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Keeping up with the Dlaminis: perceived inequality and satisfaction with democracy

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Keeping up with the Dlaminis[1]: perceived inequality and satisfaction with democracy

Abstract

Does perceived inequality shape how satisfied ordinary Africans are with how democracy is functioning in their countries? In this paper, I use the most recent round of Afrobarometer data (collected from 2016 to 2018 in 34 countries, n=45812) to test whether satisfaction with democracy (SWD) is higher among people who feel that their living conditions are equal to others' or who feel that they are better off than other people. Controlling for country-level effects, I show that feeling better off than other people increases satisfaction, and feeling worse off than other people decreases satisfaction. I contribute to the literature by demonstrating that these relative assessments are significant and comparable in effect size to widely used predictors of satisfaction with democracy found in the literature, such as economic country-level evaluations, partisanship and political interest. These results therefore should encourage future research to include individual-level comparative assessments as predictors of SWD. This paper moreover represents the most recent cross-national re-examination of predictors of SWD in Africa. My regression results are widely in line with past empirical research, both in and outside of Africa, and suggest that SWD is primarily shaped by political and economic performance evaluations. This points to the explanatory model of SWD in Africa being relatively stable across time.

1. Introduction

In the past decade, much attention has been given in media and political debate to the possible negative effects of high income and wealth inequality on democracy.[2] At least since Piketty's tome 'Capital in the 21st century' became somewhat of a surprise commercial success and popular-culture phenomenon (Pinkser, 2014; Tracy, 2014; Wade, 2014; Sheil, 2016), a great deal has been said and debated

[1] According to Stats SA, Dlamini was the most common South African surname in 2018 (the most recent year for which data had been released) (Nxumalo, 2019).

[2] Of course, the debate on *consequences* of economic inequality on democracy was preceded by the measurement of rising levels of economic inequality since the 1970s. See for example: Bourguignon & Verdier, 2000; Alderson & Nielsen, 2002; Atkinson & Piketty, 2007; Brandolini & Smeeding, 2008.

about the consequences of high inequality on democratic systems. For example, reflecting on his much noted (and cited) 2012 book 'The price of inequality: how today's divided society endangers our future', Stiglitz (2015: 1) argues that

> Growing inequality within most countries around the world is one of the critical issues facing the world today. People everywhere sense that it is morally wrong. We sense that it cannot be justified. We sense that it is dividing our societies and undermining our democracies. And we are right in sensing this harm.

While Stiglitz assumes that the connection between economic inequality and democracy is somehow widely 'sensed' by people, closer empirical scrutiny of the linkage at the individual level is limited in the literature.[3] While there exists an ample literature on the linkages between equality and democracy from a theoretical (see Dahl 1973, 1989, 2006; Rueschemeyer, 2004, Schäfer, 2013) and historical perspective in the democratic transition literature (see Muller, 1988; Karl, 2000; Powell & Powell, 2000; Boix, 2003; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006; Houle, 2009; Haggard & Kaufman, 2012; Bonica et al., 2013) far less evidence is available at the individual level.

Many of the most unequal societies are in Africa, particularly southern and central Africa (Beegle et al. 2016). Even less empirical evidence is available regarding the possible connection with democracy in these cases. And indeed, looking at nationally representative Afrobarometer survey data from Round 5 (2011-2013) for 34 African countries, people do appear to associate equality with democracy.[4] In round 5, respondents were asked what the most essential characteristic of democracy is to them.[5] Respondents were asked four times to identify which of four options was the most essential characteristic of democracy. It is important to compare the response frequencies only to other responses within the response-option group, not across questions. In figure 1, below, I display the response frequencies for the first two response sets; the other two made no reference to

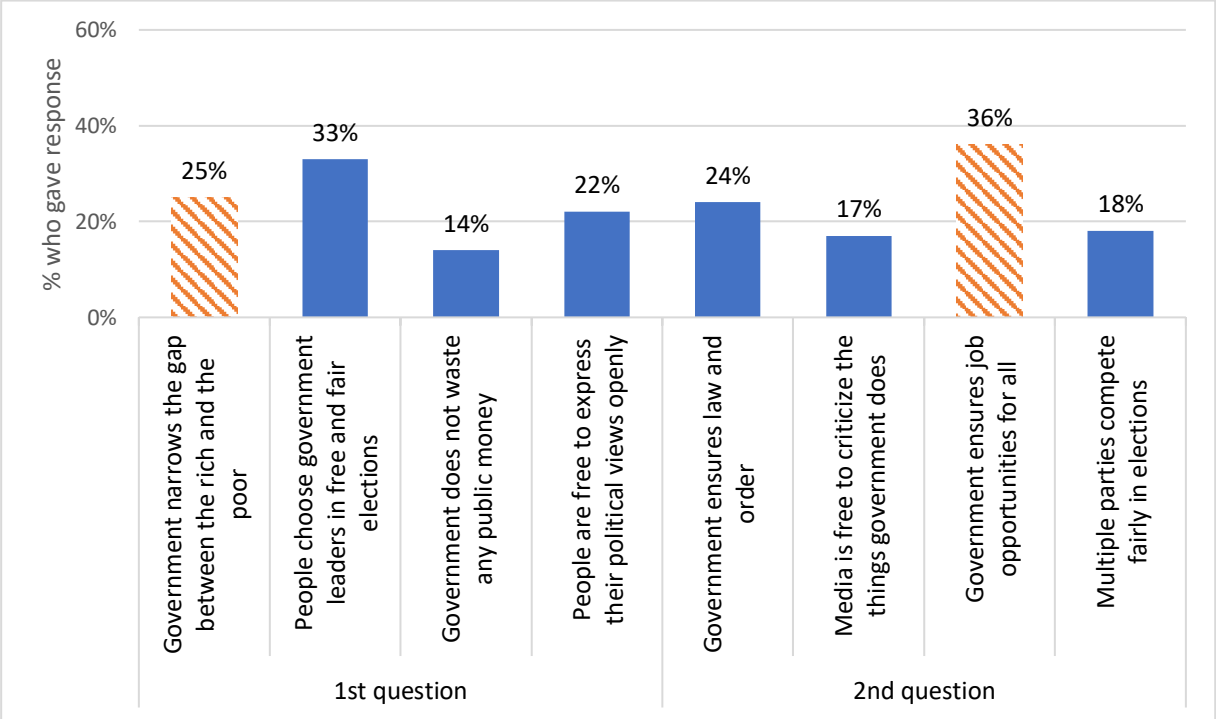
[3] Stiglitz (2012) argues that inequality allows greater concentration of political influence and power of a smaller and smaller monetary (and political) elite. This influence and power further accelerate economic inequality which leads to even greater political influence and power. Rather than catering to the people as a whole, Stiglitz argues that inequality leads to a smaller and smaller set of clients that the government and state cater for (epitomized in his description of the new democracy as 'Of the 1%, by the 1%, for the 1%') (Stiglitz, 2011).

[4] This question has not been asked in survey rounds since round 5. Round 5 data were collected in 34 countries between 2011 and 2013. For further information see http://afrobarometer.org/data/merged-round-5-codebook-34-countries-2011-2013-last-update-july-2015

[5] Respondents were asked: "Many things may be desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy. If you have to choose only one of the things that I am going to read, which one would you choose as the most essential characteristic of democracy?"

equality or equity. One in four respondents said that the most essential characteristic of democracy is that government narrows the gap between the rich and the poor. Narrowing income gaps was identified by more respondents than government efficiency and by about the same proportion as freedom of expression. Looking at the second set of response options, equal job opportunities was the most frequently mentioned characteristic of democracy (36%), more common than law and order (24%), multi-party competition (18%) and media freedom (17%). The responses suggest that notions of equality and equity are indeed tied to the term democracy in the minds of ordinary Africans.

Figure 1: Most essential characteristic of democracy. 34 countries. Afrobarometer Round 5 data (2011- 2013)



1.1 Research question, measurement and hypotheses

Despite the attention awarded to the linkage between economic inequality and democracy in past research, there is little research into the linkage at the individual-level,[6] especially in Africa.

[6] Studies have examined the relation between levels of inequality and social trust (Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005; Uslaner, 2008), participation and engagement (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995; Uslaner & Brown, 2005) and political representation (Bartels, 2009), and have linked these to the 'health' of democracy. Similarly, Rothstein (2011) has linked inequality (and corruption and social trust) to the quality of governance, which is linked to democracy (as democracies are typically of better quality of governance) although not synonymous with

In this paper I use a perceptual measure of economic inequality, as past research suggests that subjective perceptions of inequality often do not match up with objective measures of inequality (Loveless & Whitefield, 2011; Kuhn, 2011, 2019; Norton & Ariely, 2011; Chambers et al., 2014; Niehues, 2014; Gimpelson & Treisman, 2018). If people are to link levels of inequality to the functioning of democracy, it must be because they first perceive inequality in a certain way, and then evaluate this perception and decide that it is linked to the functioning of the political system. To capture subjective perceptions of inequality, I use an Afrobarometer question which asks respondents about their perceived relative living situation compared to other people in their country.[7]

To measure how people feel democracy is working in their country, I use 'satisfaction with democracy' (SWD), which is widely used in survey research and the literature in this way. The item asks respondents how satisfied they are with the way democracy works in their country.[8] As such, this paper asks:

Does the perceived relative living situation shape how satisfied Africans are with the functioning of democracy in their country?

To address the research question, I test two hypotheses while accounting for country differences using multi-level models. I employ the most recent round of survey data from the Afrobarometer (2016-2018, 34 African countries, n=45812).[9]

Given the descriptive evidence presented above, it is reasonable to assume that respondents evaluate how democracy is working by whether democracy is able to deliver what people appear to see as a core characteristic of democracy – equality. This argument is based on rational institutional theory which posits that satisfaction is rationally based and informed by how people evaluate institutional performance (Mishler & Rose, 2001). From a rational institutional perspective, it would therefore be reasonable to expect that people who feel equal to others (in

democracy. Moreover, these studies use aggregated data at sub national levels, or national level indicators, rather than an individual perspective.

[7] Throughout this paper I use the terms 'lived equality' and 'subjective experience of equality' interchangeably.

[8] In this paper I use Afrobarometer data. The survey asks respondents: "Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [respondents' country]?" See section 3.1 for further discussion.

[9] My data set includes the following countries: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, eSwatini, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

terms of their living situation) are also more satisfied with the way democracy is working than people who don't feel equal. As such the first hypothesis follows the rational institutional theory, and I expect that:

H1: Subjective lived equality increases satisfaction with democracy.

By subjective lived equality I mean the individual's perception that their living conditions are equal to others in the country. I have also included a short summary table (see table 1, below) to aid understanding of my core variables. However, from past research on the determinants of SWD – both for cases in and outside of Africa - it is known that egocentric considerations play an important role too. Studies found that being a voter for, or partisan of, the ruling party increases SWD (see sections 2.2 & 2.3 below). It is argued that the sense of being a 'winner' or beneficiary of the system (or more precisely the election), increases SWD, while feeling like a 'loser' reduces SWD. These findings suggest that people's satisfaction with the functioning of democracy is shaped, at least partially, by egocentric considerations. Rather than feeling equal, it might therefore be that feeling better off (superior) than others increases SWD. In line with an egocentric expectation, a competing hypothesis posits:

H2: Subjective relative economic superiority increases satisfaction with democracy.

By subjective relative economic superiority, I mean the individual's perception that their living condition is 'better' or 'much better' than the living conditions of other people in their country. For both H1 and H2 the respective null-hypothesis assumes that subjective lived equality or relative superiority are unrelated to SWD. As I am interested in how people perceive the functioning of democracy in their country, I exclude respondents who say that their country is not a democracy, or who say that they don't understand the term 'democracy'.[10]

Specifically, I use an Afrobarometer survey question which asks respondents how they feel their living situation compares to that of others in their country. I use this variable to compute a measure of both 'subjective relative equality' – tested in hypothesis 1 – and of 'subjective relative superiority' – tested in hypothesis 2. I provide a brief overview of the dependent and main predictor variables of this paper in table 1, below, and further discuss the variables in section 3.1.

[10] See discussion 3 in further detail.

Table 1: Dependent and main predictor variables of this paper

Variable name:	Question:	Response options and codes in original dataset:	Recoded as:	Explanation
Satisfaction with democracy (SWD)	Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [respondents' country]?	4-point scale: Not at all satisfied (coded as '1'), not very satisfied, fairly satisfied, very satisfied (4)	Not recoded	The objective is to capture how satisfied respondents are with the functioning of democracy in their country.
Subjective relative situation	In general, how do you rate your living conditions compared to those of other [nationals]?	5-point scale: 'much worse (coded as '1'), worse, same, better, much better' (5)	4 dummy variables are coded	The objective is to capture how respondents perceive their living situation compared to others (in their country)

By addressing this question, I touch upon several gaps in the literature: First, I provide an update to the SWD literature in Africa using the most recent round of available Afrobarometer data. In the literature, cross-national studies of predictors of SWD in Africa are few and far between, and to the best of my knowledge haven't used data collected in the most recent rounds of the Afrobarometer (2016-2018).[11] Second, I explore whether subjective relative situation is a predictor of SWD. While inequality has been touted to be a problem for democracy, little empirical scrutiny exists of this linkage from an individual perspective. Third, in a methodological contribution, I explore the value of using perception-based, relational individual-level measures in the context of understanding the implications of inequality.

1.2 Structure

This paper is structured as follows. I begin by overviewing the existing literature on determinants of satisfaction with democracy, and I discuss central tenets of the literature on democracy and objective and perceived equality, before introducing my measures of subjective lived equality and subjective relative economic superiority. In section 4 I construct a series of regression models to test whether perceptions of relative living conditions predict satisfaction with democracy.

[11] Memoli & Quaranta (2019) represent the most recent cross-national research on SWD in Africa. The authors use several rounds of Afrobarometer data collected between 2002 and 2013. Likewise, Guldbrandtsen & Skaaning (2010) use Round 3 data, collected in 2005, while Gold (2011) uses the first 4 rounds of Afrobarometer survey data (1999-2009).

1.3 Findings

My analysis suggests that feelings of both relative superiority and relative deprivation, rather than feeling equal to others, shape SWD. I find that even among respondents who say that equality is a core characteristic of democracy, feeling better off than others (rather than equal to them) is significantly associated with higher satisfaction with the way democracy is working. The effects for feeling relatively better off and relatively deprived are significant above and beyond (and comparable in size to) widely used predictors of SWD in the literature, such as political interest and political freedoms. This suggests that individual comparative assessments of living situation should be included in future research. The results moreover suggest that cross-time considerations strongly shape SWD. The findings in this paper provide an update to the literature on SWD in Africa. The results confirm previous research that suggests that both political and economic performance evaluations matter. This paper improves upon past research, showing that subjective comparisons play a significant role.

2. Theoretical background

Satisfaction with democracy (SWD) refers to a widely used survey item which asks respondents about the functioning of democracy in their country. While only slight variations exist of the SWD question across different surveys, ambiguity surrounds the conceptual meaning of SWD. Specifically, a debate exists regarding what dimension(s) of political support is (are) measured by SWD. In this section I first discuss the most common perspectives on what SWD captures as well as the critiques levelled against the SWD item, before overviewing the literature on the causes of SWD.

