



Challenges Facing Women Scaling to Political Leadership in Post-Colonial Kenya: A Case of Gusiiland, South Western Kenya, 1963-2013

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Abstract: *In Gusiiland, women constitute a significant proportion of the electorates. However, since independence, no woman in Gusiiland has ever been voted to the National Parliament and the Senate despite their voting strength. A handful have been chosen to the County Assemblies of Kisii and Nyamira Counties which make up Gusiiland. This being the situation, this study sought to find out barriers to women's ascent to political leadership in Gusiiland in post-colonial Kenya, 1963-2013. The study was anchored on Liberal Feminist Theory and a case study design was employed. Respondents were obtained through stratified, purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. They provided data through an interview guide which was supplemented with secondary sources. The trustworthiness and legitimacy of the interview guide were tested through piloting, expert and peer judgment. Analysis was done through thematic analysis. The study revealed that the main challenges to women's ascent to political leadership during elections were patriarchy, women's failure to vote for women contestants, domination of party leadership by men and men's control of means of production. The study recommended that women be educated on the need to support women contestants during elections given their numerical strength.*

Keywords: *Challenges, Elections, Leadership, Patriarchy, Participation, Political, Gusiiland*

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1. Introduction

Globally, the low number of women representation in political leadership has attracted the attention of many scholars (Kabugi, 2016). According to Inter-Parliamentary Union (2012), women constitute 25.7% in America's parliament, 24.9% in Europe, 22.2% in the Sub-Saharan Africa, 18.3% in Asia 15.3% in the Pacific, and 15.9% in the Arab states. Apart from Rwanda where women who participate in competitive politics constitute 54%, other African Countries are disgustingly under-represented. According to Sossou (2011), a few women hold political positions. This is the case in Nigeria where

less than 7% hold political posts in government (Agbalajobi, 2010).

The Kenyan situation is not different. When Kenya attained independence in 1963, the first unitary government was formed with no woman elected or nominated to its parliament. In 1969, elections were held after dissolving the first parliament of independent Kenya (1963-1969). After elections, only one woman, Grace Akinyi Onyango was voted to the National Assembly to represent Kisumu Town. The 1974 general election saw 3 women chosen to the National Assembly and in 1979 4 were selected through competitive politics.

The sixth parliament had a higher number of legislators; 188 elected, 12 nominated and 2 ex-officials, this however did not expand the slots for women. Only 2 women were voted to the National Assembly. The 1997 elections gave four women an opportunity of being voted. In the 2002 elections, 9 got voted out of the 1,015 who vied for parliamentary seats. The number of those who were elected in the 2007 elections rose to 16. In the 2013 elections only 13 women representing 4.48% succeeded to parliament through competitive politics. This represents a very small fraction of Members of Parliament of women (Akello, 2010). Unfortunately, between 1963-2013 Gusiiland has never had a woman elected to parliament during general elections where they contest with men. The furthest a woman from this region has had an opportunity of entering parliament is through the nomination of Mrs. Catherine Moraa Nyamato in 1992 (Ndubi, 2009). This study was carried out on the basis of this background in order to find out the challenges that face in their attempt to ascent to political leadership since 1963 to 2013.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The issue of women under representation in political leadership in Kenya has generated a lot of political heat in the present time. Chief Justice David Maraga even recommended that the Parliament be dissolved because of lack of gender parity. It is even worse in Gusiiland where no woman has ever been voted to Parliament since independence despite their numerical strength. This is a situation that needs to be explored and addressed in order to find practical ways of meeting the constitutional requirements. Existing literature on challenges experienced by women in their quest for political leadership particularly in Gusiiland is scarce and has been given diverse methodological approaches. This study sought to add knowledge to the ongoing discourse on impediments to women's ascent to political leadership through general elections particularly in Gusiiland.

1.2 Research Objective

This study sought to explore barriers to women's ascension to political leadership in Gusiiland in post-colonial Kenya.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The Liberal Feminist Theory by Charles Fourier (1837) guided the study. According to this theory, humanity believes that women are inherently less mentally and bodily capable than men. On this basis, they are discriminated in most social, economic and political domains. The exponents of this theory believe that female subordination is deep-seated in established of customary and legal

barriers that block their entry to and accomplishment in competitive activities against men.

