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Media Sustainability and Gender Inequality in Africa

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Abstract: Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals is to promote gender equality and to empower women. This empowerment is key to achieving success of all eight goals. An important element to this empowerment is the media and the role that media plays in countries all over the world, particularly in Africa. Media holds significant power, shaping the views of many on women and the role of women in society. Awareness builds understanding. As we become more educated about women and the important role that women play in economic development, the more the media will represent an increasingly important tool to aid in the development and empowerment of women. This study analyzes more than 30 countries in Africa and looks at the changes that have occurred in the media systems, as measured by the Media Sustainability Index, and the subsequent effect that changes have had on the role of women in society, as measured by the Gender Inequality Index. This study will show that the more developed a country's media system that promotes and protects free speech and access to public information, the less gender inequality the country will experience.

Keywords: Gender Inequality, Media Sustainability, Africa

I. Introduction

The issue of gender inequality has been studied for some time. There is various empirical research that shows if the world were to address the gender inequality issue, we would see massive progress toward meeting all eight UN Millennium Development Goals. Media is a significant source for helping to alleviate gender inequality in the world. Whether we are talking about television, print, social media, or filmanthropy, media can take on the significant role of helping to unify thought throughout the world and come to the aid of suffering women particularly in developing nations. Violence against women without punishment, whether through rape as a weapon of war, honor killings, domestic beatings, etc., is shown to be particularly merciless in Africa. Just as media was able to help those subjugated in northern Africa during the Arab Spring, media, in all of its forms, can be used as a tool to propel gender equality issues to the forefront of thought in the world today.

II. Media Sustainability Index

The Media Sustainability Index (MSI) was prepared by IREX, an international nonprofit organization providing thought leadership and innovative programs to promote positive lasting change globally, in cooperation with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This was done to assess the development of media systems over time and across countries [6]. "The MSI assesses five objectives in shaping a successful media system: Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information; Journalism meets professional standards of quality; Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable, objective news; Media are well-managed enterprises, allowing editorial independence; and supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media" [6]. Each of the five objectives is averaged to obtain an overall average score for each country. An overall average score of 0-1 can be interpreted as unsustainable, with government and laws actively hindering free media development, low professionalism, and minimal media-industry activity. An overall score of 1-2 can be interpreted as a country minimally meeting objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. An overall score of 2-3 can be interpreted as a country progressing in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism and the business environment supportive of independent media. An overall score of 3-4 can be interpreted as a country considered to be generally professional, free and sustainable or to be approaching these objectives [6].

A. The Media

The media plays an important role in providing access to information. This information is presented through various mediums with the intention of providing objective perspectives of headline news throughout the world. Some argue that the live newsgathering has greater influence than government policymaking [7]. It has the ability to capture devastating catastrophes of humankind, the fall of governments, and the joys of Olympic wins. CNN International Producer, Mr. Ebrahimji, argues that CNN has brought world attention to both Africa's challenges (HIV and AIDS pandemic, political and ethnic clashes, the genocide in Rwanda, and the refugee crises) and its potential (natural resources, economic growth, elections, and poverty alleviation) [7]. However, the depth and continuity of the coverage depends on access to compelling visuals and the perceived impact on the American audience [7].

In addition it is important to understand how international media is perceived by individuals in their home country. In Uganda, for example, citizens that own a television have access to international news outlets like CNNI. In addition to the international news, they also have access to local news. However, the unreliability and poor performance of the local news makes the international news sources far more reliable. Despite this, viewers continue to be loyal to local networks because local stations present stories from a positive and superfluous outlook that promotes long held traditions, which have become engrained in their identity as a nation [7]. This is consistent with the outcry from Ugandans in 2011 over the Invisible Children documentary about Joseph Kony. Further, reference [7] discusses the perception of “out of control” crime in South Africa due to media coverage. Reference [7] argues that the coverage of crime far outweighs the actual statistics. Keeping this thought in mind, local media may be better able to help change local behavior concerning discrimination.