2.1 The concept of political support

Political support is commonly thought of as a summary term which describes attitudes that people have towards political entities. Following Easton (1965, 1975) political support may vary between 'objects' (i.e. "support is not all of a piece" (Easton, 1975: 437)) and simultaneously held attitudes may be divergent from one another. Seminal work by Easton (1965, 1975) suggested that political support could be thought of a ranging from diffuse to specific, depending on what 'object' support was directed towards. Table 2, above, displays the continuum from diffuse to specific support, along with the respective level of analysis, affective orientations and evaluations. Diffuse support describes support or acceptance of the basic political community. Specific support on the other hand describes support for incumbents – those who hold office – and their performance. A central 'dimension' of support – neither entirely diffuse nor entirely specific – regards the political regime, which summarizes rules and institutions. Specific support tends to be shorter lived and fluid, as incumbents lose support over failed

promises or bad policy, and opposition candidates win hearts and minds. Conversely, diffuse support tends to be more stable and long lasting. Easton argued that a regime can survive for some time without strong (specific) incumbent support, but not without (more diffuse) regime or political community support. Subsequent work by Norris (1999) has since refined Easton's threefold distinction into a five-fold scale. Norris (1999) includes Easton's two most diffuse levels – political community and regime – but divides incumbent support into three categories: regime performance, regime institutions and authorities.

Table 2: Classification of political support (Adapted from Norris (1999) and Dalton (2004)

	Level of Analysis	*Affective Orientations*	*Evaluations*
Diffuse Support ↑	Political Community	National pride Sense of national identity	Best nation to live in
	Regime: Principles	Democratic values	Democracy best form of government
	Regime: Performance	Participatory norms Political rights	Evaluations of rights **Satisfaction with democratic process**
	Regime: Institutions	Institutional expectations Support party government Output expectations	Performance judgments Trust in institutions Trust party system Trust bureaucracy
↓ Specific Support	Authorities	Identify with party	Candidate evaluations Party support

2.2 What does SWD measure?

Widely, it is understood that the SWD question taps some form of political support, but it is disputed as to which dimension(s) of political support specifically. Despite its wide use in survey research, much criticism regarding the validity and reliability has been laid upon the SWD measure as used in most survey research. This question asks respondents:

> On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in [country]?

This question item has been criticized for lacking clear reference as to what exactly the respondent is asked to assess or refer to, as well as lacking any reference to time. Moreover, as Canache et al. (2001: 511) point out, the

respondents are "implicitly required to contrast the actual nature of democracy with some standard of performance". Much of the literature on democracy acknowledges that democracy probably means different things to different people and in different contexts. As such, asking respondents to compare the 'democratic reality' with their personal idea and ideal of what democracy ought to entail, may limit the comparability of results (Kuechler, 1991). As Thomassen (1995: 383) notes, SWD reflects the respondents "felt discrepancy between democratic norms and the actual democratic process". However, it is unclear from the question alone what the said norms may be and they are probably sensitive to time and place. SWD may also be limited due to different meanings across time for the same country. Salient issues at a given time may 'bubble up' to the forefront of respondents' minds and are likely to shape what respondents base their responses on (Adcock & Collier, 2001; Canache et al., 2001; Linde & Ekman, 2003). Lastly, Canache et al. (2001) suggest that because the SWD question lacks any specific reference, responses are probably influenced by survey context. This may compromise the comparability and thus reliability of evidence produced across different surveys and survey rounds. Most basically, however, the question leaves unclear what dimension of political support it taps into. In the following paragraphs I shall briefly touch upon three different perspectives on this issue.

As the question itself does not specify which dimension respondents are being queried about, the literature contains various views and arguments as to what respondents are likely basing their responses on, and, consequently, what the variable should be seen to be measuring. In the literature, three arguments as to what SWD captures can be distinguished. [12]

First, some argue that SWD captures incumbent, or specific support, and that SWD is understood as an indicator of support for incumbent authorities. The argument is largely based on the question wording, noting that "the phrase 'how democracy works' cues survey respondents to contemplate the outputs of incumbent authorities" (Canache et al. 2001: 507).

A second perspective is that SWD captures system support, meaning the functioning of political institutions and the "constitutional reality" (Fuchs et al. 1995: 328) that respondents live in (Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Klingemann, 1999). From this perspective, SWD is neither a measure of diffuse nor specific support but an 'in-between' dimension of political support (Fuchs 1993). Fuchs (1993) argued that the functioning of democracy refers to "the informal structure of the regime; in the generalization hierarchy it is between attitudes in respect to the formal structure and those in respect to the authorities" (Fuchs, 1993: 240).

[12] The structure of this discussion section is based on the useful literature summary by Canache et al. (2001).

The perspective emphasizes that SWD captures perception of the functioning of the system, linking SWD to outputs and actual performance, rather than abstract comparisons between regime types on paper. As Kuechler (1991) argues, SWD represents the "emotionally-biased running tally that citizens keep on the performance of a system" (Kuechler 1991, 280).

The third perspective argues that SWD is best understood as a summary indicator of several dimensions of political support. As noted above, empirical studies often find that SWD is significantly correlated to both diffuse and specific support (Kaase, 1988; Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Anderson, 2002).[13] While Fuchs (1993) has argued that this correlation suggests that SWD captures an 'in-between' dimension of political support, others have argued that the correlation with multiple dimensions suggests that SWD is best considered a summary measure (Clarke et al. 1993). Widely, empirical scrutiny has found SWD to be correlated to both regime support and incumbent support. However, Canache et al (2001) argue, the correlation results obtained by Clarke et al. (1993) could also be interpreted in a different way, namely that people simply interpret the question in different ways: as pertaining to support for the community, or as pertaining to the regime or the incumbent authorities. This ambiguity has led some to argue that SWD should not be used because the ambiguity is unacceptable and SWD does not aid in understanding different dimensions of political support. Norris (1999), for example, argues that SWD means different things to different people and that the instrument is value laden. Rather, she proposes to use a scale combining confidence in both political and civic institutions.[14] On the other hand, Anderson (2002) has argued that all dimensions of political support suffer some level of collinearity, and the criticism thus does not only apply to SWD. As such, all measures of political support dimensions are ambiguous to some extent.[15]

[13] Diffuse support is typically measured as how much people support democracy as a regime type. Hereby, the question wording makes no reference to the country of the respondents, but rather queries support for democracy in principle. For example, Afrobarometer asks respondents: "Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion? Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government; Statement 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable; Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have." Conversely, specific support taps how much someone supports the incumbent authorities, such as the president. While no one question is used to capture specific support, positive character evaluations of elected representatives (honesty, responsiveness), approval of politicians, and trust in representatives, are commonly found in the literature as measures of specific support. See Norris (2011, p19ff).

[14] Rose et al. (1998) propose yet a different approach by including a set of questions which explicitly avoid using the term 'democracy'.

[15] See also Fuchs (1993). Given the wide application of the SWD question, and especially given the prolonged debate over the validity and reliability of the SWD question in the literature, it is puzzling why the question has not been reformulated, or why similar questions have not been posed together to understand variations in what is being queried and understood by respondents, or why plain and straightforward follow-up questions have not been introduced into surveys.

In the context of my cases, a clearer understanding of meaning of SWD can be gauged by testing for association between the SWD measure in the Afrobarometer survey and the measures of other dimensions of political support (which are displayed in table 2, above). Table 3 below, displays the Pearson's correlation analysis between SWD and support for democracy (as a measure of diffuse support), trust in institutions, as well as perceived performance of and trust in the president (as a measure of specific support).

Table 3: Correlation between support for, and satisfaction with, democracy. 34 countries. Afrobarometer R7 data (2016-2018)

		Support for democracy	**Satisfaction with democracy**	**Trust in institutions**	**Performance: President**
Satisfaction with democracy	Pearson Corr.	**0.124****	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000			
	N	36981	37800		
Trust in institutions	Pearson Corr.	**0.063****	**0.319****	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		
	N	34368	34560	35294	
Performance: President	Pearson Corr.	**0.049****	**0.340****	**0.359****	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	33475	33655	31645	34551
Trust president	Pearson Corr.	**0.070****	**0.347****	**0.581****	**0.548****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	36577	36759	34923	33925
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

The results suggest that in the context of my cases, SWD is more closely associated with more specific measures of political support than it is with a more diffuse measure, such as support for democracy. Moreover, it appears that SWD is equally associated with support for regime institutions ($r(34560)=0.319$, $p<0.001$; measured as trust in said institutions) as it is with support for authorities (performance of the president: $r(33655)=0.340$, $p<0.001$; trust in the president: $r(36759)=0.347$, $p<0.001$). In both cases, the correlation coefficient suggests low to moderate association between the three items, suggesting some shared variance. Furthermore, using a factor and reliability analysis, I was able to confirm that SWD, institutional trust and presidential performance do not reflect an underlying factor.[16]

Such questions could follow up on the respondent's answer and would shed insight into what or whom the respondent is referring to when they say they are 'satisfied' or 'dissatisfied'.

[16] I also conducted a factor analysis using Principal Axis Factoring factor extraction and Promax rotations (converged in 3 iterations). I additionally included demand for democracy, a measure of diffuse support. The factor analysis produced 2 factors. The first factor includes only the

In light of the debate surrounding the SWD item, described above, the results suggest that SWD in the context of my cases must probably be understood as an 'in-between' dimension of political support. The correlation and factor analyses suggest that SWD is only minimally related to more diffuse support. Conversely, some overlap exists between SWD and more specific support, such as trust in institutions and performance evaluations of the president. This overlap, however, is not sufficient to motivate collapsing SWD and said measures.

2.3 Inequality and satisfaction with democracy

Somewhat surprisingly, given the strong interest in the media and public debate, only a limited literature exists scrutinizing the effect of inequality on SWD. In a study of 25 European countries in the mid-2000s, Schäfer (2012) found that country-level income inequality reduced satisfaction with democracy, especially among the more developed western European states. Schäfer found that trust in institutions and incumbents, as well as more positive views of the economy and personal income, significantly improved satisfaction. Similar results were also obtained by Anderson & Singer (2008) in a study of 20 European countries using European Social Survey data from 2002-2003. Anderson & Singer (2008) found that higher country levels of income inequality significantly reduced satisfaction with democracy. This effect was especially strong among those respondents who self-categorized as being on the left, but was not moderated by the respondent's absolute income.

These significant results may, however, not hold elsewhere. In what to date appears to be the broadest study on inequality and SWD, Han & Chang (2016) used data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) project, consisting of 76 cross-national election surveys in 43 countries between 2001 and 2011 (CSES module 2 and 3).[17] South Africa was the only case in Africa. Unlike Schäfer (2012) and Anderson & Singer (2008), Han & Chang (2016) found no significant effect of (country-level) income inequality on SWD. But they did report a strong interaction effect between income inequality and winner-loser status. This meant that the effect of being a winner or loser strengthened as income inequality increased. What is more, their models also suggested that, once the

measures of diffuse support (support and demand for democracy) and has an Eigenvalue of 1,728, explaining 22,3% of the variance. The second factor includes SWD, trust in situations and performance of incumbents. This factor has an Eigenvalue of 1.502 and accounts for 19.527% of variance. I next used a reliability analysis to test the internal reliability of the factor. The result (alpha=0.408) did not meet an acceptable threshold, suggesting that the three items were not indicative of an underlying factor.

[17] The CSES itself consist of more surveys. Han and Chang included only surveys in which SWD was available and excluded countries which could not be considered a democracy in the election year (using Cheibub et al.'s (2010) dichotomous variable of democracy).

interaction between income inequality and winner-loser status was considered, the interaction between the winner-loser distinction and the electoral system was insignificant. As Han & Chang concluded, this suggested that "the mediating effect of income inequality on the relationship between democratic satisfaction and winner-loser status eclipses the mediating effect of electoral systems" (2016: 91).

None of the work reported by Schäfer (2012), Anderson & Singer (2008) and Han & Chang (2016) included a perception based, individual-level, measure of inequality. And generally, research linking individual-level perceptual or attitudinal measures of inequality and SWD is limited. Kang (2015), in a study of Korean attitudes towards democracy, used an Asian barometer survey question from 2006 which asked respondents whether economic inequality causes them great concern. Kang (2015) found that Koreans who reported being concerned about economic inequality were significantly less satisfied with democracy in their country.

Research using perception-based measures for African cases is therefore limited. In a study of ten African countries,[18] Cho (2004) found evidence of perceived relative situation being a significant predictor of more SWD in eight of his ten countries.[19] The effect of perceived relative situation was larger than of interest in politics in all eight cases. It was comparable or larger in size to perceived national economic performance in six countries (Mali, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Tanzania, Malawi and Botswana). These results suggested that both national and individual economic considerations played a role in how respondents evaluated democracy and how satisfied they were with the functioning thereof. In Zimbabwe and Nigeria, perceived relative situation was moreover equal in size to being a partisan.[20] To the best of my knowledge, no other study has examined the linkage between perceptions of individual inequality and SWD in Africa.[21]

Data from the Afrobarometer has frequently been used in the past to capture horizontal, group-based, perceptions of inequality in the study of group

[18] The dataset that Cho used included the following countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

[19] Cho chose to run country models for each of the 10 countries, rather than a single analysis accounting for country effects. The effect of perceived relative situation was significant in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Malawi, Mali, Botswana and South Africa. The effect was not significant in Lesotho and Mali.

[20] Cho (2004) coded people who said they feel close to the ruling party, or to no party, as 'winners' and people who said they feel close to the opposition party as 'losers'. Cho coded people who felt close to any party (ruling or opposition) as 'partisans' and people who did not feel close to a party as 'non- partisan'.

[21] Cho never referred to this variable as a measure of perceived inequality.

mobilization (Langer, 2005) and conflict (Stewart et al., 2008; Langer et al., 2009; Brown & Langer, 2010; Langer & Stewart, 2015).

From the overview of the literature, little evidence is available of whether perceptions of inequality shape satisfaction with democracy. This paper therefore represents the first attempt at testing this linkage cross-nationally for cases in Africa. To assess whether any finding is of value to future modeling of SWD, it is important first to understand what is understood to be informing SWD. In the following sections I provide an oversight of the broader literature on predictors of SWD.

2.4 Predictors of satisfaction with democracy?

Past research has pointed to a number of predictors of satisfaction with democracy. A number of these predictors can be summarized as perceived positive performance, both political and economic. These findings support the rational institutional theory which posits that satisfaction is rationally based and informed by how people evaluate institutional performance (Mishler & Rose, 2001). For example, economic performance is widely noted as a predictor of satisfaction with democracy (Powell, 1982; Lewis-Beck, 1988; Evans & Whitefield, 1995; Mishler & Rose, 1996; Carlsen, 2000; Kim, 2009). On the other hand, research has also pointed to political performance such as adherence to rule of law, as well as low corruption, increasing satisfaction with democracy (Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Anderson & Tverdova, 2003; Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Guldbrandtsen & Skaaning, 2010; Norris, 2011; Linde, 2012; Ariely, 2013; Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014; Stockemer & Sundström, 2014; Christmann & Torcal, 2017; van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2017). And other aspects of 'good governance', and what democracy stands for intrinsically, appear to produce satisfaction with democracy as well. Empirical studies have suggested that accountable government, individual freedoms and rights, procedural integrity in decision-making process and feeling represented by elected officials may increase satisfaction with democracy (Hofferbert & Klingemann, 1999; Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Aarts & Thomassen, 2008; Norris, 2011; Quaranta & Martini, 2016; Christmann, 2018).

Performance evaluations may be important as they allow people to make judgements about the system as a whole without needing to be too informed about the day to day work of government. As Anderson & Guillory note, perceived performance is important because

> performance evaluations shape the reputation of political institutions and of the political system as a whole. Because the policy process involves multiple governmental agents and a lengthy gestation period, citizens have more evidence available about the system as an

> institutional design for problem solving than about specific political actors (Anderson & Guillory, 1997: 72).