2. Literature Review

Most political positions globally are dominated by men. Due to this, a lot of interest has been paid on the issue of political disparity between men and women. In spite of their numerical strength, women's success in elections has been dismal. Samargandi, Shah & Almandeel (2020) carried out a study on socio-cultural determinants of women's empowerment in politics in the state of Punjab in Pakistan. The research established that women's success in politics in Punjab is not promising. A related study on Pakhtun society in Pakistan by Othman & Kalthum (2016) sought to establish the various socio-cultural impediments to women political empowerment. It was established that discriminatory social structure, patriarchy and feudalism decreased women political empowerment. The downgrading of women in decision-making and the challenges encountered by female politicians on their way to attaining political positions in Nigeria was surveyed by Okechukwu and Onyishi (2014). The findings established that socio-cultural, economic, political, organizational, legal and political factors have combined to explain the level of involvement of women in political and governmental decision making positions. Political party malpractices among others account for low political participation of rural women in 2013 party primary elections (Dziva, Makaye and Dube, 2013). This was through a survey they carried out on factors militating against women's active participation in rural party politics, as voters and candidates in Mberengwa rural district. Esidene & Abdul (2013) researched on gender parity in Nigerian's fourth republic's politics. It was established that men dominance in key party positions made the political landscape rugged and therefore denied women equal chances of being elected. Kosombo's (2012) study wanted to investigate the aspects upsetting women involvement in democratic politics in Africa. According to the study, customary view of women as lesser to men prevail as many people support traditional practices which augment the subservience of women. Gochhayat (2012) researched on the extent of political involvement of women in working as well as in the democratic process of the Panchayats and the hitches they encountered. The study exposed that political contribution of women in the operation as well as in the democratic process of the Panchayats is not adequate since political gatherings have not taken a lively part in teaching the voters. Ajibade, Ocheni, Mabe, & Adekunle (2012) on the other hand surveyed aspects working in contradiction of women vigorous involvement in politics in Ofu native

administration area of Kogi state Nigeria. The study exposed that absence of defined strategy by political parties for women political desire was going against their active contribution in politics. Wrzenski (2012) explored on the effect of being male or female on campaign contributions. The results showed that gender is often a statistically noteworthy determinant of the entire sum of contributions received, as well as the proportion donated to one's own campaign, and the ratio obtained from minor contributors. In Ghana, Sossou (2011) examined on the meaning of sex parity and women's insights of matters of gender equivalence and its consequences for social work education and practice. The study found that Ghanaian women lag behind in nearly all public scopes of lifecycle due to established and organizational obstacles such as women's numerous roles, social and customary obstructions and adverse outlooks and observation about women in common. Lenita (2011) researched on numerous approaches the Swedish political parties have assumed to surge the number of women in politics and to evaluate the parties' opinions on women's representation and rations. The study found that political parties in Sweden contest against each other and this has led to escalation of women in the political parties. Agbalajobi (2010), sought to study the issues of women's liberation and political involvement in Nigeria. It was recognized through this study that a huge percentage of the Nigerian feminine populace are not as economically robust as their male counterparts and this is a fundamental limitation to real women partaking in Nigerian politics. Johnson, (2010) established that women running as contestants and open-seat contenders may need more money to pull off a triumph either because they are running from the underprivileged point of a competitor or because the competition is particularly competitive. According to a study carried out by Jenkins (2007), women lack self-confidence in raising money for crusades. The study confirmed that women are more troubled than men about their capability to raise funds.

3. Methodology

The study was carried out in Gusiiland which is composed of Kisii and Nyamira Counties. A case study design was utilized as it provided the researcher an opportunity for an in-depth analysis of the challenges that women face in getting political leadership. The design helped to describe the meaning, or lived experience for various women and gave the researcher an opportunity to interpret the meaning of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2014). Data was gathered from 60 respondents who were obtained through stratified, purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. An interview guide and secondary sources were used to obtain data. The consistency of the interview guide was ensured through piloting. Information that was

recorded in audio tapes was transcribed and analyzed to avoid misinterpretation of meaning that may have originated from paraphrasing. Field data was analyzed and integrated with secondary data, then thematically organized according to the objective of the study. The data was analyzed using thematic content analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

For the purpose of clarity and easy understanding of findings from the respondents in this research, they are classified into socio-cultural, political and economic challenges. The findings and discussions commence with the socio-cultural ones.