This can be seen in western countries as well. The media played an important role in broadcasting coverage of the violence in Israel and Palestine in November, 2012. This coverage differed from any other American coverage ever shown since the outset of violence in the region. For the first time, Americans were shown an objective view of the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinian. In the past, journalists were not allowed to enter the Palestinian territory, so Americans could not see the carnage that was inflicted on the Palestinians and therefore blindly supported Israel. As a result, American attitude shifted dramatically and polls revealed that they became more sympathetic to the Palestinian situation. Dennis O’Hearn echoes this thought as he quotes Bobby Sands, an Irish Hunger Striker, in his book entitled “An Unfinished Song”. He says that there are two realities in any conflict: the real story and the media account. If the media choose to portray a situation in a certain light, they will certainly form the perceptions of the people at large regardless of whether it is the “real story”.

In the absence of open media in Africa, social media has been propelled to the forefront allowing for information to travel to all throughout the world in a fast and systematic way. The arrival and growth of social media has not only introduced a new dimension to politicians’ interactions with the masses but also brought speed and extent to exposure in the public domain unheard before [13]. The number of internet users who turn to online platforms to create their own diet of news, rather than relying on editors’ sections have been steadily growing and may soon exceed the number of those who depend on offline news sources [9]. Therefore, social media will become an important focus for shifting political, economic, and cultural thought. Especially in the wake of the Arab Spring, this outlet is becoming more and more widely accepted.

III. Gender Inequality Index

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) reflects women’s disadvantage in three dimensions – reproductive health, empowerment and the labor market [14]. The health dimension is measured by maternal mortality ratio and the adolescent fertility rate. The empowerment dimension is measured by the share of parliamentary seats held by each sex and by secondary and higher education attainment levels. The labor dimension is measured by women’s participation in the work force [14]. The index ranges from 0 to 1 where 0 indicates that women and men fare equally and 1 indicates that women fare as poorly as possible in all measured dimensions [14].

A. Gender Inequality and Africa

Discrimination based on gender is most prolific on the continent of Africa. There are many arguments posed for why this is the case -- cultural, poverty, corruption, etc. Any benefits that African nations have achieved through globalization have not included gender equality. [4] argues that women were victims of injustice in traditional African culture because of what society did *not* do to them. He says that boys grew up knowing that they had to be strong, hardworking and wise and girls grew up knowing that they had to be hardworking and submissive so that they could find good husbands who would take good care of them. The point being that it wasn’t up to the girls to make their lives successful; it was up to their husbands [4]

Achieving gender equality is considered to be a critical ingredient to reducing poverty [3]. Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals is to promote gender equality and to empower women. Reference [1] argues that the Millennium Goals can only be achieved if the continent is able to draw on all its resources and talents, and women must be allowed and enabled to participate fully in social, political and economic activities. Reference [12] adds to this argument by saying that gender equality is key in raising social welfare through high economic growth, reduced fertility, child mortality, and under-nutrition. However, gender inequality continues to be pervasive across the world. Bwakali argues that the gender equality scenario in developing nations is definitely not similar to that of developed nations. He states that women in developed nations have economic empowerment, which gives them a voice, a powerful voice that demands an audience and positive action. Bwakali says, however, women in developing nations are generally silent, with their voices being stifled by economic and cultural handicaps, which creates an ever increasing need to for the media to shed light on gender inequality.

The lack of empowerment in women in Africa has been attributed to HIV/AIDS pandemic. Reference [11] reports that women in sub-Saharan Africa have little or no access to education or jobs and are economically dependent on men, creating the “feminization” of AIDS. Because of this USAIDS is urging governments to

pass legislation protecting women from domestic violence and reforming their inheritance laws, which could force women out of their family home forfeiting their property. This leaves women destitute, forcing them into the sex market.

B. Media and Gender Equality

The world witnessed the Taliban attack on an innocent schoolgirl in Pakistan in 2012. World coverage of the attack brought together sympathizers all over the world. Though a significant amount of fear still exists, improvement for women will only be seen when men and women stand up together in support of equal rights for all.

Leymah Gbowee, recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, is a modern example of how the media could aid in peaceful protesting of basic rights and bring about peace in her country. Ms. Gbowee successfully used a sex strike in her home country to gain media attention of the plight of her people. With the world looking on she was able to bring peace to her country. By taking the actions that Gbowee did, she showed others how to formulate their own footprint. The more this type of thinking and protest is publicized, the more “normal” it will become. Women will find it unacceptable to have their rights stepped upon.

The more the media is able to describe the true nature of events occurring in society, the more the injustices of women will be revealed. This will increase awareness and understanding and will therefore promote change in society. The most difficult aspect that individuals will face in trying to create gender equality is to change the deeply held cultural and religious practices and beliefs [10].