But positive performance can also be more fundamental. In democratic systems, representation is closely linked to elections. The literature on satisfaction with democracy has produced a strong argument which posits that feeling represented is not as important as feeling one is an election 'winner'. The 'winner/loser hypothesis' introduces institutional features as predictors of satisfaction with democracy. The hypothesis argues that people who support the 'winning' party in elections will consequently perceive their interests to be better represented than those who support a 'losing' party. Subsequent research has linked this 'winner/loser' effect to the electoral system. Majoritarian systems tend to favour larger parties while commonly disfavouring smaller parties. In single-member districts, a large share of the electorate may thus fail to be represented, making them de- facto 'losers'. Conversely, proportional, or consensual systems allow greater access to legislation for smaller parties and a greater chance for smaller parties (and hence interests) to be represented, or even for smaller parties to participate in a coalition government. This is because majoritarian and proportional systems have fundamentally different principles of representation. In majoritarian systems, 'the majority' rules, in proportional systems, 'as many people as possible' rule (Lijphart, 1984: 4). Importantly, the argument is not that one system creates more satisfaction than the other, but that the type of electoral systems interact with being a winner or loser. In majoritarian systems, being a 'loser' is more detrimental to satisfaction as majoritarian system tend to be more polarized. Conversely, in consensual or proportional systems, being a 'loser' is less detrimental as smaller parties are more likely to coalesce and the distance between government and opposition is likely to be smaller.

2.5 Evidence on SWD in Africa

Research about cases in Africa is far less common than research about cases of the global north. Much of the available empirical research of SWD in the African context is based on the availability of cross-country data collected by the Afrobarometer since the late 1990s. As will become evident in the discussion below, research employing the Afrobarometer SWD question has operationalized the variable in slightly different forms and assumed different levels of measurement over the years. This makes a clear and direct comparison of results across studies difficult.

Guldbrandtsen & Skaaning (2010) used Afrobarometer Round 3 data for 2005 to test the effect of system performance on SWD. Their data set contains 18 countries, although Zimbabwe and Uganda are excluded on the grounds of not

meeting any minimal definition of democracy.[22] Guldbrandtsen & Skaaning (2010) used SWD as a continuous 5-point scale ranging from 'very satisfied' as the most positive response to 'this country is not a democracy' as the most negative response. Using a multi-level regression model, the authors found that SWD was significantly shaped by the perceived country's economic situation, past Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, perceived election quality and fair treatment under the law. Likewise, the authors found that political interest and generalized trust were strongly associated with more SWD. These findings point to both egocentric and sociotropic considerations shaping SWD. The results further indicate that while both micro- and macroeconomic explanations are important to consider, only micro-level political ones appear to be relevant. The authors found no significant association between SWD and free elections and civil liberties, respectively. In line with Bratton & Mattes (2001), Guldbrandtsen & Skaaning concluded that SWD in the context of Africa is informed by both perceived economic performance and perceived political performance.

Similar results in terms of economic performance were also obtained by Memoli & Quaranta (2019) in a study of 32 African countries using 85 Afrobarometer country-surveys collected between 2002 and 2013. Unlike Guldbrandtsen & Skaaning (2010), Memoli & Quaranta used SWD as an ordinal variable and ran an ordinal logistic multilevel model accounting for time at level 2 and country at level 3. The models suggest that government performance evaluations in terms of handling the economy and corruption as well as the country's economic situation are significantly associated with SWD. [23]

Past research for cases outside of Africa have pointed to strong winner/loser differences in SWD. However, the studies discussed so far for African cases did not include variables to test or control for such effects. In an earlier study of 10 African countries using Afrobarometer Round 1 data (1999-2001), Cho (2004)

[22] The findings discussed in this section results from a model which included the following cases: Tanzania, Ghana, Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa, Botswana, Senegal, Kenya, Mali, Benin, Cape Verde, Lesotho, Madagascar, Zambia, Malawi and Nigeria.

[23] Memoli & Quaranta (2019) didn't include political performance evaluations as such. They did, however, include an index of 'economic freedom'. This country-year index is taken from the Heritage Foundation and The Wall Street Journal and comprises "four areas of economic freedom – rule of law, government size, regulatory efficiency, and market openness" (Memoli & Quaranta, 2019: 1933). The authors found that positive economic performance evaluations and economic freedom had a conditional association with satisfaction with democracy. In the past, rule of law has been used as a measure of political performance and it could be argued that the same applies to regulatory efficiency and market openness. As such, while not directly stated by the authors, their significant finding of freedom of the economy being associated with SWD probably largely reflects effects found by studies linking political performance to SWD. The conditional effect described above, probably reflects the widely accepted collinearity between political and economic performance evaluations.

found that both election winners (defined as feeling close to the ruling party or to no party) and partisans (defined as people who feel close to any party) were significantly more satisfied with democracy than election-losers and non-partisans.[24] These effects were significant even when controlling for national economic performance, interest in politics and perceived relative situation (discussed above).[25] Cho's (2004) results moreover suggested that the government structure (presidential or parliamentary system) mediates the relation described above, with losers in presidential systems being more dissatisfied than losers in parliamentary systems.

But respondents may also draw from beyond the individual and country level. Gold (2011) conducted a multi-level model of 20 countries for Afrobarometer rounds 1 to 4 (1999-2009) using SWD as a recoded binary outcome variable (very/ fairly satisfied vs. not very/ not at all satisfied). The results suggest that (ethnic) group-based, meso-level considerations and grievances also shaped SWD in the context of sub-Saharan Africa. Gold concluded that these and individual level predictors of SWD, such as level of education and personal living conditions, were held simultaneously.

2.6. Conclusion

In this section I overviewed the empirical literature, for cases both within and outside of Africa, on predictors of satisfaction with democracy. To date, only a limited literature exists testing the effect of inequality on satisfaction with democracy for cases outside of Africa, and even less literature exists for cases in Africa. Of course, the question arises whether cases in Africa should be expected to perform differently from cases elsewhere. A comparison of the predictors of SWD present in the literature, for cases in and outside of Africa, suggests that this is not the case (at least empirically). For cases both outside of and in Africa, research suggests that positive performance evaluations in political and economic matters enhance satisfaction, as does a sense of being a 'winner' of the system (by having voted for, or being a partisan of, the ruling party). Some uncertainty exists in the literature on what exactly SWD measures, and I used correlation and factor analysis to establish that, in the context of my cases, SWD is not a measure of diffuse support for the democracy system in principle, but rather associated with support for the incumbent and the institution. Next, I discuss the data and variables that I shall be employing to test the hypotheses laid out in the introduction.

[24] Cho (2004) operationalized SWD as an ordinal variable and ran ordered-logit models.

[25] Respondents were asked: National Economic Performance: "How satisfied are you with your life now compared to one year ago?" Personal Economic conditions: "Now let us speak about your personal economic conditions. Would you say they are worse, the same, or better than other people in (your country)?" Cho refers to this variable as the 'personal economic condition'. However, I do not agree with this name as it conveys the idea of a measure of an absolute condition, rather than a measure of relative conditions.

3. Data and method

For my analysis I employ Afrobarometer survey data (Round 7), which were collected between September 2016 and September 2018 in 34 African countries.[26] The survey was conducted face-to-face, in the respondent's choice of language, using nationally representative samples.[27] The dataset consists of 45812 cases, clustered in 34 countries. Country samples range from 1193 (Guinea) to 2400 (Tanzania, Ghana), yielding an error rate of 2% (n=2400) and 3% (n=1200), respectively. I exclude respondents who said their country is 'not a democracy' as it is unclear whether their response should be considered a factual statement or an evaluation which fits into the scale as an extreme, negative statement.[28] Moreover, these respondents are excluded from the analysis as it is of little value to ask respondents how satisfied they are with the way democracy is working in their country, if they do not believe their country is a democracy.[29] This leaves n=39092.

[26] My data set includes the following countries: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, eSwatini, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

[27] I apply national weights to ensure gender parity in each country. For a full description of the sampling process, see Afrobarometer, 2020.

[28] I exclude respondents based on two survey questions. First, I exclude respondents who said that their country is not a democracy, or that they don't understand either the question or the term democracy, in response to the question: "In your opinion how much of a democracy is [country] today?" Respondents are read out options ('Not a democracy' (1), 'A democracy, with major problems' (2), 'A democracy, but with minor problems' (3), 'A full democracy' (4).), as well as it being noted if respondents say they 'don't know' or refuse to answer the question. I also exclude respondents who said 'the country is not a democracy' when asked how satisfied they are with the function of democracy in their country.
In the dataset, 830 said that their country is not a democracy in the context of SWD, and 5616 said their country is not a democrcay in the context of evalauting the extent of democracy. I exclude respondents from the analysis who said their country 'was not a democrcay' to either question. I moreover exclude respondents who said they 'don't understand the term democracy' (which is a response option in the 'extent of democracy' question. See appendix 1 for further details. I generally exclude cases from the analysis who said they 'didn't know' or refused to answer, or where data was missing.

[29] Note that this approach is different to Guldbrandtsen & Skaaning (2010) (discussed above), who excluded Uganda and Zimbabwe on the grounds that the countries do not meet a minimalist definition of democracy. However, respondents in both countries may think they do live in democracies. In fact, the authors (p. 166) showed that Ugandans report the fifth highest satisfaction with democracy among the countries they considered. Conversely, respondents in countries that were included in the study by Guldbrandtsen & Skaaning (2010) may not feel that their country is a democracy. For this reason – and because I am interested in micro-level relations – I choose to exclude and include cases based on perceptions and evaluations reported by respondents, rather than expert country-ratings.

Due to the sampling framework (which is nationally representative) the data is clustered within country units. It is therefore recommended to use multilevel modeling (MLM), as a single level analysis would not account for variation in the slopes and intercepts of the predictor variables across clusters (country-units) within the data. These differences can be accounted for by including a second level in the analysis. My level 1 analysis is at the individual level, while my level 2 analysis is at the national level. One of the possible issues with my data is that my n at level 2 (country) is relatively small (n=34), compared to the n (n>39000) at level 1 (individual). Ideally, data used in an MLM analysis is structured with a large n at level 2 and a small n at level 1 (Albright & Marinova, 2015). A possible problem arising from my data could be the overestimation of effect size due to the limited case number at level 2. Data with low case numbers at level 2 tend to yield overly small effect sizes when using a random slope model. As such I test only random intercept models. To establish whether a multi-level model is warranted, I begin by establishing whether the estimates of covariance parameters are significant. MLM analysis allows for two estimation modes: maximum likelihood and restricted maximum likelihood. Restricted maximum likelihood (REML) is advised to be used when the case number at level two is relatively small. This is the case in my data set as I use only 34 country cases. To test whether clustering at the country level is significant, I first run a null-model with no predictor variable. The estimates of covariance parameters are significant at the 1% level. To further confirm the necessity for an MLM analysis, I calculate the interclass correlation coefficient (ICC) for the dependent variable. Indeed (using REML estimation), the ICC meets the minimum threshold of 0.05.[30]

3.1 Dependent variable: Satisfaction with democracy

I use an Afrobarometer survey item to measure satisfaction with democracy. The question follows a widely used question text and answer format and reads:

> Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [respondents' country]?

Four response options were read out to the respondent, ranging from 'not very satisfied' to 'very satisfied'. Unlike the more diffuse question about support for democracy as a regime type, this question asks respondents to reflect on the situation in their specific country.[31] As such, satisfaction with democracy gauges an evaluation rather than an attitude or value. The question posed in the

[30] The ICC for Satisfaction with democracy (0.13) meets the minimum threshold.

[31] The question in Afrobarometer on support for democracy reads: "Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion? Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government; Statement 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable; Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have." See appendix 4 for more details on the dependent variable.

Afrobarometer closely follows the well-established 'satisfaction with democracy' survey item which has been asked and subsequently analyzed in the existing literature. A slight departure from the standard SWD item is that the question used by Afrobarometer does not mention the response options in the question itself.[32] A limitation to this variable is that no context is give as to what the respondent thinks democracy ought to deliver or entail or what specifically they are dissatisfied with. A dissatisfied citizen could therefore mean that democracy is functioning in that country, but maybe that citizen has a different view of what democracy should be or is dissatisfied with the incumbent or their performance. Moreover, the question text and response option may lead respondents to be less likely to say that the country 'is not a democracy' (which isn't read out but captured by the interviewer should the respondents give such assessment) as the question and the answers that are read out may suggest to respondents that the country is in fact a democracy, or that the interviewer (or who the interview is believed to be representing) thinks the country is a democracy. Evidence for this can be found when looking at the number of respondents who say 'the country is not a democracy' when asked in the context of SWD, compared to being asked about the extent of democracy in their country (to which 'the country is not a democracy' is read out). In the former cases, 830 respondents said 'the country is not a democracy. In the latter case, 5616 said 'the country is not a democracy'. Given this limitation, I exclude respondents who said 'the country is not a democracy' to either question.[33]

Across the 34-country sample (n=37902)[34] almost half of respondents are either 'not very satisfied' (30%) or 'not at all satisfied' (17%), while half are 'very satisfied' (16%) or 'fairly satisfied' (36%) (see first bar in figure 2, below). Large country variations emerge however, once responses are grouped by country.[35] For example, while large majorities in Tanzania (80%), Ghana (80%), Sierra Leone (68%) and Namibia (68%) are satisfied (fairly satisfied + very satisfied), 87% of Gabonese and 85% of Malagasy are dissatisfied (not very satisfied + not at all satisfied).[36]

[32] The widely used standard format for the SWD question reads: "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in {country}?"

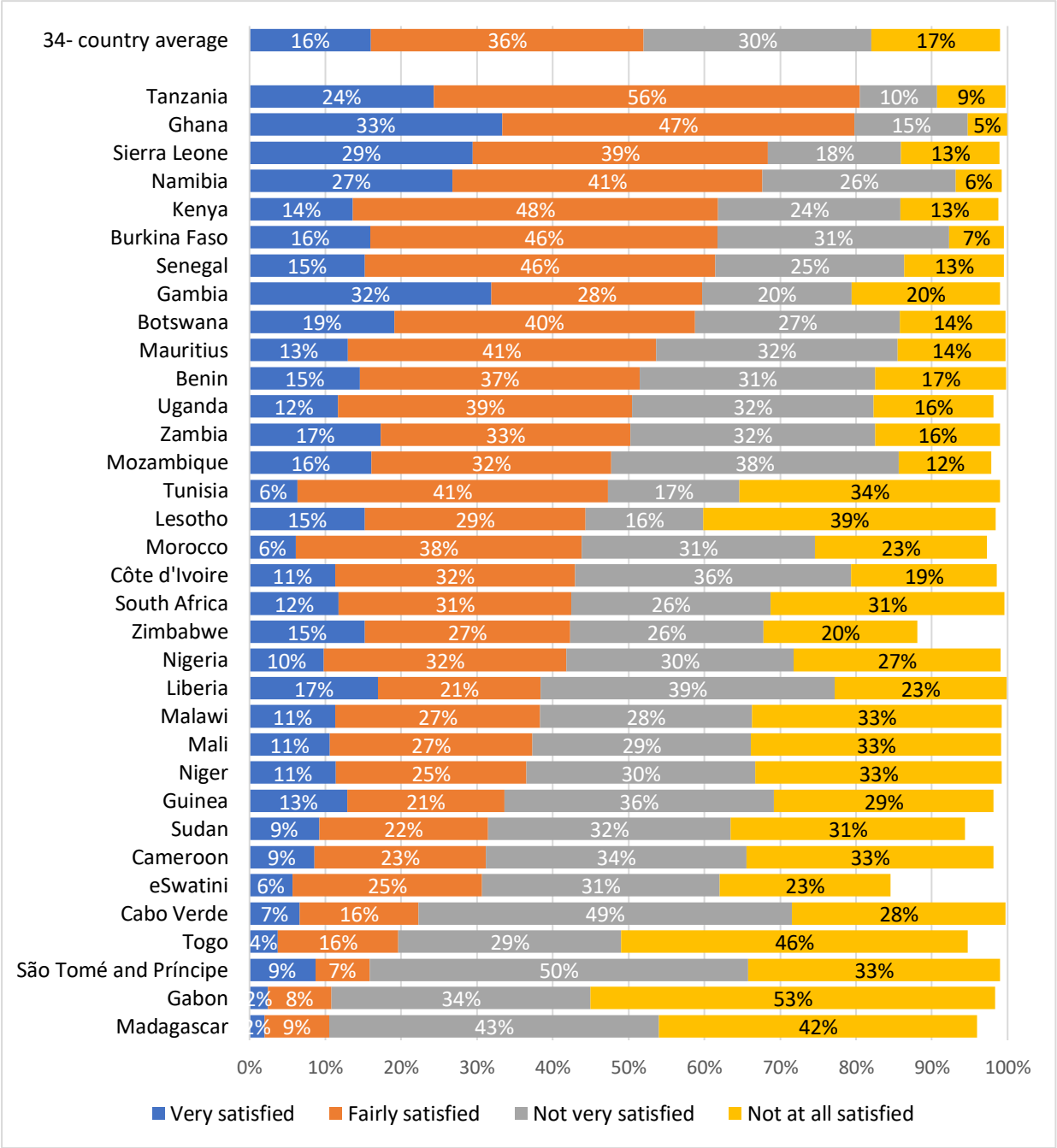
[33] See appendix 1 for the crosstabulation between SWD and extent of democracy.