4.1 Socio-Cultural Challenges to women in Political Leadership

From the responses collected, the study found that though there were many social barriers, the most notable one was women being 'enemy' number one of women contestants. From the responses recorded verbatim, the respondents revealed that women are the greatest enemies of their colleagues who sought political leadership. As per the findings of the study, most women regarded those who made attempts in seeking political leadership as rebels who have lost direction because they believe that no woman should rise against a man in whichever way. They felt that women did not have the capacity to lead. The slogan was, *ingaki omokung'u aratorae?* (how can a woman lead us?) On this basis, most women in Gusiiland preferred voting for man than their fellow women. This finding is in agreement with an observation made by Domingo, Holmes, O'Neil, Jones, Bird, Larson, Presler-Marshall, and Valters (2015) who observed that women have no confidence in their fellow women in decision making and political leadership. However, this finding contradicts the findings of Sanbonmatsu (2002) who observed that voters and women in particular are not biased against female candidates. These contradictory findings call for further studies to establish the position of women in relation to female political candidates. These contradicting findings could be based on the level of democracy or the level of political maturity in a given country. According to Mrs. Seme who stood from Ichuni ward but was beaten had this to say:

Abakungu ba Abagusii imbaraitaba koragwa na abakungu bamwabo. Nigo babwate endamwamu ekio kere egetango ekenene ase abakungu gochorwa ase chikura na abakungu bamwabo. Nigo abakungu babwate ribero nabakungu baria

bakoboria chikura na nigo bakobwatana na abasacha gokwana amangana amakongu igoro ya abakungu baria bakoboria chikura (Women of Abagusii have not accepted the idea of being administered by fellow women). They are envious of each other and this is the greatest barrier women competitors face while seeking political leadership. They join men in pursuing caustic attacks on fellow women who seek political control.

This thinking by women not to support women contestants may need a lot civic education on women so that they can find it rational to support fellow women.

According to Benta Nyaboke who stood for Member of County Assembly in Nyamira County:

The attack targets her ideas, her person, how many children she has outside marriage, on her single-motherhood status, on purported numbers of her sleeping companions, actual or illusory. This untrue character manslaughter disrupts the self-confidence and self-esteem in women aspirants and their supporters and hence makes them fail to capture the seats they pursue.

This situation is not only noted to exist in Gusiiland but also in other parts of the world where women sought political leadership through elections (Huber & Kammerud, 2016). Their findings indicate that women not only experienced spoken and bodily violence but also are subjected to intimidations together with their enthusiasts and husbands. This shows that threats against women candidates occurs in many parts of the world and derailed them from ascending to political leadership through elections. Most of the threats are planned and executed by men who feel that women are supposed to execute subordinate roles. This practice and conviction seems persistent and therefore, women in Gusiiland may not in the near future ascent to political leadership unless women themselves purpose to support their colleagues.

At the same time, most of the respondents revealed that the many family roles women played was a serious challenge to their ascend in political leadership. Tape recorded data revealed the following information from Mrs. Nyakango from Gesima Ward in Kitutu Masaba:

Women have to strike a balance between family life with leadership demands that involve late hours and much travelling. They have to play the nurturing roles of mother, wife, sister, grandmother etc. The limited time women have

denied them valuable time necessary for networking.

Further comments were made by Nyamoita of Bogiakumu ward who uttered:

People are opposed to electing women because of reasons like absenteeism during pregnancy and child birth as well as their frequent movements because of transfers of their husbands.

Mokeira had this to say:

My role as a mother, primary care provider and a politician has not been easy. I have to apportion my time accordingly by pinching myself so much to make time for my home before attending party meetings. Worse still, my husband does not want me to keep a house help, making it very difficult to muddle through the many demands.