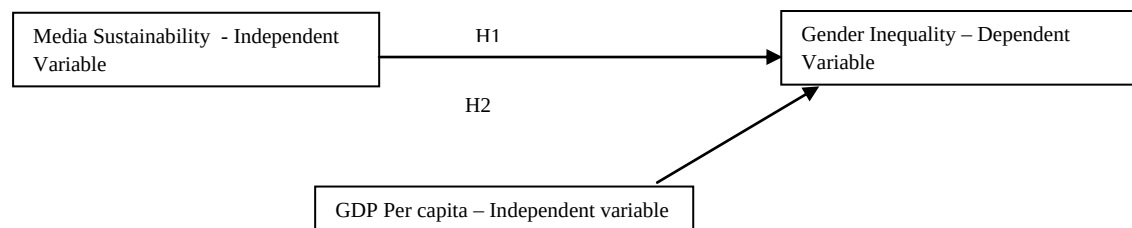
The term “Filmanthropy” was coined by SnagFilms founder and Chairman, Ted Leonsis. The term describes the use of documentary films to inspire sustainable change in all areas of life. Gender inequality is a social justice issue that if reversed could see all areas of human life move forward in a dramatic way. Media has the power to elicit this type of change.

IV. Hypotheses

H1: As the media sustainability index increases, gender inequality decreases.

H2: As GDP per capita decreases, gender inequality increases.

Model 1



V. Statistical Analysis

The data in this study has been tested using panel data analysis and will look at the differences between changes in media sustainability and gender inequality for 31 African countries and the time series effect of those changes over a four year period. This test reflects both the differences in gender inequality between countries and the time-series information reflected in the changes of the Media Sustainability Index and Gender Inequality index variables over time. This study has tested the relationship between the two variables using correlation analysis and cross-sectional time series analysis. This relationship can be tested using Granger Causality [8]. In addition to testing the differences between changes in media sustainability and gender inequality (H1), this study will also look at the differences between changes in GDP per capita and gender inequality (H2).

A. Cointegration and Granger Causality

Cointegration means that one or more linear combinations of variables is stationary even though individually they are not [3]. If they do change over time, such data is known as non-stationary data (data that has a unit root). If the variables are cointegrated, then they cannot move too far from each other [3]. For cointegration to exist, a pair of integrated series must have the property that a linear combination of them is stationary [3]. If it is determined that the variables are cointegrated, it must be determined whether they are cointegrated with the same hidden common factor and they must be considered to be generated by an error-correction model [3]. An error-correction model shows the change of one of the series is explained in terms of the lag of the difference between the series [3]. Equation 1 is the general equation used to test for cointegration and to calculate the error-correction term. The motivation for including the error correction term is to allow for adjustment back to the long term equilibrium relationship given a deviation in the last period [3]. The error correction term represents the difference between the actual value of gender inequality and the predicted value of gender inequality using the coefficients estimated in Equation 1. A significant error correction term is evidence of causality in at least one direction [3].

Equation 1

$$G_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{Media}_t + \alpha_2 \text{GDP}_t + \varepsilon_1$$

G = Gender Inequality index

T = time period

Media = Media Sustainability Index

GDP = GDP per capita

The hypothesis in this study will be tested using Granger (1969) methodology on panel data. This analysis will use a time series regression analysis based on a time lag in an effort to test the causality between changes in media sustainability and gender inequality. Hypothesis 1 will test the cause and effect relationship between changes in media sustainability and gender inequality. Hypothesis 2 will test the cause and effect relationship between changes in GDP per capita and gender inequality. The Granger test examines whether given two variables, that the change in a variable x is able to predict a change in Y [3]. Causality is tested using the error correction model in Equation 2. All of the variables show the logged first difference as noted by Δ . For example, ΔG is the log of the first difference of gender inequality. The coefficient of ΔMedia will test Hypothesis 1. A statistically significant error correction term will indicate that media sustainability has a causal impact on gender inequality [3]. Hypothesis 1: A change in media sustainability leads to a decrease in gender inequality.

$$\text{Equation 2: } \Delta G = \sum [\alpha \Delta G_{t-L} + \beta_1 \Delta \text{Media}_{t-L} + \beta_2 \Delta \text{GDP}_{t-L}] + \lambda \text{EC}_{t-L} + \varepsilon_1$$