[34] I exclude missing data as well as respondents who refused to answer (n=90) or said they didn't know (n=1100). The percentages reflect the unweighted percentages, meaning that larger country-samples account for a large share of the data used. The data is weighted at country level to ensure gender parity.

[35] The data is not weighted by population size, but I do apply weights within country datasets to ensure gender parity.

[36] In the literature, some authors suggest using a broader conceptualization of political support by distinguishing between demand for, and supply of, democracy. Hereby, demand for democracy refers to how much people want democracy (support democracy as a regime type

Figure 2: Satisfaction with democracy. By country. 34 countries. Afrobarometer Round 7 data (2016- 2018)



and reject non-democratic regime types), while supply of democracy refers to how much they think they are getting. The latter includes SWD as well as a measure of perceived extent of democracy, which asks respondents how democratic they feel their country is. Analogous to how SWD varies markedly between the countries in the Round 7 data, so too does the association between SWD and the perceived extent for democracy vary by country. For example, the association between the two is $r(1788)=0.34$; $p<0.01$ for South Africa, but $r(1059)=0.833$; $p<0.01$ for Zimbabwe. I also tested for internal reliability if I were to collapse SWD and extent of democracy. The reliability test did not meet the threshold (Cronbach's alpha=0.683). I therefore decided not to collapse the two measures into a single measure of supply for democracy. See appendix 2 for a list of correlation results by country.

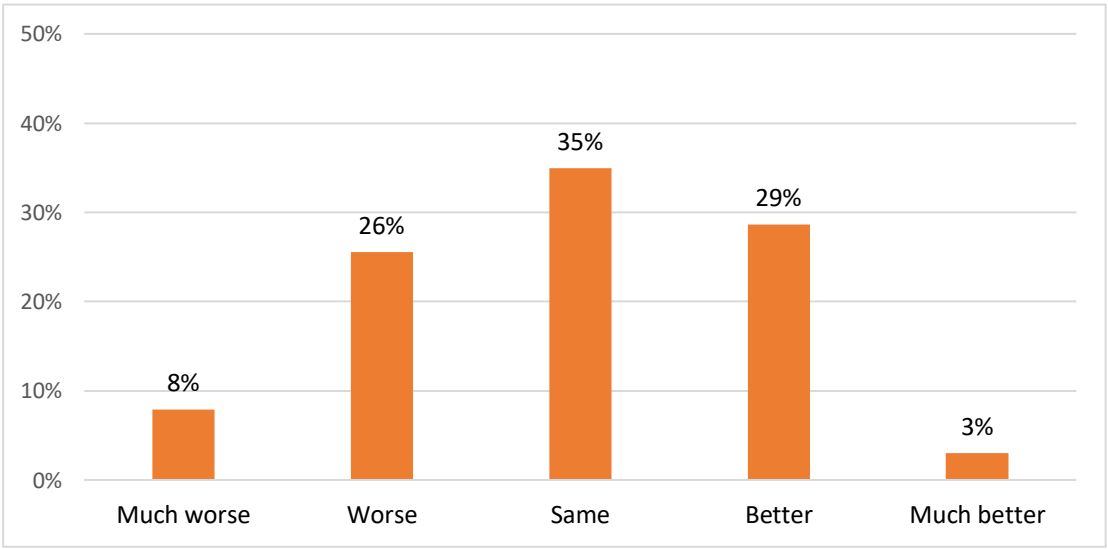
3.2 Predictor variables

In this section I discuss the two main predictors of this paper – subjective lived equality and subjective relative economic superiority. Both predictors are computed from the variable 'subjective relative living situation'.

3.2.1 Subjective lived equality

Subjective lived equality is coded from a survey question which asks respondents how they feel their living situation compares to other people in their country.[37] This variable makes no reference to what 'living situation' refers to. Substantive responses to this item are 'much worse (coded as '1'), worse, same, better, much better' (coded as '5'). I recode this variable by coding '3' if people say their living situation is 'the same', '2' if people say they are 'better' or 'worse' off than others and '1' if they say it is 'much better' or 'much worse'. By recoding the variable in this way, I am interested in how equal or unequal respondents perceive themselves to be, compared to others, rather than their subjective superior or inferior placement compared to others. I am therefore assuming that someone who feels much better off than others and much worse off than others, feel equally unequal from others. I use the term 'lived equality' analogously to the concept of 'lived poverty', meaning it is based on the subjective individual experiences, rather than on an assessment of inequality levels overall (e.g. within a country). In my sample of 34 countries (see figure 3), around one in three respondents feel equal (35%), while the majority say they feel either 'better' or 'worse' (54%). Only one in ten say their situation is very different ('much better' or 'much worse') (11%).

Figure 3: Perceived relative living situation. 34 countries. Afrobarometer Round 7 (2016-2018). N=44287



[37] Respondents were asked: "In general, how do you rate your living conditions compared to those of other South Africans?". See appendix 5 for more details on this variable.

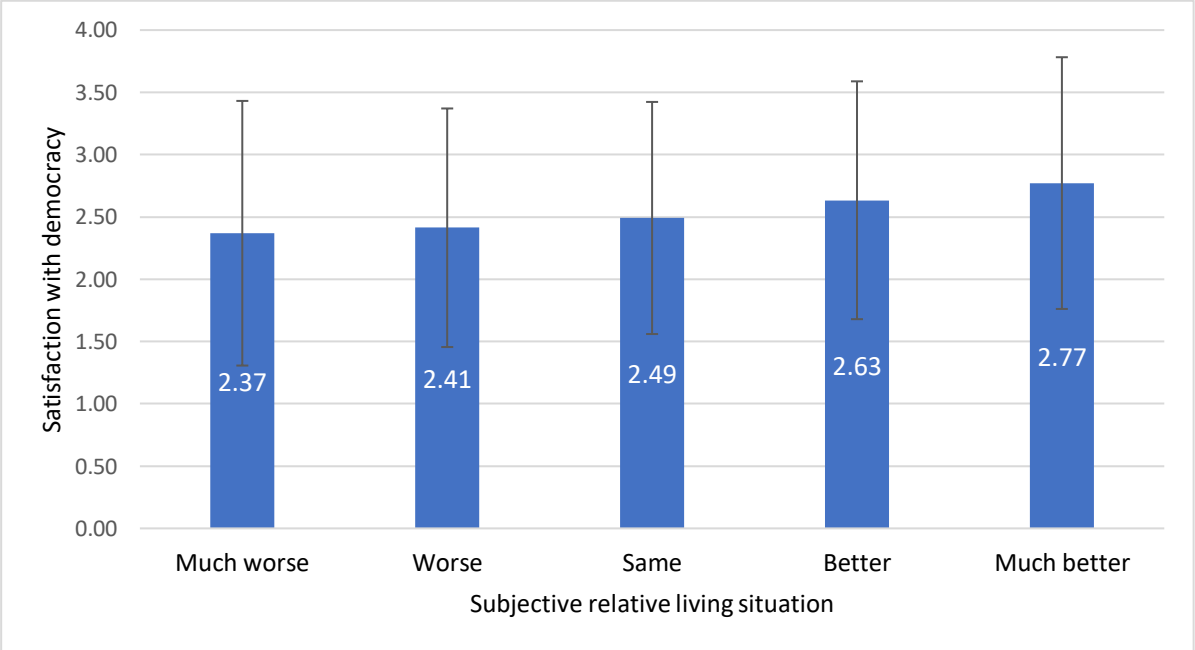
3.2.2 Subjective relative economic superiority

To test whether subjective relative economic superiority informs SWD, I compute four dummy variables which dichotomize the subjective relative situation variable (discussed above) by coding each of the four 'unequal' categories (much better, better, worse, much worse) as 1, respectively, and all other categories as 0. I do not include a dummy for 'equal', in effect making it a refence category as all other categories are controlled for through the dummy variables. The two dummy variables 'much better or other' and 'better or other' reflect subjective relative economic superiority.

3.3 Bivariate results

A first descriptive test using the 34-country data without considering country-differences[38] (n=36596), suggests that people who feel better or much better off on average also report more SWD than people who feel equal to others or worse off (see figure 4 below).

Figure 4: Mean satisfaction with democracy (and standard deviation) by perceived relative situation.

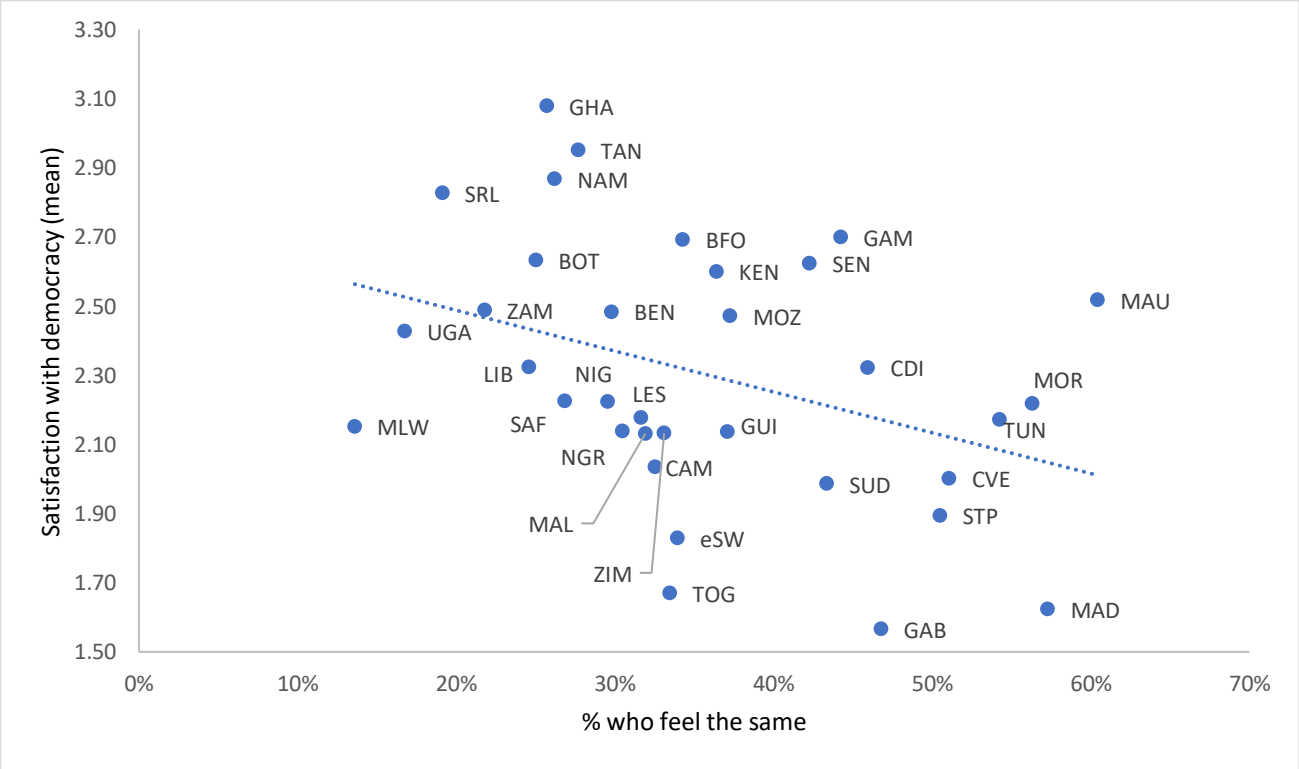


Likewise, at country level (n= 34), the data does not support the expected relation between equality and satisfaction with democracy. Figure 5, below, displays the bivariate correlation of the percentage in a country who feel the same as others in

[38] This data is not weighted to account for country sample-size. This means that larger countries have a larger effect on the scores than smaller countries.

their living situation and the mean SWD per country for 34 African countries.[39] The correlation produces a significant, yet negative, association between the two variables, suggesting that in countries in which more people feel equal to others, people are on average less satisfied with the ways democracy is working. This does not fit the discussion regarding equality and democracy and appears to contradict the expected relation as per hypothesis 1.

Figure 5: Satisfaction with democracy (mean) by percentage who feel the same (per country). 34 countries. Afrobarometer Round 7 data (2016-2018)



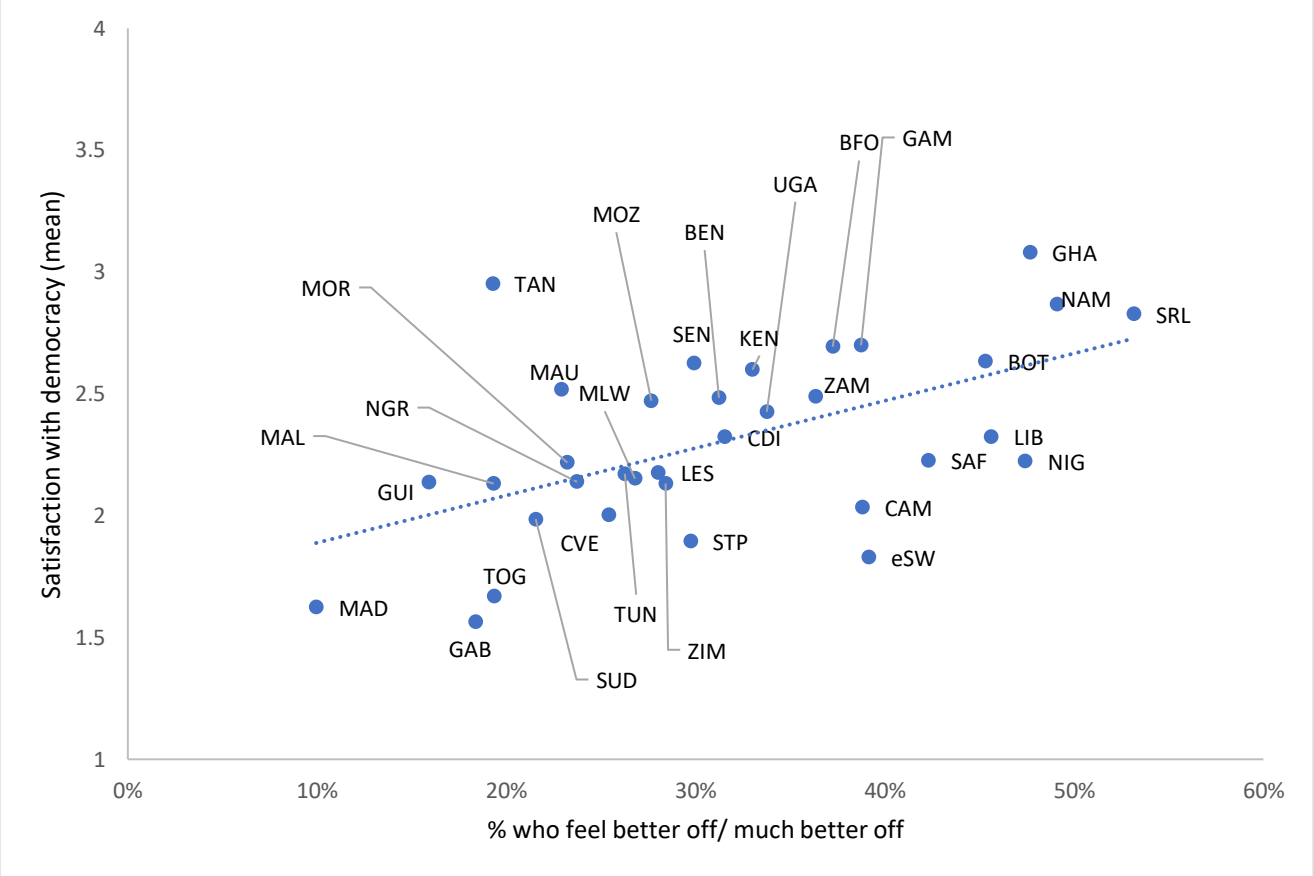
($r(34)=-0.379$, $p<0.05$)

A second expectation formulated in the introduction is that people apply egocentric considerations when assessing how democracy is working in their country. From this perspective, hypothesis 2 expects that people who feel better off than others will be more satisfied with how democracy is working. In figure 6, below, I display the bivariate correlation between the percentage of respondents per country who feel better or much better off than others and the mean SWD score per country. The correlation suggests a moderate to strong, positive

[39] My data set includes the following countries: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, eSwatini, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe. This data is weighted at the country level to ensure gender parity.

correlation between the two scores. This suggests that people on average are more satisfied with democracy in countries in which more people also say that they feel better off (or much better off) than others. At country level, there seems to be evidence of egocentric considerations, rather than considerations of equality, thus supporting hypothesis 2 and not hypothesis 1.