The multiple roles of women which include reproduction, production and social reproduction impact on their capacity to effectively participate in politics in Gusiiland. The roles are too demanding making their social mobility difficult yet this is a vital component in politics. M/s Bochere from Moticho ward affirmed this in the following expression:

Social mobility is indeed a vital factor in politics. This implies that women must be ready to make several trips to campaign and to attend conclave meetings which are sometimes held in the night...Furthermore, since legitimate authority is naturally assigned to husbands in the family, women's ability to effectively negotiate political life is dependent on men's consent.

The effect of the multiple roles of women towards their ascent to political leadership was not only felt in Gusiiland but across other countries such as Zimbabwe. According to the findings by Mwale & Dodo (2017), the Shona believed that women were meant to shepherd their husbands, children, wash clothes, utensils and dig and be led by men. With this finding and that from the current study in Gusiiland, it evident that jostling for political leadership by women is overwhelmed by the many roles they execute. Unless an alternative way is established through which some roles could be taken away from them, their rise to political leadership will still be hindered.

The process of socializing children equally had an impact in their view of what the future roles of women and men will be. According to the respondents; the socialization of children to expect and accept different roles in life has

created a social mechanism for the development of values that engender the several forms of discrimination against the female sex. The greatest psychological weapon available to man is the length of time they have enjoyed dominance over women, who have taken it for granted theirs is to lead as women accept to be led.

This was revealed by all respondents who said:

People in my family keep on asking, "what are you woman looking for, your place is not in politics, go and stay with your family, you don't respect men". Men make almost all decisions single handedly without consulting a woman.

Such 'superior- inferior' relationship has perpetually left women in Gusiiland in the governed position and therefore denied them the chance of being considered for political leadership. As M/s. Nyaboke observed:

Engencho abagusii bakinirie, omokungu noyokogamberwa, tari oyokogambera abanto. Abakungu nigo bakinirie koba abaitongo, bakogamberwa na gotaba mamincha ya abasacha ase enchera ende yonsi. Igo nemuma korwanereria omosacha ekerogo ase obogambi (The socialization process does not model women to be leaders instead women are socialized to be humble, to be led and should not go against men in any situation. Therefore, women belief that it is a taboo to stand against a man fighting for the same position).

Such socialization has persisted among the Abagusii making the community to feel that women who participate in politics are violating the community's norms. When men stand for political positions people take it positively but when women do it people feel this is straying because from historical times, women's role in the community has been understood to be taking care of the family.

This finding concur with that of Tucker (1999) who established that women in America are socialized in such a way that they perceive political leadership as a domain of men and therefore those engaged themselves in politics were going against societal expectations of the role of women. These findings could suggest that from the early years, children should be socialized in such a way that they can accept to vote for either gender during their quest for political leadership. This may propose that women are politically disadvantaged because they were socialized to believe that leadership is a preserve of men.

Some respondents revealed that women fear being labeled names. They expounded this by saying:

People tend to focus on the candidate's personal life, such as womanhood, marital life and alleged

personal escapades, instead of celebrating and encouraging her as the only one woman who at least has a voice in matters that shape our everyday rural life.

M/s Nyambane from Ichuni ward remarked:

Women who vie for public office have to consider the risk of being labeled 'loose' or 'unfit' as mothers or wives, and being socially stigmatized. Such considerations make many women shy away from politics, and positions that put them in the public eye. Moreover, women who want to get married have to present themselves as good marriage material by being meek and submissive. Such women are branded "prostitutes", "these unmarried women", "iron ladies", "witches" and these "disrespectful women"

The Abagusii have historically been a patriarchal community. Patriarchy as a system of male domination has shaped women's relationship in politics. It has transformed male and female into men and women and constructs the hierarchy of gender relations where men are privileged. Patriarchy has been used by the Abagusii to place women within the private arena of home as mothers and wives and men in the public orb. Women leadership suffers by virtue of cultural and patriarchal stereotypes and beliefs. The Abagusii have historically been a patriarchal community where men are regarded as decision makers, and therefore persuading the electorate to vote for female candidates has yielded little results. The family is the main institution of patriarchy which is an important concept in explaining gender inequality. Literarily, it means "the rule of the father"; more broadly, it refers to a society ruled and dominated by men over women. This is inherent in most African families and the family plays an important role in maintaining this patriarchal order across generations. Patriarchal norms limit women's political expressions to entertaining and voting for a candidate preferred by their husbands, most likely men. Men think it abominable to be under a woman's leadership, that in line with the traditions of the land, men are naturally the leaders while women ought to be the followers or the subordinates. Women are expected to be the ones to nurture and take care of the home and they are not expected to be vocal in the presence of men. Therefore, in case where politics is considered a game for men, even with increased educational as well as economic qualifications on the side of women, this underlying factor still affects the way women are perceived and treated as the society have bestowed upon men such mentality that women are not supposed to be at par with them.

