insulted (France 24, 2018). So in the 2018 presidential election in Cameroon there was intensive use of the social media and all the stakeholders were active online.

METHODOLOGY

The research design that suits this paper was the case study research design. The article used the quantitative approach that gives room or opportunity for the researcher to explore the phenomenon under investigation. Target population is that population to which the researcher wants to generalize the results of study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). The target population was those who actively participated in the 2018 presidential election in Buea and Douala. The population of this article also represents different age groups, educational background, profession and socio-economic status. In this article simple random sampling was used. Simple random sampling was applied by the researcher as the researcher wrote the names of the selected neighbourhoods in Douala and Buea on pieces of papers, folded them and asked a 12-year-old child to pick, then unfolding the pieces of paper to unveil the selected neighbourhoods for data collection. The choice of this sample technique was guided by the desire to get in-depth understanding from the targeted respondents.

With regards to Sample Size, 176 respondents were sampled from Douala and Buea. Quantitative data was analysed using frequency tables. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) advise that a population of 320 warrants a sample of 175. Approximately, the targeted voters for the two towns amount to 340, hence 176 from the two towns was used as sample size.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Analysis of social media use to violate the electoral code during the 2018 election

Table 1: Period Respondents received or read campaign messages in the 2018 election

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Before the official campaign	103	58.5%
During campaign	46	26.1%
After campaign	27	15.4%
Total	176	100

Source: Field Research, 2023

To be able to establish whether the social media was used to violate the electoral code during the 2018 election, the researcher decided to find out from the respondents the period when they received or read campaign messages in the 2018 presidential election. Table 1 above shows the period when respondents received or read campaign messages in the 2018 election. the findings read that 103 respondents received or read campaign messages *before the official campaign period* was announced resulting to 58.5% while 46 respondents received or read campaign messages *during official campaign period* was announced amounting to 26.1% and lastly, some respondents 27 indicate that they received or read campaign messages after the *close of the campaign period* amounting to 15.4%. From the above statistics, it is evident to conclude that the social media was used to violate the electoral code in the 2018 election as messages were received or read before the official campaign period was announced and even when the campaign period was closed, some respondents could still receive or read campaign messages.

Table 2: Period Respondents forward/send campaign messages in the 2018 election

Item	Frequency	Percent
Before the official campaign	121	68.7%
During campaign	35	19.8%
After campaign	20	11.5%
Total	363	100

Source: Field Research, 2023

Table 2 shows the period when respondents forwarded or send campaign messages in the 2018 presidential election in Cameroon. The findings reveal that majority of the respondents 121 forwarded or send campaign messages before the official campaign period leading to 68.7% while some respondents 35 forwarded or send campaign messages during the campaign period amounting to 19.8% and lastly a few respondents 20 forwarded or send campaign messages after campaign period accounting to 11.5%. From the above statistics, it is evident that the social media violated the electoral code in the 2018 presidential election.

The findings show that respondents forwarded or send campaign messages before the official start of campaign period which was violating the law and also respondents forwarded or send campaign messages after the close of campaign period thus violating the electoral code in the 2018 presidential election.

Table 3: Sources of election results

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Social Media	149	84.6%
Other sources	27	15.4%
Total	176	100

Source: Field Research, 2023

According to the electoral code, election results are to be declared fifteen (15) days after the election and must be declared by the constitutional council. From the above table, respondents indicated the sources of their election results. Statistics reveal that the social media was the main source of the election results during the 2018 presidential election amounting to 84.6% while some respondents reveal that they received election results from other sources but did not disclosed the sources accounting to 15.4%. From the above findings, it is evidence that election results circulated on the social media before the official date of election results.

The finding of this article is supported work of Farago, (1972: 387) who recommended five key factors as far as the role of the social media in violating the 2018 presidential election is concerned. They include; 1) The conduct of campaign b) The publication of results c) Propagation of fake news d) Spreading threats and fear. e) Foreign interference. Also, the finding of this article is in line with Edozien's (2015) finding which holds that the public and electoral officers could broadcast vote counts on the social media. To support this claim ACE (2011), equally adds that one of the key roles the social media played during the 2011 election in Nigeria was to collate and publish results. This was indicative of the fact that the majority of respondents trusted the social media more than other sources of information and trusted the result that was coming from the social media. This claim ties with the finding of Conner (2020) in their article "*Fake News, Post truth and media-political change: Addressing Social Media's Threats to Democratic Legitimacy and Public Safety After Election Day*" in which they state that ' it may take days or weeks after Election Day to count the votes, declare winners in hotly contested races, and certify the results for the U.S. 2020 general election. And during this waiting period, social media platforms may be used in attempts to delegitimize the election process and cause chaos.

Furthermore, the finding of this article is corroborated by Gilardi, et al (2021) in their study entitled "*Fake News and the 2017 Kenyan Elections, Social media and political agenda setting*". According to Gilardi, et al (2021) the social media was used to spread fake news intended mainly to win over voters, create fear and alarm, and sometimes disparage some of the independent institutions that were managing the elections. Ngange (2020) concurs with the findings of this article as Maurice Kamto (who came second in the election results) and his supporters' propagated information that they won the 2018 presidential election without any statistics to back them. The propagation of false information and the organization of massive protests by Maurice Kamto and his supporters in major cities in Cameroon (Yaoundé, Douala and Bafoussam) and their partial destruction of the Cameroon embassies in France and Germany in January 2019 led to the arrest of Kamto and some of his supporters'.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the world, elections are governed by laws or codes to ensure that electoral processes are fair, balanced, and transparent and that the playing field is level for every candidate. Election laws regulate who votes, when and how they vote, how campaigns are conducted and how votes are recorded, counted and allocated (U.S. Constitution, 1870). In Cameroon there is the Electoral Code, section 45 specify those to vote during presidential elections of either sex, who are 20 years and have registered on the electoral register and is free from all cases of disqualification by law, shall be entitled to be an elector (Electoral Code, 2012). Section 87 states that campaign shall open on the 15th (fifteenth) day preceding the election and close at midnight on the eve of Election Day (Electoral Code, 2012). Section 92 states that it is forbidden for anyone to circulate or cause the circulation of any ballot papers, circulars, documents, articles or objects related to the election in any way whatsoever, on election day. Section 137 states that the Constitutional Council shall adopt and proclaim the results of the presidential election within no more than 15 days of the close of the poll (Electoral Code, 2012). Section 278(1) states that it is forbidden for any political parties to receive subsidies or funding from abroad, foreign persons, organizations, powers or states.

Election violence will always happen during major elections like the presidential election. What is important however, it is for those in charge to be able to prevent, minimize or manage the violence for there to be peace and development in the country. On the flip side if election violence is not prevented, minimized or properly managed it can lead to total violence which may intend lead to the absolute destruction of the country and stall its development. According to experts the social media can play a role in minimizing election violence if properly used and furthermore if it is used in respect of the law. Each time there is violence before, during and after an election, it is indicative of the fact that the fact that the playing field was level for all the parties. In the case of the social media it is indicative of the fact that the social media which is a tool for informing voters, for campaign and for candidates to relate with the public was used for

not everything except the above mentioned functions. According to several election stakeholders the socialmedia can either be used to incite violence or be used to minimize violence. True that the social media can spread fake news but there is the possibility for the same social media to combat fake news. It can be confirmed as fake if there are groups of trust worthy fact checkers, if candidates and different candidates can take their responsibility to announce that the information is fake and again if the owners of social media platforms can work with the authorities to bring the piece of information down as quick as possible.

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