Figure 6: Satisfaction with democracy (mean) by percentage who feel better off or much better off than others (per country). 34 countries. Afrobarometer Round 7 data (2016-2018)



($r(34)=0.555$, $p<0.01$)

4. Analysis

In this section I test whether subjective lived equality (hypothesis 1) or feeling better off than others (hypothesis 2) shapes how satisfied ordinary Africans are with the way democracy is working in their country. I proceed in two steps. I first test the hypotheses against each other in a basic model in which I only include sociodemographic control variables as well as level 2 country-controls (section 4.1)[40]. In section 4.2, I then construct more comprehensive models in which I

[40] The data I use is clustered at various levels, but most obviously at the country level. Country-units may be significant in how causal relations work at the individual level. To test whether

compare the predictors of interest against known predictors of SWD from past research. This will allow me to say not only which hypothesis holds true, but whether my predictor variables of interest are important, compared to what we know to be predictors of SWD.

4.1 Building a basic model

The regression results, displayed in table 4, suggest that satisfaction with democracy is associated with egocentric considerations, rather than perceptions of equality.[41] If satisfaction with democracy were associated with a sense of equality, we would expect that feeling anything but equal to others would be consistently associated with less or more satisfaction with democracy. Rather, the coefficients suggest that respondents who feel relatively deprived are less satisfied with democracy, while those who feel they are better off than others, are more satisfied. These results suggest that hypothesis 1, which expected that feeling equal to others would enhance satisfaction, must be rejected. Conversely, hypothesis 2, which expects those who feel relatively better off, can tentatively be accepted.[42]

As displayed in model 2, the subjective relative living situation (both inferior and superior to others) is significantly associated with satisfaction with democracy, even when controlling for sociodemographic factors, such as location, age and education. Despite the significant results, however, including subjective relative situation only minimally improves the accounted share of variance in satisfaction with democracy within countries, compared to the null model (roughly 2% less

national level inequality affects satisfaction with democracy, I include the Gini score as well as an alternative measure that I compute using the national standard deviation of the lived poverty index. Higher deviations of both indices reflect greater inequality, while a lower deviation reflects less inequality and more equality. Second, I control for type of electoral system using data from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). In the literature, authors have pointed to a heightened winner/loser divide in majoritarian systems (Lijphart, 1999; Klingemann, 1999; Aarts & Thomassen, 2008; Bormann & Golder, 2013; Thomassen, 2014). I recode the International IDEA data to code '1' if a country uses a majoritarian system and '0' if it does not (proportional representation, mixed, both). A full list of electoral systems by country can be found in appendix 7c. I also control for economic growth by including the national GDP per capita (purchasing power parity), economic growth in the year prior to the country interview, as well as mean economic growth for the previous three years (2015-2017) and mean economic growth between 2011 and 2017. I also include control variables for level of education, location (urban or rural), gender and age group.

[41] The coefficients reported here in-text and in the tables are estimates of fixed effects. The estimates indicate the change in value in the dependent variable with each 1-unit change in the independent variable.

[42] Throughout this section I use the following classification: *p <= 0.05, **p <= 0.01, ***p <= 0.001.

variance). Conversely, model 2 proves more helpful at accounting for variance in satisfaction between countries (roughly 15% reduction in unaccounted variance versus the null model). Among the level 2 control variables, only lived poverty dispersion (as per standard deviation) and economic growth in the past are significantly associated with satisfaction with democracy. The results suggest that people in countries which are marked by a larger lived poverty standard deviation (meaning peoples' individual lived poverty experiences are more varied) are more satisfied with the way democracy is working. Likewise, people are more satisfied in countries which has experienced sustained growth (on average), compared to those who have not.

Table 4 Predicting satisfaction with democracy with perceived equality and perceived relative position

Level 1	**Model 1**	**Model 2**
Intercept	2.477(0.056)***	-0.37 (1.05)
Much worse vs other	**-0.143(0.02)*** **	**-0.18 (0.02)*** **
Worse vs other	**-0.116(0.013)*** **	**-0.14 (0.01)*** **
Better vs other	**0.065(0.012)*** **	**0.07 (0.01)*** **
Much better vs other	**0.206(0.028)*** **	**0.23 (0.03)*** **
Rural = 1		**0.1 (0.01)*** **
Female = 1		-0.02 (0.01)
Age group		**0.03 (0)*** **
Level of education		**-0.08 (0.01)*** **
Level 2		
Gini coefficient		0 (0.01)
Lived Poverty StdDev		**1.89 (0.81)***
Majoritarian elec. system		0.12 (0.1)
Human Development Index		1.27 (0.64)
Growth in 2017		0.01 (0.03)
Growth 2011-2017 (mean)		**0.12 (0.05)***
Within country R^2	0.01	0.02
Between country R^2	0.02	0.15

Note: Cell entries are linear mixed model coefficients and standard errors in parentheses.
*p <= 0.05, **p <= 0.01, ***p <= 0.001.

4.1.1 Location, location, location

To better understand the mechanism by which perceived inequality is associated with satisfaction with democracy, it is important to ask whether such relative perceptions are distinct in their association with satisfaction with democracy from an absolute and objective relative situation. The former describes how people are

objectively doing, irrespective of their relative position to others. The latter describes how people are objectively faring compared to others. It is important to distinguish between the three to understand what actually shapes satisfaction with democracy: is it being poor? is it being objectively poorer than others? or is it thinking that you are poorer than others?

4.1.1.1 Absolute situation

To account for someone's absolute poverty, I include two control variables. First, the Lived Poverty Index (LPI) is an additive index of 5 variables which query how often in the past year a respondent has gone without basic commodities (enough food, water for personal consumption, medical services, cooking fuel and cash income). Response options range from 'never' having gone without a commodity to 'always'. The five questions are added, and categories are created, running from 'no lived poverty' to 'high lived poverty'. The Lived Poverty Index was developed by Afrobarometer as a measure of poverty, which would allow the interviewer to capture the "experiential core of poverty" (Mattes, 2008: 1). Importantly, the questions underpinning the LPI could be captured as part of the broader attitudinal interview, without having to spend too much time and effort on capturing economic conditions, behaviours and habits, as studies on poverty tend to do in economic research.[43]

Arguably, the lived poverty index is not only a measure of the individual's experience of poverty, but is also influenced by how respondents compare themselves to others. For example, when asked how often they went without food in the past year, respondents may not only be drawing from their own experience, but they may be gauging how often they went without food compared to others, and base their response on such comparisons with others. To address this possibility, I also include an alternative measure of absolute poverty. Specifically, I construct an 'asset index', which reflects how many non-elemental goods a respondent has access to or owns personally. The index reflects whether respondents say they have access to, or personally own: a radio, television, mobile phone, computer, motor vehicle and bank account.[44] The scores for the six items are added without any weighting and the resulting scale is not recoded. The scale runs from 0 ('no access or personal ownership to any item) to 12 (personal ownership of all six items).

[43] On the validity and reliability of the LPI as a measure of core poverty, see: Bratton & Mattes 2003; Bratton et al. 2005; Mattes 2008.

[44] A factor analysis was performed, and a single factor extracted. The factor produced an eigenvalue of 2,664 (6 items) and accounted for 44,398% of variance. A reliability analysis produced a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha of 0,745.

4.1.1.2 Objective relative situation

How satisfied people are with democracy may also be shaped by their actual, objective position within national distributions. To account for this possibility, I compute a series of indicators which capture the respondent's relative position within a number of lived poverty distributions by country. For each of the indicators, low scores suggest that respondents experience less poverty than the average (within each reference group) and high scores suggest that the respondent experienced more poverty than the reference group on average. First, I compute an indicator which reflects the respondent's relative position compared to the overall national lived poverty mean. However, other distributions may be important too. For example, highly educated people are likely to experience much less poverty than people with no education. But does that comparison actually shape their satisfaction with democracy, or would highly educated people compare their situation with the situation of other highly educated people?[45] To account for this, I compute additional indicators which reflect the relative objective position of respondents within the distribution of their respective age group, education level and location with respect to lived poverty experiences.

4.1.1.3 Discussion

The results, displayed in table 5 below, suggest that how people perceive their relative living situation remains significantly associated with satisfaction with democracy, above and beyond how much poverty they experience in 'absolute' terms and how much poverty they experience compared to other people. Model 1 contains the measures of perceived inequality as well as level 2 control variables, but also includes predictors of absolute poverty and material well-being. The results suggest that experiencing more poverty is significantly associated with less satisfaction with democracy. Comparing models 2 (table 4) and model 1 (table 5) suggests that controlling for absolute poverty has slightly reduced the effects size of subjective relative evaluations, but these nonetheless remain significant. The results maintain that feeling relatively worse off than others is significantly associated with less satisfaction with democracy, as is feeling relatively better off in association with more satisfaction with democracy. The effect in Table 5 is reduced relative to Table 4 more strongly for negative relative perceptions, than for positive ones. In other words, how one fares relatively to others is of less importance in shaping satisfaction with democracy if the individual's absolute situation is bad. Conversely, feeling better off than others significantly improves

[45] The importance of understanding the correct reference group lies at the very core of the relative deprivation theory. While the concept of relative deprivation predates Stouffer et al.'s (1949) seminal work, it was Stouffer et al.'s (1949) study of grievances over promotions, among U.S. Army Air corpsmen and military police, that emphasized the importance of understanding to whom people are comparing themselves and their aspirations, as that determines whether they feel aggrieved or not.

satisfaction with democracy, even when absolute conditions are considered. Conversely, albeit weaker in effect size, I find that people who have more assets are slightly less satisfied with democracy, than those who have less assets (see model 1). Possibly, this suggests a non-linear relation between absolute poverty or wellbeing and satisfaction with democracy. Arguably, the lived poverty index is a measure of variance of experienced poverty among the poor but does not capture variance in the lived experience of the non-poor. Here the asset index may be more useful in capturing variance among those who are non-poor. The two results would suggest that as people become less poor, they become more satisfied with democracy. Once basic needs are met (as captured by the lived poverty index), people become more critical of the functioning of democracy.

Table 5 Predicting satisfaction with democracy with perceived equality and perceived relative position

	Model 1: absolute situation	**Model 2: national comparison**	**Model 3: Age comparison**	**Model 4: Education comparison**	**Model 5: Location comparison**
Intercept	0.15(1.01)	-0.07(1.07)	-0.07(1.07)	-0.07(1.07)	-0.07(1.07)
Much worse vs other	-0.13(0.02)***	-0.11(0.02)***	-0.11(0.02)***	-0.1(0.02)***	-0.1(0.02)***
Worse vs other	-0.11(0.01)***	-0.1(0.01)***	-0.1(0.01)***	-0.09(0.01)***	-0.09(0.01)***
Better vs other	0.06(0.01)***	0.05(0.01)***	0.05(0.01)***	0.05(0.01)***	0.05(0.01)***
Much better vs other	0.21(0.03)***	0.19(0.03)***	0.19(0.03)***	0.19(0.03)***	0.19(0.03)***
Lived Poverty Index	-0.09(0.01)***				
Asset index	-0.03(0)***				
Poverty rel to national mean		-0.07(0.01)***			
Poverty rel to national age group mean			-0.07(0.01)***		
Poverty rel to national education group mean				-0.09(0.01)***	
Poverty rel to national location mean					-0.08(0.01)***
Gini coefficient	0(0.01)	0(0.01)	0(0.01)	0(0.01)	0(0.01)
Lived Poverty StdDev	1.84(0.78)*	1.78(0.82)*	1.77(0.82)*	1.77(0.82)*	1.77(0.82)*
Majoritarian elec. system	0.1(0.1)	0.12(0.11)	0.12(0.11)	0.12(0.11)	0.12(0.11)
Human Development Index	1.08(0.62)	0.98(0.66)	0.97(0.66)	0.97(0.66)	0.97(0.66)
Growth in 2017	0.01(0.03)	0.01(0.03)	0.01(0.03)	0.01(0.03)	0.01(0.03)
Growth 2011- 2017 (mean)	0.11(0.05)	0.11(0.05)*	0.11(0.05)*	0.11(0.05)*	0.11(0.05)*
Within country R^2	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01
Between country R^2	0.21	0.12	0.12	0.11	0.12

Note: Cell entries are linear mixed model coefficients and standard errors in parentheses.
*p <= 0.05, **p <= 0.01, ***p <= 0.001.

In models 2 to 5 I include the objective relative position of respondents within various lived poverty distributions. The results indicate that respondents who experience more poverty than the national average are less satisfied with

democracy, while those who experience less poverty than the average are more satisfied with democracy. These results are consistent for both the national mean as well as the age group, education level or location group mean. These results further underline egocentric expectations as being a strong source of how satisfied people are with the way democracy is working in their country. The results also demonstrate that while objective position is significantly associated with satisfaction with democracy, subjective perceptions of said relative positions remain significant.

While the results suggest a significant association between relative situation and SWD above and beyond the independent effects of absolute poverty and objective relative position, it is unclear whether relative situation ought to be considered in future research on SWD. First, it is unclear as to how the effect size compares to other known predictors of SWD. And second, it is unknown as to whether the effect of relative situation is partially, or even fully, accounted for by other predictors of SWD. To test this, I build a more complex model in which I run relative situation concurrently with known predictors of SWD as per the literature.

4.1.2 Does equality shape satisfaction only for those who see it as a core feature of democracy?

The results in this section suggest that satisfaction with democracy is shaped by egocentric relative comparisons, rather than a sense of being equal to others. While this finding is not implausible, given past research which also suggests egocentric motives, it stands in contrast to the descriptive findings discussed in the introduction of this paper, which found that a sizeable share of respondents actually view notions of equality and equity as core characteristics of democracy. Given this finding, one would assume that people are satisfied with the functioning of democracy when they feel that a core characteristic of democracy, namely equality, is fulfilled. From the findings above this appears not to be the case. However, it may also be that equality matters only for those who view equality as a core characteristic of democracy, but not for others. Modelling the relation between equality and satisfaction with democracy without disaggregating between these two groups may therefore blur important differences for either group.

To disaggregate the linkage between equality and satisfaction with democracy, I use Afrobarometer Round 5 data (as I did in the introduction), which is the most recent round of available data in which respondents were asked about what they see as core elements of democracy. Using the two questions regarding what they see as the core characteristic of democracy, I group respondents by whether they chose a response which reflects a notion of equality or whether they chose a different response. The two responses which capture a notion of equality are ‘Government narrows the gap between the rich and the poor’ on the one hand, and

'Government ensures job opportunities for all' on the other hand.[46] The grouped multilevel model results are displayed in table 6, below.