Some respondents revealed that the low level of education of women and is a big hindrance to their pursuit of political

leadership. The following response by Mrs. Nyamato illustrates their sentiments:

It is very difficult for women to talk, to argue, to press for their concerns because of limited education. Although there is no consistent correlation between literacy rates and women's political representation, nomination processes require a minimum level of literacy. This prevents women from registering as candidates for elections.

This was affirmed by Mrs Omanga who observed:

It is very difficult to win elections if you are illiterate. Competitors will go around de-campaigning you, telling electorates that you will not be in a position to effectively represent them given that parliamentary proceedings, memos and minutes are written in English. Also, you must be literate to read newspapers and reports to be a breast of development events. So, if you are illiterate, then people will not vote you.

At the same time, most families, parents prefer to send their sons to school, instead of their daughters whom they feel would eventually get married and thus get incorporated into another family. Politics require lobbying skills and networking which can be achieved when women are educated.

While making the same observation, Maloiy, Jonck & Goujon (2016) noted that education is a facilitating reason for female leaders as it gave integrity, promote information seeking and decision-making skills. Formal educational actions pass on leadership necessary expertise such as communication ability. This could imply that the low level of education among most women in Gusiland is to a large extent a hindrance not only to civic education on why they should vote for women contestants but also on the significance of involving more women in decision making decisions.

On the issue of regular and mandatory consultation with their husbands and family members, the following verbatim data was provided by one of the respondents:

It is very difficult for a woman to make up her mind to enter politics. Once she makes up her own mind, then she has to prepare her husband and her children and her family. In most cases, the family objects and she has to concede with their decision or risk being labeled a spoiled woman. This is not the case with a man who simply wakes up in the morning and decides to run for political leadership without or with minimum consultation.

M/s Nyamwamu revealed that:

If you don't get support from your husband, immediate and extended family members, the rest will view you suspiciously. Women at leadership positions at national level are therefore viewed as women with "loose morals and non-conformist".

Additionally, Mrs. Mosinya had the following to say:

My husband is my biggest problem because when it is time for her to attend meetings that is when he demands her services which always generate into unnecessary arguments. I may not stop going or I get angry and ignore him in order to attend the meeting. With such a scenario, I do not intend to get any far with politics even though I enjoy it.

M/s Nyakango remarked:

My husband edges me on to stay in politics but he complains any time I am away for a long time at political meetings. He usually monitors my movements. My children are also on me any time they don't see me at home. The party also needs me because I am a branch women organizer.

In fact, all women interviewed concurred that women's confinement to domestic roles has a serious challenge to their participation in public life with some adding that they have to tread cautiously with their husbands and other family members to avoid some unpleasant exchanges and quarrels. Similarly, Mrs. Mokeira remarked:

Though I am a housewife, being a mother and a politician is such a hard task. The children and my husband need me at home. My husband being the demanding type, who wants me to render all services and attention in the world to him, makes me not very active at my position though I have the desire and all it takes to be a good politician. This makes my participation in politics very difficult.

It is clear from these statements that the husbands and children are major constraints on the women's inability to pursue their political careers successfully. In the Gusii society, men dominate and are regarded as head of family. Women are expected to seek permission from their husband before embarking on any venture/enterprise. And in a situation where such permission is not granted, the interviewee noted that they have no other option than to drop whatever ambition we having, be it political or others. Some respondents revealed that their political 'ground' was loose because they belong to two worlds; that is where they were born and where they are married. Some of the responses illustrate this. According to the

respondents, unlike men, women do not have constituents, they move from their father's home to their husband's home where they are like refugees. They have no base from which to develop contacts with the people or build knowledge and experience about political issues. Importance is attached by electorates in voting for someone who grew up in the community. All the respondents revealed after marriage they ceased to belong to their place of birth and if they wanted to go back to contest from there the male opponents would always insist on the issue of not bringing development there because she now belongs to another community, sub-tribe or clan. If she stood from where she is married, it becomes a big challenge because for votes.