ΔG = log of first differences of gender inequality

ΔMedia = log of first differences of media sustainability

ΔGDP = log of first differences of GDP per capita

EC = Error Correction term

Hypothesis 2 will be tested using equation 3. The coefficient for ΔGDP will test the hypothesis. A significant EC term will indicate that there is a causal impact on gender inequality. Hypothesis 2: A change in GDP per capita leads to a decrease in gender inequality.

$$\text{Equation 3: } \Delta G = \sum [\alpha \Delta G_{t-L} + \beta_1 \Delta \text{Media}_{t-L} + \beta_2 \Delta \text{GDP}_{t-L}] + \lambda \text{EC}_{t-L} + \varepsilon_1$$

VI. Results

A. Analysis of Correlations

Test of correlations in Table 1 for logged independent variables show there is a weak degree of correlation between the two independent variables. This supports the proposition that multicollinearity does not exist in the data.

	Media	GDP per capita
Media	1.0000	
GDP per capita	.3428	1.0000

Table 1

B. Cointegration Results

Cointegration is based on finding relationships between variables that follow a first order process. The presence of a first order process can be tested to see if the series contain a unit root. After determining this, the error correction terms are analyzed to see if they should be included in the model. Each error term coefficient's size and statistical significance is an indicator of the tendency of each variable to return to equilibrium over the long run [3]. A significant error correction term is evidence of causality in at least one direction [3].

A univariate analysis of each of the error correction terms was undertaken to examine the presence of a unit root. The unit root test is tested using the Fisher test for unbalanced dataset. Table 4 reports the cointegration tests using Equation 1. The Fisher tests for cointegration using error-correction terms find evidence for cointegration.

Ho: A series has a unit root Variable Tested	Fisher Test Unbalanced Data p-Value
EC_Gender	.0000
EC_Media	.0000
EC_GDP	.0000

Table 2

The results of equation 1 are presented in Table 3. The $\ln \text{Media}$ index coefficient is negative, and it is the independent variable with the coefficient of the highest order magnitude (-.2174) in the regression. This indicates that Media appears to have the greater impact on gender inequality. The negative coefficient means that the $\ln \text{Media}$ index is negatively correlated with gender inequality. As media sustainability increases, gender inequality decreases. The $\ln \text{GDP}$ is negatively correlated with the gender inequality index; however, it is not significant.

	Panel Data		Sample =114 Adj R-squared = .0568
Independent Variable (ln):	Coefficient	P-Value	
Media	-.2174	.067	
GDP Per Capita	-.0305	.126	

Table 3

Results from the analysis of Equation 2 are shown in Table 4. The error correction term (EC) is significant and provides evidence that the independent variables, media and GDP per capita, Granger causes Gender Inequality. The coefficient on Media is significant has the correct sign. This indicates at a 10% increase in Media Sustainability is equal to an 18% decrease in the Gender Inequality index. The coefficient of GDP per capita is also significant and is also showing the correct sign. This means that a 10% increase GDP per capita is equal to a 3% decrease in the Gender Inequality index. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 has been supported by the data.

From Equation 2: Dependent Variable = Δ Gender			
	Coefficient		Sample Size = 83 Adj R-Squared = .9965
Error Correction Term	.9865719 (.0000)	***	
Δ Gender [1]	-.9949328 (.0000)	***	
Δ Media [1]	-.1791094 (.0000)	***	
Δ GDP [1]	-.0322649 (.0000)	***	
*** Statistically significant at the 99% confidence level (p-value)			
Number in brackets [] denotes appropriate lag length			

Table 4

The significance of the coefficient of GDP per capita in Table 4 leads to support of Hypothesis 2. This relationship indicates that a 10% increase in GDP per capita leads to a 3% decrease in the Gender Inequality index.

VII. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between Gender Inequality and Media Sustainability. This study looked at the following research question: What is the causal relationship between media sustainability and gender inequality? This study found empirical support for a causal relationship between media sustainability and gender inequality. The data showed that a 10% increase in media sustainability decreased gender inequality by 18%. The findings are consistent with the arguments presented in the literature review and suggest that increased media sustainability will decrease gender inequality in Africa. This suggests that as media is used to protect and promote free speech and provide citizens with reliable, objective news, women benefit through greater transparency and unified thought. This has significant implications for economic development as an increase in gender equality has shown to empower women and subsequently decrease poverty and improve education.

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