Table 6: Modelling Satisfaction with democracy by subjective relative situation and perceived essential characteristic of democracy

	Essential characteristic of democracy			
	Narrowing gaps between rich and poor	**Other**	**Inclusive job opportunities**	**Other**
Intercept	2.64(0.05)***	2.74(0.05)***	2.66(0.05)***	2.66(0.04)***
Much worse vs other	-0.19(0.02)***	-0.18(0.03)***	-0.17(0.02)***	-0.21(0.03)***
Worse vs other	-0.1(0.01)***	-0.16(0.02)***	-0.1(0.01)***	-0.13(0.02)***
Better vs other	0.05(0.01)***	0.02(0.02)	0.03(0.01)*	0.05(0.02)**
Much better vs other	0.2(0.03)***	0.2(0.06)***	0.2(0.03)***	0.17(0.04)***
Within country R^2	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Between country R^2	0.02	-0.03	0.01	0.00

Note: Cell entries are linear mixed model coefficients and standard errors in parentheses.
*p <= 0.05, **p <= 0.01, ***p <= 0.001.

Estimating the relation between subjective relative living situation and satisfaction with democracy in this disaggregated way suggests that egocentric motivations shape satisfaction with democracy, regardless of whether someone views equality as a core characteristic of democracy or not. For both groups, respondents who feel they are relatively better off are more satisfied with the way democracy is working, and those who feel relatively deprived compared to others are less satisfied.

4.2 Is relative situation important in the context of known predictors of SWD?

The existing literature (see section 2 above) points to a number of predictors of satisfaction with democracy. To test the effect of perceived relative situation above and beyond such variables, I include both complementary and competing predictors of SWD as well as commonly used sociodemographic control-variables in the predictor models. Following the recommendation by Lee Ray (2003), I run separate models for separate explanatory variable-groups so as not to include intervening variables in a single model.[47] In this section I first give an overview

[46] See appendix 3 for a detailed description of the question and response options.
[47] I nonetheless encounter some issues of multicollinearity. I have included a correlation matrix of all variables run (per model) in appendix 8. For example, I find moderate correlation between the performance of the president and other measures of political performance, in particular trust

of the variables which I include in the models (section 4.2.1), before discussing the results (section 4.2.2).

4.2.1 Control variables

4.2.1.1 Political evaluations

I largely follow Mattes and Bratton (2007) in the variables I include as political performance evaluations.[48] First, I include the evaluation of the president's performance.[49] I also account for immaterial outputs of the regime by controlling for perceptions of civil freedoms and rights. I create a factor which entails survey items which ask respondents to evaluate how often they have to be careful about what they say in public, which political organization they join and how they vote.[50] The factor is computed in an additive fashion without any recoding of the resulting scale. Moreover, I include a variable which queries how free and fair respondents felt the past national election was.[51] Previous studies have found that SWD is negatively influenced by corruption and lack of regime responsiveness (Weatherford, 1987; Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Anderson & Tverdova, 2003; Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Aarts &Thomassen, 2008; Guldbrandtsen & Skaaning, 2010; Norris, 2011; Linde, 2012; Ariely, 2013; Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014; Stockemer & Sundström, 2013; Christmann & Torcal, 2017; van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2017). I control for reported overall level of corruption as a proxy

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in institutions ($r(31645)=0.359$; $p<0.001$). However, I include these in the model so as to follow the structure of Mattes and Bratton's paper (2007). In the case of the economic evaluations, I again encounter issues of multicollinearity. For example, economic performance evaluation and social services performance are highly correlated ($r(33968)=0.636$; $p<0.001$), as are economic performance evaluations and handling of income gaps ($r(34534)=0.664$; $p<0.001$). In this case, I cannot motivate including the variables in one model. In order to compare the effects of relative situation while controlling for the three variables, I choose to run three separate models. See appendix 8 for the correlation matrix.

[48] A full description of the variables discussed in this section can be found in appendix 6 and 7.

[49] Respondents were asked: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past twelve months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? The President." Responses were 'strongly disapprove' (1), 'disapprove' (2), 'approve' (3) and 'strongly approve' (4). I fully acknowledge that from the question alone it is unclear whether the 'president's performance' should be deemed a political, economic, cultural or otherwise evaluation. I simply follow Mattes and Bratton and categorize the variable as a political evaluation.

[50] Respondents were asked: "In your opinion, how often, in this country: do people have to be careful of what they say about politics?/ Do people have to be careful about what political organizations they join?/ Do people have to be careful about how they vote in an election?" I conducted both factor analysis and reliability analysis before computing an additive factor variable 'Freedoms Factor'. The analysis produced a single factor which accounted for 62% of total variance and had an eigenvalue of 2.2. The reliability analysis was satisfactory (Cronbach's alpha= 0.826).

[51] Respondents were asked: "On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [20xx]."

for what the respondent deems to be the most salient form or perpetrator of corruption.[52] To gauge responsiveness, I include a survey item which asks respondents to evaluate whether they feel that members of Parliament (MPs) listen to them, when they need help.[53] Following Mattes & Bratton (2007), I include a factor of trustworthiness of state institutions. The factor is computed by simple addition of four variables: reported trust in the police, army, election committee and courts of law.[54] To confirm the validity of the factor, I conduct a principle component factor analysis. A single unrotated factor (Eigenvalue = 2.52) explains 63.1% of common variance. I further confirm the reliability of the factor (Cronbach's Alpha=0.803). The factor scale runs from 'no trust' (0) to 'trust a lot' (12).

4.2.1.2 Economic evaluations

I compute two factors which capture respondents' evaluation of how the government is doing in terms of economic performance and service delivery. Economic performance entails questions about how government is perceived to be managing the economy, improving the living standards of the poor, creating jobs and keeping prices stable.[55] Conversely, social service delivery entails evaluations of how government is handling the provision of enough to eat, drinking water, health and education. The variables used in both factors are quasi-metric and use a 4-point response scale (from 'very badly' to 'very well'). I form the factors by adding response scores for each respondent and do not recode the additive score.

Related to economic performance evaluations is the assessment of how government is handling inequality. I use a question which asks respondents to evaluate how government is handling narrowing gaps between 'rich' and 'poor'.[56] Rather than capturing perceptions of inequality, this variable speaks to how

[52] Respondents were asked: "In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same?"

[53] Respondents were asked: "How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what people like you have to say? Members of Parliament".

[54] Mattes and Bratton (2007) included a variable on trust in the national broadcaster, but that question is not queried in Round 7. Respondents were asked: "How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? Electoral Commission/ The Police/ Courts of law/ The army". Responses range from 'not at all' (0), 'just a little' (1), 'somewhat' (2), 'a lot' (3).

[55] See the full questions in appendix 6.j. I use factor analysis to test whether the variables reflect a connected concept. The analysis produces a single factor which accounts for 66% of total variance and has an eigenvalue of 2.6. I moreover run a reliability analysis which is satisfactory (Cronbach's alpha= 0.824).

[56] Respondents were asked: "How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? Narrowing gaps between rich and poor".

respondents evaluate government to be handling narrowing of gaps between 'rich' and 'poor'. This variable thus speaks to a broad sense of the inequality gap but does not allow any further reasoning as to what form of inequality (wealth, income, assets) the respondent is referring to, how much inequality a respondent perceives to exists, or how much inequality a respondent deems acceptable or desirable. Widely, respondents report negative views on their government performance in this regard, with more than 3 in 4 saying the government is doing 'very badly' or 'fairly badly'.

4.2.1.3 Across time

It is likely that people's satisfaction with the functioning of democracy is shaped by what they have experienced in the past or how they expect the functioning to change in the future. To test whether people's SWD is associated with such cross-time considerations, I include a variable which reflects a respondent's assessment of the overall direction of the country.[57] Respondents were asked whether they feel the country is going in the right or wrong direction and two response options were given in the survey: 'country going in the wrong direction' (0) and 'country going in the right direction' (1). As the question makes no reference to what is being queried (politics, economy, conflict), the best estimation is that respondents are reporting upon whatever is most salient to them. The question also makes no reference to whether the question is asking about a retrospective comparison or about prospective expectations. Indeed, a simple correlation analysis suggests that the variable is equally correlated with retrospective ($r(37043)=0.298$; $p<0.01$) and prospective ($r(34049)=0.328$; $p<0.01$) economic evaluations. Despite this limitation, the question allows me to include some estimation of cross-time considerations.[58]

4.2.1.4 Personal ties

In their assessment of democracy, people may evaluate democracy as a means or vehicle to allow people or parties they support, to rule. It is widely noted that winner/loser considerations shape satisfaction with democracy, with election winners being more satisfied that election losers (Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Anderson & Tverdova, 2001; Blais & Gélineau, 2007; Singh et al., 2012). In previous studies on this topic, the winner/loser variable was captured by using the respondent's reported voting-behaviour in the *past* election. However, this is not

[57] Respondents were asked: "Let's start with your general view about the current direction of our country. Some people might think the country is going in the wrong direction. Others may feel it is going in the right direction. So let me ask YOU about the overall direction of the country: Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?"

[58] In past rounds, Afrobarometer also asked respondents about their personal situation compared to the past, and their expected personal situation in the near future. However, these questions were not included in Round 7.

captured by Afrobarometer. Following Mattes & Bratton (2007) I instead control for the winner/loser effect by coding a control variable which distinguishes whether someone feels close to the ruling party (coded 2), a different party (1) or no party (0).[59]

4.2.1.5 Interest

Anderson & Guillory (1997) find that interest in politics increases SWD. Unfortunately, the most recent available Afrobarometer round (round 7) does not ask respondents about their interest in politics. Rather, I use a proxy for interest, which is discussing politics with friends and family.[60] Moreover, I control for whether someone voted in the past election, which can be seen as a sign of personal investment in and understanding of the regime and should also increase SWD.[61]

4.2.2. Results

Table 7, below, displays the regression results.[62] The results suggest that perceived relative situation is significantly associated with SWD. In particular, perceived relative superior situation should be considered along widely used explanatory variables of SWD in the future.[63] In all models, feeling much better off than others was significantly associated with more SWD. This effect is statistically significant above and beyond political evaluations, economic evaluations, comparisons across time, partisanship and interest. In several models, the effect of feeling better off (but not much better off) was also significant. In the case of the partisanship and interest model, all four dummy variables produced significant effects. Although not explicitly discussed in terms of theoretical

[59] Respondents were asked: "Do you feel close to any particular political party?" If 'Yes': "Which party is that?" Respondents who didn't feel close to a party were coded as 0, while those who felt close to any party other than a party in power (either alone or in coalition) were coded as 1. Respondents who said they were close to a or the ruling party were coded as 2.

[60] Respondents were asked: "When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters?"

[61] Respondents were asked: "Understanding that some people were unable to vote in the most recent national election in [20xx], which of the following statements is true for you?" Respondents were coded as '0' if the decided not to vote, '1' if they didn't vote for another reason, and '2' if they voted.

[62] Cell entries are linear mixed model coefficients and standard errors are in parentheses. *p <= 0.05, **p <= 0.01, ***p <= 0.001.

[63] For many results discussed in this section, it is impossible to determine a causal direction between the hypothesized independent and dependent variables. For example, respondents who are more satisfied with democracy (for whatever reason) may therefore think more highly of the president's performance or say that the country is headed in the right direction. In this paper, I follow past research in my decision as to what variables I view as independent and what variable I view as dependent (see discussion in section 1). Further, I try to discuss the results of the regression analysis in purely association terms so as not to suggest a causal direction.

explanations, it is interesting to note that feelings of severe relative deprivation, in the context of a variety of competing predictors, is not significantly associated with more or less satisfaction with democracy once competing explanations are included in the models.

The results emphasize that how people feel compared to others, and positive comparisons in particular, is significantly associated with SWD, even when controlling for widely used explanations of SWD. However, a few results are worth discussing in greater detail. As noted in the introduction to this paper, empirical scrutiny of the predictors of SWD in Africa are few and far between. For example, Guldbrandtsen & Skaaning (2010), in the most recent peer-reviewed examination of SWD in Africa, used Afrobarometer Round 3 data, which was collected over a decade prior to the data used here. It is therefore worth elaborating on a few observations as to what informs SWD in Africa.

Guldbrandtsen & Skaaning (2010) concluded that SWD in Africa is informed by both perceived economic performance and perceived political performance. The results in this paper confirm this conclusion with the newest Afrobarometer data, thus suggesting time-stable cognitive models by which respondents assess the functioning of democracy in Africa. This is interesting not only given the passing of time, but also the additional country cases which were included in this paper, compared to the study by Guldbrandtsen & Skaaning (2010).[64]

The results from round 7 emphasize that both political and economic evaluations are important in understanding SWD. Among political evaluations, quality of elections (0.15***) and the performance of the president (0.14***) have the strongest effects on SWD. As would be expected, more positive political evaluations are significantly associated with more satisfaction. Other political evaluations, such as overall level of corruption (0.07***), feeling that MPs listen (0.05***) and trust in institutions (0.04***), while significant, are equal or smaller in effect size than feeling much better off (0.09**). In terms of economic evaluations, positive government performance evaluations in both economic matters (0.08***) and social services (0.05***) significantly increased SWD but how government was perceived to be handling narrowing gaps between rich and poor showed a stronger effect than both (0.17***).

Interestingly, feeling much better off and how government is handling inequality have similarly sized, positive effects on satisfaction with democracy. People are more satisfied with the way democracy is working when they feel that government

[64] Countries that were surveyed in Round 7, but not in round 3 are: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, eSwatini, Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo and Tunisia. There are no countries that were surveyed in round 3 but not in round 7.

is handling inequality, but this is not in conflict with also being more satisfied with democracy when one feels relatively better off. Perhaps people do not see themselves as part of the wider issue of inequality, or perhaps they evaluate how government is handling inequality in terms of how well government is securing their relatively superior positions compared to others.

Across all models, no variable was more strongly correlated with SWD than the direction of the country (0.38***). People who said that the country was going in the right direction, as opposed to the wrong one, were significantly more satisfied with democracy. This suggests that while current performance matters, satisfaction with democracy appears also to be linked to cross-time comparisons. Likewise, I find that country economic growth in the recent past is associated with more SWD at country level. This finding follows the finding by Guldbrandtsen and Skaaning (2010: 169), who find that growth in the average GDP per capita between 2000 and 2005 was significantly associated with more SWD.

In line with previous work, both in Africa and beyond, I find that people who are partisans of the ruling party are significantly more satisfied with democracy, than those who are not partisans (0.12***). While being partisan to the incumbent party is significantly associated with more SWD, partisanship does not mitigate the effect of being worse off (see the sixth model in table 7, below), like political performance variables do in the first model of table 7. This could suggest a certain degree of sophistication in the assessments of democracy that Africans display, where affiliation with the ruling party does not 'gloss over' insufficiencies in the day-to-day of people's lives.

Comparing the model performance within countries, the political evaluations (~19% reduction in variance) and economic performance model (~11% reduction in variance) are most helpful. Overall, the models are useful models in explaining variance in satisfaction with democracy. The models consistently account for a greater reduction in unaccounted variance in satisfaction with democracy between countries, than within countries. For example, the political evaluations models (first column in table 7) improves what we know about the variance between countries by around 54%, compared to 19% in regard to variance within countries.

Table 7: Predicting satisfaction with democracy with perceived equality and perceived relative position

Level 1	**Political evaluations**	**Economic evaluations**	**Handling inequality**	**Service delivery**	**Across time**	**Partisanship**	**Interest**	**Full model**
Intercept	-1,03 (0,8)	-0,91 (0,91)	-0,87 (0,91)	-1,14 (0,88)	-0,86 (0,91)	-0,65 (0,96)	-0,73 (0,97)	-1,41(0,83)
Much worse vs other	0 (0,02)	0 (0,02)	-0,03 (0,02)	-0,02 (0,02)	-0,03 (0,02)	**-0,07 (0,02)****	**-0,06 (0,02)****	0,02(0,02)
Worse vs other	-0,02 (0,01)	**-0,03 (0,01)***	**-0,05 (0,01)*****	**-0,05 (0,01)*****	**-0,04 (0,01)****	**-0,06 (0,01)*****	**-0,07 (0,01)*****	-0,01(0,02)
Better vs other	0,02 (0,01)	0,02 (0,01)	**0,03 (0,01)***	**0,03 (0,01)****	0,02 (0,01)	**0,04 (0,01)****	**0,03 (0,01)****	0,02(0,01)
Much better vs other	**0,09 (0,03)****	**0,11 (0,03)*****	**0,14 (0,03)*****	**0,14 (0,03)*****	**0,12 (0,03)*****	**0,15 (0,03)*****	**0,15 (0,03)*****	**0,1(0,03)***
Performance of President	**0,14 (0,01)*****							**0,1(0,01)*****
Civil and political freedoms	**-0,01 (0)*****							**-0,01(0)*****
Free election	**0,15 (0,01)*****							**0,13(0,01)*****
MPs listen	**0,05 (0,01)*****							**0,03(0,01)*****
Level of corruption	**0,07 (0)*****							**0,05(0)*****
Trust in institutions	**0,04 (0)*****							**0,03(0)*****
Govt economic performance		**0,08 (0)*****						**0,03(0)*****
Govt handling inequality			**0,17 (0,01)*****					0,01(0,01)
Govt social services performance				**0,05 (0)*****				**0,01(0)*****
Direction of the country					**0,38 (0,01)*****			**0,16(0,01)*****
Incumbent partisan						**0,12 (0,01)*****		**0,03(0,01)*****
Discuss politics							**-0,03 (0,01)*****	-0,01(0,01)
Voted in past national election							**0,09 (0,01)*****	0,02(0,01)
Lived Poverty Index	**-0,03 (0,01)*****	**-0,05 (0,01)*****	**-0,06 (0,01)*****	**-0,04 (0,01)*****	**-0,06 (0,01)*****	**-0,07 (0,01)*****	**-0,07 (0,01)*****	**-0,02(0,01)****
Present living situation	**0,06 (0)*****	**0,06 (0)*****	**0,08 (0)*****	**0,08 (0)*****	**0,06 (0)*****	**0,09 (0)*****	**0,1 (0)*****	**0,04(0,01)*****
Urban/ rural	**0,04 (0,01)******	**0,08 (0,01)*****	**0,1 (0,01)*****	**0,12 (0,01)*****	**0,1 (0,01)*****	**0,1 (0,01)*****	**0,11 (0,01)*****	**0,04(0,01)****
Gender	0 (0,01)	0 (0,01)	-0,02 (0,01)	-0,02 (0,01)	-0,02 (0,01)	-0,01 (0,01)	**-0,02 (0,01)***	0,01(0,01)
Age group	0,02 (0)	**0,03 (0)*****	**0,03 (0)*****	**0,03 (0)*****	**0,03 (0)*****	**0,03 (0)*****	**0,03 (0)*****	**0,01(0)*****
Level of education	**-0,06 (0,01)*****	**-0,08 (0,01)*****	**-0,09 (0,01)*****	**-0,09 (0,01)*****	**-0,09 (0,01)*****	**-0,09 (0,01)*****	**-0,09 (0,01)*****	**-0,05(0,01)*****
Level 2								
Gini	0 (0,01)	0 (0,01)	0 (0,01)	0 (0,01)	0 (0,01)	0 (0,01)	0 (0,01)	0(0,01)
LPI (StdDev.)	**1,41 (0,61)***	**1,91 (0,7)***	**1,97 (0,7)****	**1,88 (0,68)***	**1,83 (0,7)***	**1,98 (0,74)***	**1,98 (0,74)***	**1,51(0,63)***
Majoritarian system	0,04 (0,08)	0,07 (0,09)	0,1 (0,09)	0,07 (0,09)	0,12 (0,09)	0,11 (0,1)	0,11 (0,1)	0,02(0,09)
HDI	**1,28 (0,51)***	1,07 (0,56)	**1,2 (0,56)***	**1,31 (0,54)***	1,09 (0,56)	1,18 (0,58)	1,2 (0,59)	**1,32(0,52)***
Growth (2017)	0 (0,02)	0,01 (0,02)	0 (0,02)	0,01 (0,02)	0 (0,02)	0,01 (0,02)	0 (0,02)	0,01(0,02)
Growth (2011 to 2017)	0,08 (0,04)	**0,1 (0,04)***	**0,12 (0,04)***	**0,11 (0,04)***	**0,11 (0,04)***	**0,11 (0,05)***	**0,12 (0,05)***	0,06(0,04)
Within country R^2	0,19	0,11	0,07	0,08	0,08	0,05	0,04	0,22
Between country R^2	0,54	0,37	0,36	0,40	0,37	0,32	0,28	0,51

4.2.3. Section conclusion

What do we take away? The results suggest that relative self-placement is significantly associated with SWD and should be included in predictor models in the future. Feeling much better off than others shapes SWD above and beyond known predictors of SWD. If one feels this much better off, everything else may not be irrelevant, but feeling much better off than others increases SWD regardless of other factors. Comparing across the models, only political evaluations completely suppress the effects of feeling relative worse off. This is important. The results suggest that if countries get political performance right, egocentric notions of relative living situation are no longer significantly associated with SWD. Taking the explained variance between countries into account further underlines the importance of political factors in explaining SWD in Africa. The political evaluations model, more than any other model, accounts for 54% of variance between countries in terms of satisfaction with democracy.

The results in this section reflect the most recent Afrobarometer survey data and thus provide a much-needed update to past studies of SWD in Africa. I am able to confirm that how respondents evaluate the functioning of democracies appears stable across time. Both political and economic evaluations shape SWD, as do winner/loser effects. Moreover, the results point to strong cross-time considerations that respondents make in assessing democracy. This is weakly understood from past research.[65] Of course a limitation to the results presented here is the likelihood that different evaluations and predictors of SWD are related, and are probably intervening, rather than being strictly independent variables. Here the use of structural equation models to conduct path analyses would be advised. However, the aim of this paper is not to argue how competing and complementary predictors are best understood to shape SWD, but whether or not subjective relative comparisons should be considered as one of those predictors or not. The results suggest that they should.

5. Conclusion

Given the public and media interest in the effects of inequality on democracy, surprisingly little empirical research has tested this linkage from an individual perspective: are people who don't feel equal to other people in their country less satisfied with democracy?

Using the most recent round of Afrobarometer data (collected 2016-2018) from 34 African countries, I find that feeling superior to others in regard to one's living

[65] Mattes & Bratton (2007) include comparisons to the past regime (prior to democracy), but not to past performance of the democratic regime. Guldbrandtsen & Skaaning (2010) include only the Average GDP/capita growth of 2000-2005, but no perceptual variable.

situation is significantly associated with higher levels of satisfaction with democracy, while feeling inferior to others is significantly associated with less SWD. For individual perceptions of feeling materially equal to others, SWD appears not to be a function of experiencing equality, but rather of feeling superior to others. This seems to tell us about egocentric expectations that ordinary Africans have regarding democracy.

However, taken alone these findings are only of limited value. The important question is whether perceptions of relative situation account for something which is previously unaccounted for in the literature. In other words, do perceptions of relative situation remain significant predictors of SWD when pitted against other, known predictors? If so, this paper would show that perceptions of relative situation should be included in explanatory models of SWD going forward. I was able to confirm that subjective relative economic superiority holds up against widely used predictors of SWD, such as political performance evaluations, the country's economic situation, incumbent support and engagement. The results therefore suggest the value of including subjective measures in future models of SWD as competing predictors.

This chapter contributes to the literature in several ways. First, I provide an update to the understanding of predictors of SWD in Africa using the most recent round of Afrobarometer data (2016-2018). By comparison, the most recent cross-national study of SWD used data collected in 2013 (Memoli & Quaranta, 2019). I am largely able to confirm results obtained in earlier work (Cho, 2004; Guldbrandtsen & Skaaning, 2010; Gold, 2011; Memoli & Quaranta, 2019), namely that SWD is significantly associated with both political and economic performance evaluations as well as partisan winner/loser considerations. This suggests that the explanatory model for SWD in Africa is relatively stable across time.

Second, I contribute to the literature by showing that subjective relative economic superiority is significantly correlated with SWD, above and beyond previously used predictors of SWD. As such, my work motivates the inclusion of such measures in future work examining SWD in Africa. Moreover, my findings in regard to covariates of SWD in Africa are in line with what has been found in other cases, outside of Africa. As such it is plausible that my finding regarding perceived relative situation may hold in cases outside of Africa as well. A revision of past models for cases outside of Africa may be advisable.

Third, I contribute to the literature on the relationship between inequality and attitudes towards democracy and political support. The results in this paper suggest that subjective relative economic superiority, rather than feeling equal to others, increases satisfaction with democracy. These results stand in contrast to

past research by the author, which found that feeling equal to others rather than perceived superior or inferior situation, significantly increased support and demand for democracy (Isbell, 2020). Unlike support for democracy as a regime type, satisfaction with democracy is shaped by hierarchical relative considerations, rather than subjective experiences of equality. This could suggest that sociotropic considerations are more pertinent in regard to more diffuse support, while egocentric ones emerge in regard to more specific support.

Lastly, I contribute to a growing literature which explores the value of perception and experience-based measures of inequality in explaining behaviour and attitudes, rather than objective measures of inequality. A growing body of research suggests that objective measures of inequality only weakly correlate (if at all) with how ordinary people perceive inequality levels. This study helps to further the understanding of capturing inequality from an individual level, perceptual perspective. My findings highlight that experiences of inequality are not purely framed by material considerations. I moreover contribute to the conceptual understanding of perceptual measures of relative situation.

Several limitations must be acknowledged and may provide promising starting positions for future research in this area. First, it is possible that the causal direction assumed in this paper in fact runs in the reverse direction, meaning that more satisfaction with democracy leads to perceptions of more positive relative circumstances, political evaluations, economic performance evaluations, etc. This problem has also been acknowledged by Memoli & Quaranta (2019) who suggest using, where and if possible, panel data to account for patterns of attitudes across time. Second, as the regression models suggest, cross-time assessments appear important in understanding how satisfied people are with the functioning of democracy. Here, controlling for the effect of time in a multi-level model may provide further insight. Alternatively, if possible, a longitudinal panel study on SWD would allow for the tracking of economic and political assessment, and their (changing) relation to satisfaction with democracy. Third, it is not well understood what respondents are referring to when they say their 'living situation' is better or the same as others. Here, follow up questions in the Afrobarometer querying the comprehension of the question would be advisable. Alternatively, a qualitative study could be useful to understand localized patterns of how respondents are responding to this question.

This paper offers a first oversight of accounting for variance in satisfaction with democracy using perception-based relational individual-level factors in Africa, and possible beyond. The results are promising and should encourage the use of such measures in future research.

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Appendix

1. Crosstabulation: Extent of democracy * Satisfaction with democracy

Table A1: Crosstabulation of extent of democracy with satisfaction with democracy

		Satisfaction with democracy							Total
		The country is not a democracy	Not at all satisfied	Not very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Very satisfied	Refused	Do not know	
Extent of democracy	Not a democracy	652	3263	1201	321	136	7	36	5616
	A democracy, with major problems	45	4717	5646	2655	536	11	48	13658
	A democracy, but with minor problems	25	1358	4672	7851	1428	16	68	15418
	A full democracy	8	417	918	2945	4178	2	51	8519
	Do not understand question / democracy	77	55	63	77	44	13	775	1104
	Don't know	23	115	119	149	66	23	921	1416
	Refused	0	4	9	12	6	37	13	81
Total		830	9929	12628	14010	6394	109	1912	45812

2. Correlation SWD by Extent with democracy, by country.

Table A2: Correlation by country of satisfaction with democracy by extent of democracy

Country	Correlation coefficient
South Africa	0.340**
Liberia	0.410**
Mozambique	0.465**
Lesotho	0.466**
Guinea	0.478**
Gabon	0.487**
Madagascar	0.498**
Ghana	0.500**
Tunisia	0.503**
Togo	0.510**
Malawi	0.513**
Namibia	0.513**
São Tomé and Príncipe	0.530**
Nigeria	0.539**
Sudan	0.542**
Burkina Faso	0.550**
Niger	0.554**
Senegal	0.556**
Cabo Verde	0.557**
Kenya	0.557**
Benin	0.575**
Cameroon	0.579**
eSwatini	0.623**
Tanzania	0.633**
Sierra Leone	0.636**
Gambia	0.637**
Mali	0.654**
Uganda	0.658**
Côte d'Ivoire	0.659**
Zambia	0.671**
Botswana	0.673**
Mauritius	0.678**
Morocco	0.697**
Zimbabwe	0.833**

3. Essential characteristics of Democracy (Afrobarometer Round 5)

Question Number: Q44
Question: Many things may be desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy. If you have to choose only one of the things that I am going to read, which one would you choose as the most essential characteristic of democracy?
Variable Label: Essential characteristics of democracy: equality, fair election, etc.
Values: 1-4, 8, 9, 998, -1
Value Labels: 1= Government narrows the gap between the rich and the poor, 2= People choose government leaders in free and fair elections, 3= Government does not waste any public money, 4= People are free to express their political views openly, 8= None of these, 9=Don't know, 998=Refused to answer, -1=Missing

Question Number: Q45
Question: And here is another list. Which one of these things would you choose as the most essential characteristic of democracy?
Variable Label: Essential characteristics of democracy: law and order, job, etc
Values: 1-4, 8, 9, 998, -1
Value Labels: 1= Government ensures law and order, 2= Media is free to criticize the things government does, 3= Government ensures job opportunities for all, 4= Multiple parties compete fairly in elections, 8= None of these, 9=Don't know, 998=Refused to answer, -1=Missing

4. Dependent variable: Satisfaction with democracy (Afrobarometer Round 7 data)

Question Number: Q41
***Question*:** Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Ghana? Are you:
***Variable Label*:** Q41. Satisfaction with democracy
***Values*:** 0-4, 9, 98, -1
***Value Labels*:** 0=Ghana is not a democracy, 1=Not at all satisfied, 2=Not very satisfied, 3=Fairly satisfied, 4=Very satisfied, 9=Don't know, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing
***Note*:** Interviewer was instructed to "Read the question in the language of the interview, but always read "democracy" in English. Translate "democracy" into local language only if respondent does not understand English term."

5. Predictor variable: Subjective relative living situation (Afrobarometer Round 7 data)

Question Number: Q4B
Question: In general, how would you describe: Your own present living conditions?
Variable Label: Q4B. Your present living conditions
Values: 1-5, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 1=Much worse, 2=Worse, 3=Same, 4=Better, 5=Much better, 9=Don't know, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing

6. Level 1 control variables

6.a Lived Poverty Index

Question Number: Q8A
Question: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without enough food to eat?
Variable Label: Q8a. How often gone without food
Values: 0-4, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 0=Never, 1=Just once or twice, 2=Several times, 3=Many times, 4=Always, 9=Don't know, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing

Question Number: Q8B
Question: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without enough clean water for home use?
Variable Label: Q8b. How often gone without water
Values: 0-4, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 0=Never, 1=Just once or twice, 2=Several times, 3=Many times, 4=Always, 9=Don't know, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing

Question Number: Q8C
Question: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without medicines or medical treatment?
Variable Label: Q8c.How often gone without medical care
Values: 0-4, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 0=Never, 1=Just once or twice, 2=Several times, 3=Many times, 4=Always, 9=Don't know, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing

Question Number: Q8D
Question: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without enough fuel to cook your food?
Variable Label: Q8d. How often gone without cooking fuel
Values: 0-4, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 0=Never, 1=Just once or twice, 2=Several times, 3=Many times, 4=Always, 9=Don't know, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing

6.b Absolute living situation

Question Number: Q4B
Question: In general, how would you describe: Your own present living conditions?
Variable Label: Q4b. Your present living conditions
Values: 1-5, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 1=Very bad, 2=Fairly bad, 3=Neither good nor bad, 4=Fairly good, 5=Very good, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know, -1=Missing

6.c Asset index

Question Number: Q89A
Question: Which of these things do you personally own? [If no, ask:] Does anyone else in your household own one: Radio?
Variable Label: Q89a. Own radio
Values: 0-2, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 0=No one in household owns, 1=Yes, someone else in household owns, 2=Yes, personally owns, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know, -1=Missing

Question Number: Q89B
Question: Which of these things do you personally own? [If no, ask:] Does anyone else in your household own one: Television?
Variable Label: Q89b. Own television
Values: 0-2, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 0=No one in household owns, 1=Yes, someone else in household owns, 2=Yes, personally owns, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know, -1=Missing

Question Number: Q89C
Question: Which of these things do you personally own? [If no, ask:] Does anyone else in your household own one: Motor vehicle or motorcycle?
Variable Label: Q89c. Own motor vehicle, car, or motorcycle
Values: 0-2, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 0=No one in household owns, 1=Yes, someone else in household owns, 2=Yes, personally owns, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know, -1=Missing

Question Number: Q89D
Question: Which of these things do you personally own? [If no, ask:] Does anyone else in your household own one: Computer?
Variable Label: Q89d. Own computer
Values: 0-2, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 0=No one in household owns, 1=Yes, someone else in household owns, 2=Yes, personally owns, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know, -1=Missing

Question Number: Q89E
Question: Which of these things do you personally own? [If no, ask:] Does anyone else in your household own one: Bank account?
Variable Label: Q89e. Own bank account
Values: 0-2, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 0=No one in household owns, 1=Yes, someone else in household owns, 2=Yes, personally owns, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know, -1=Missing

Question Number: Q89F
Question: Which of these things do you personally own? [If no, ask:] Does anyone else in your household own one: Mobile phone?
Variable Label: Q89f. Own mobile phone
Values: 0-2, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 0=No one in household owns, 1=Yes, someone else in household owns, 2=Yes, personally owns, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know, -1=Missing

6.d Performance of the President

Question Number: Q58A
Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way the following people have performed their jobs over the past twelve months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: the President?
Variable Label: Q58a. Performance: President
Values: 1-4, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 1=Strongly disapprove, 2=Disapprove, 3=Approve, 4=Strongly approve, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard enough, -1=Missing
Note: Interviewer probed for strength of opinion.

6.e Civil and political Freedoms and rights

Question Number: Q42A
Question: In your opinion, how often, in this country: do people have to be careful of what they say about politics?
Variable Label: Q42a. How often careful what you say
Values: 0-3, 9, 8, -1
Value Labels: 0=Never, 1=Rarely, 2=Often, 3=Always, 9=Don't know, 8=Refused to answer, -1=Missing

Question Number: Q42B
Question: In your opinion, how often, in this country: Do people have to be careful about what political organizations they join?
Variable Label: Q42b. How often careful which organizations joined
Values: 0-3, 9, 8, -1
Value Labels: 0=Never, 1=Rarely, 2=Often, 3=Always, 9=Don't know, 8=Refused to answer, -1=Missing

Question Number: Q42C
Question: In your opinion, how often, in this country: Do people have to be careful about how they vote in an election?
Variable Label: Q42c. How often careful how vote
Values: 0-3, 9, 8, -1
Value Labels: 0=Never, 1=Rarely, 2=Often, 3=Always, 9=Don't know, 8=Refused to answer, -1=Missing

6.f Free and fair elections

Question Number: Q23
Question: On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [20xx]. Was it:
Variable Label: Q23. Freeness and fairness of the last national election
Values: 1-4, 8, 9, 8, -1
Value Labels: 4=Completely free and fair, 3=Free and fair, but with minor problems, 2=Free and fair, with major problems, 1=Not free and fair, 8=Do not understand the question, 9=Don't know, 8=Refused to answer, -1=Missing

6.g MPs listen

Question Number: Q54A
Question: How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what people like you have to say: Members of the National Assembly?
Variable Label: Q54a. MPs listen
Values: 0-3, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 0=Never, 1=Only sometimes, 2=Often, 3=Always, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know, -1=Missing

6.h Level of corruption

Question Number: Q45
Question: In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same?
Variable Label: Q45. Level of corruption
Values: 1-5, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 1=Increased a lot, 2=Increased somewhat, 3=Stayed the same, 4=Decreased somewhat, 5=Decreased a lot, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know, -1=Missing
Note: Interviewer probed for strength of opinion.

6.i Trust in institutions

Question Number: Q43G
Question: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The Police?
Variable Label: Q43g. Trust police
Values: 0-3, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 0=Not at all, 1=Just a little, 2=Somewhat, 3=A lot, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard, -1=Missing

Question Number: Q43H
Question: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The Army?
Variable Label: Q43h. Trust army
Values: 0-3, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 0=Not at all, 1=Just a little, 2=Somewhat, 3=A lot, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard, -1=Missing

Question Number: Q43I
Question: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Courts of law?
Variable Label: Q43i. Trust courts of law
Values: 0-3, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 0=Not at all, 1=Just a little, 2=Somewhat, 3=A lot, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard, -1=Missing

6.j Economic services delivery

Question Number: Q66A
Question: Now let's speak about the present government of this country. How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Managing the economy?
Variable Label: Q66a. Handling managing the economy
Values: 1-4, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 1=Very badly, 2=Fairly badly, 3=Fairly well, 4=Very well, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard enough, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing
Note: Interviewer probed for strength of opinion.

Question Number: Q66B
Question: Now let's speak about the present government of this country. How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Improving the living standards of the poor.
Variable Label: Q66b. Handling improving living standards of the poor
Values: 1-4, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 1=Very badly, 2=Fairly badly, 3=Fairly well, 4=Very well, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard enough, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing
Note: Interviewer probed for strength of opinion.

Question Number: Q66C
Question: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Creating jobs?
Variable Label: Q66c. Handling creating jobs
Values: 1-4, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 1=Very badly, 2=Fairly badly, 3=Fairly well, 4=Very well, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard enough, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing
Note: Interviewer probed for strength of opinion.

Question Number: Q66D
Question: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Keeping prices down?
Variable Label: Q66d. Handling keeping prices down
Values: 1-4, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 1=Very badly, 2=Fairly badly, 3=Fairly well, 4=Very well, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard enough, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing
Note: Interviewer probed for strength of opinion.

6.k Government handling inequality

Question Number: Q66E
Question: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Narrowing gaps between rich and poor?
Variable Label: Q66e. Handling narrowing income gaps
Values: 1-4, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 1=Very badly, 2=Fairly badly, 3=Fairly well, 4=Very well, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard enough, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing
Note: Interviewer probed for strength of opinion.
*Not asked in Sudan.

6.l Social and consumable services

Question Number: Q66F
Question: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Reducing crime?
Variable Label: Q66f. Handling reducing crime
Values: 1-4, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 1=Very Badly, 2=Fairly badly, 3=Fairly well, 4=Very well, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard enough, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing
Note: Interviewer probed for strength of opinion.

Question Number: Q66G
Question: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Improving basic health services?
Variable Label: Q66g. Handling improving basic health services
Values: 1-4, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 1=Very badly, 2=Fairly badly, 3=Fairly well, 4=Very well, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard enough, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing
Note: Interviewer probed for strength of opinion.

Question Number: Q66H
Question: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Addressing educational needs?
Variable Label: Q66h. Handling addressing educational needs
Values: 1-4, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 1=Very badly, 2=Fairly badly, 3=Fairly well, 4=Very well, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard enough, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing
Note: Interviewer probed for strength of opinion.

Question Number: Q66I
Question: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Providing water and sanitation services?
Variable Label: Q66i. Handling providing water and sanitation services
Values: 1-4, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 1=Very badly, 2=Fairly badly, 3=Fairly well, 4=Very well, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard enough, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing .
Note: Interviewer probed for strength of opinion.

Question Number: Q66J
Question: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Ensuring everyone has enough to eat?
Variable Label: Q66j. Handling ensuring enough to eat
Values: 1-4, 9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 1=Very badly, 2=Fairly badly, 3=Fairly well, 4=Very well, 9=Don't know/Haven't heard enough, 98=Refused to answer, -1=Missing .
Note: Interviewer probed for strength of opinion.

6.m Direction of the country

Question Number: Q3
Question: Let's start with your general view about the current direction of our country. Some people might think the country is going in the wrong direction. Others may feel it is going in the right direction. So let me ask YOU about the overall direction of the country: Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?
Variable Label: Q3. Overall direction of the country
Values: 1, 2, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 1=Going in the wrong direction, 2=Going in the right direction, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know, -1=Missing

6.n Incumbent partisan

Question Number: Q88A
Question: Do you feel close to any particular political party?
Variable Label: Q88a. Close to political party
Values: 0, 1, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 0=No, does not feel close to any party, 1=Yes, feels close to a party, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know, -1=Missing

Question Number: Q88B
Question: Which party is that?
Variable Label: Q88b. Which party
Values: 9995, 9997-9999, -1
Value Labels: 9995=Other, 9997=Not applicable, 9998=Refused, 9999=Don't know, -1=Missing
Note: If the response to Q88A was "No," "Don't know," or "Refused," then the interviewer was instructed to mark "9997=Not applicable."

6.o Discuss politics

Question Number: Q13
Question: When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters:
Variable Label: Q13. Discuss politics
Values: 0-2, 8, 9, -1
Value Labels: 0=Never, 1=Occasionally, 2=Frequently, 8=Refused, 9=Don't know, -1=Missing

6.p Voted in the past national election

Question Number: Q22
Question: Understanding that some people were unable to vote in the most recent national election in 2014, which of the following statements is true for you?
Variable Label: Q22. Voting in the most recent national election
Values: 0-9, 98, -1
Value Labels: 0=You were not registered to vote, 1=You voted in the elections, 2=You decided not to vote, 3=You could not find the polling station, 4=You were prevented from voting, 5=You did not have time to vote, 6=You did not vote because you could not find your name on the voters' register, 7=Did not vote for some other reason, 8=You were too young to vote, 9=Don't know/Can't remember, 98=Refused, -1=Missing

6.q Sociodemographic control variables

6.q.1. Location

Question Number: URBRUR
Question: PSU/EA
Variable Label: Urban or Rural Primary Sampling Unit
Values: 1, 2
Value Labels: 1=Urban, 2=Rural
Note: Answered by interviewer

6.q.2. Gender

Question Number: Q101
Question: Respondent's gender
Variable Label: Q101. Gender of respondent
Values: 1, 2
Value Labels: 1=Male, 2=Female
Note: Answered by interviewer

6.q.3. Education

Question Number: Q97
Question: What is your highest level of education?
Variable Label: Q97. Education of respondent
Values: 0-9, 98, 99, -1
Value Labels: 0=No formal schooling, 1=Informal schooling only (including Koranic schooling), 2=Some primary schooling, 3=Primary school completed, 4=Intermediate school or some secondary school/high school, 5=Secondary school/high school completed, 6=Post-secondary qualifications, other than university, 7=Some university, 8=University completed, 9=Post-graduate, 98=Refused, 99=Don't know, -1=Missing

6.q.4. Age

Question Number*:* Q1
Question*:* How old are you?
Variable Label*:* Q1. Age
Values*:* 18-110, 998, 999, -1
Value Labels*:* 998=Refused, 999=Don't know, -1=Missing

7. Level 2 control variables

7.a Gini

World Bank: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI

7.b LPI standard deviation

See description of Lived Poverty Index above

7.c Electoral system

Taken from: https://www.idea.int/data-tools/continent-view/Africa/44

Table A3: Overview of electoral systems and coding details:

	Year	Type	Code
Benin	2019	PR	0
Botswana	2014	Majoritarian	1
Burkina Faso	2015	PR	0
Cabo Verde	2016	Majoritarian	1
Cameroon	2013	Majoritarian	1
Côte d'Ivoire	2016	Majoritarian	1
eSwatini	2018	Majoritarian	1
Gabon	2018	Majoritarian	1
Gambia	2017	Majoritarian	1
Ghana	2016	Majoritarian	1
Guinea	2019	Mixed	0
Kenya	2017	Majoritarian	1
Lesotho	2017	Mixed	0
Liberia	2017	Majoritarian	1
Madagascar	2019	Majoritarian and PR	0
Malawi	2019	Majoritarian	1
Mali	2019	Majoritarian	1
Mauritius	2014	Majoritarian	1
Morocco	2016	PR	0
Mozambique	2014	PR	0
Namibia	2014	PR	0
Niger	2016	PR	0
Nigeria	2019	Majoritarian	1
São Tomé and Príncipe	2018	PR	0
Senegal	2017	Mixed	0
Sierra Leone	2018	Majoritarian	1
South Africa	2019	PR	0
Sudan	2015	Mixed	0
Tanzania	2015	Majoritarian	1
Togo	2018	PR	0
Tunisia	2019	PR	0
Uganda	2016	Majoritarian	1
Zambia	2016	Majoritarian	1
Zimbabwe	2018	Mixed	0

7.d Human Development Index

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi

7.e Growth

World Bank data: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG

8. Correlations of predictor variables

Table A4: Correlations of predictor variable

	Performance: President	Freedoms Factor	Free fair last national election	MPs listen	Level of corruption	Trust in institutions	Economic Performance	Handling narrowing income gaps	Social Services Performance	Overall direction of the country	Incumbent partisan	Discuss politics	Voted in the past
Much Worse	-0.051**	ns	-0.055**	-0.017**	-0.056**	ns	-0.114**	-0.075**	-0.093**	-0.111**	0.018**	ns	ns
Worse	-0.054**	0.021**	-0.045**	-0.056**	-0.037**	-0.025**	-0.118**	-0.072**	-0.081**	-0.118**	0.015**	-0.027**	0.037**
Better	0.085**	-0.012*	0.062**	0.076**	0.060**	0.037**	0.137**	0.091**	0.107**	0.119**	0.038**	0.028**	ns
Much Better	0.041**	ns	0.028**	0.037**	0.012*	0.013*	0.056**	0.036**	0.055**	0.047**	0.020**	ns	ns
Performance: President	1	-0.053**	0.312**	0.166**	0.302**	0.359**	0.422**	0.297**	0.368**	0.318**	0.232**	-0.012*	0.087**
Freedoms Factor		1	-0.074**	-0.020**	-0.034**	-0.077**	-0.081**	-0.061**	-0.075**	-0.057**	-0.052**	ns	-0.045**
Free fair last national election			1	0.112**	0.214**	0.265**	0.268**	0.190**	0.231**	0.223**	0.146**	-0.063**	0.151**
MPs listen				1	0.118**	0.229**	0.262**	0.197**	0.225**	0.130**	0.090**	ns	0.011*
Level of corruption					1	0.240**	0.321**	0.225**	0.260**	0.265**	0.132**	ns	0.051**
Trust in institutions						1	0.305**	0.218**	0.291**	0.222**	0.165**	-0.025**	0.093**
Economic Performance							1	0.664**	0.636**	0.351**	0.151**	ns	0.054**
Handling narrowing income gaps								1	0.522**	0.243**	0.111**	-0.014**	0.050**
Social Services Performance										0.263**	0.124**	-0.012*	0.049**
Overall direction of the country										1	0.138**	-0.019**	0.044**
Incumbent partisan											1	0.174**	0.173**
Discuss politics												1	0.069**
Voted in the past												0.069**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ns= non-significant