A woman is therefore a member of the community or clan by marriage and therefore has little political networking. This is used against women political aspirants from regions outside their current constituency, they are often denied electoral bid, for it is assumed that politicians tend to fail if they go for positions without being an indigene of that particular constituency they are contesting for. Based on the fact that a woman comes from a particular area and upon marriage moves to another, in the political environment it is conceived that the woman is neither here nor there, that she is somewhat an alien and therefore should not be given the right that should be for the "son of the soil".

FIDA (2018) observed that women are politically prisoners of their husbands' political prisoners. Further, the women body noted that until when women will emancipated themselves from such a prison, their quest for political leadership is still a mirage. It is therefore necessary for men to free women who want to seek political positions.

4.2 Political Challenges Facing women in Political Leadership

According to the respondents, the political landscape for women in Gusiiland was rugged and skewed towards enabling men ascend to political leadership. It was characterized by massive intimidation and threats or abuses together with biasness towards the incumbent. This situation according to Mama Seme, scared women contestants who chose to bow out instead of losing their lives. This was exacerbated by the fact that most of political networking in Gusiiland took place at night in hotels. Ms .Otachi had the following to narrate:

Political meetings are often held late at night on an adhoc basis, making attendance difficult for women, who face greater personal risk in travelling alone in the night. Most political party

networking and caucus meetings are held in the night. Such nocturnal meetings held at unsociable hours are not conducive for the female folks. Therefore, women shy off.

Bhartiya (2017) noted that in terms of fighting cruelty against women, there repeatedly exist gaps and uncertainties in the laws criminalizing aggression. Laws tend to be piecemeal, focusing on precise types of hostility rather than dealing broadly with all forms of cruelty against women. Despite the presence of the laws, the reinforcement of the same is often frail. This therefore implies that as long as there are weak mechanisms of ensuring violence against women is curbed, even suitable and potentially able women will be barred from winning in elective positions.

This was quite unfavourable to women contestants in Gusiiland who were socially boxed into a situation dominated by men. One respondent revealed that before women join the game of politics, they are already beaten because the referees who are men tailor political manifestos and rules for political parties. When the time of playing politics comes in Gusiiland, women are reduced the substitute bench. They can only be given a ticket by their respective political parties when no suitable male candidate exists. Because in most cases, it is a big dream to imagine that no suitable male candidate will exist, they can never be given a ticket and thus resort contesting through unpopular political parties. This just reduces them to mere participants with minimum or no chances of winning in any election. A similar observation was made by USAID (2014) that even political parties, women are not given leadership positions but their official involvement is often restricted to supportive tasks inside party 'women's wings'. This reduces their chances of winning in elective politics. Such a scenario will reduce women to mere political 'hecklers' with no consequences as enjoy political leadership.

From the responses, politics in Gusiiland is mucky because women are intimidated through hard hitting propaganda, verbal abuse and use of derogatory language to demean women. The propaganda aims at tarnishing their reputation and denting their image in an attempt to discourage voters from voting for them. It is characterized by personal attacks on morality and dignity, family, or ethnicity. Men apply unconventional means such as spreading printed, maligning information to discourage voters from voting for women candidates. They create a hostile political environment by paying out money to hecklers to boo down the female candidates at political rallies. Sometimes, women are offered money to drop their campaign or candidacy.

Apart from the time the meetings were held, the place where they were held was equally a big challenge to women who aspired for political leadership. Mrs. Gesicho had this to say:

Meetings of most parties and activist take place at night and in locations such as hotels and clubs which are regarded by society as places exclusively reserved for men. Therefore, most women would not want to attend such meetings for lack of time and for fear of being regarded as “irresponsible” to be in such places...” women who attend such meetings in such places have, according to all the respondents are labeled as prostitutes.

Politics is a game for the strong hearted a dirty game where women do not easily fit in. Men hold clandestine midnight meetings at secret locations most times making it impossible for women to be part of them. This excludes women from participating fully in party issues. The party rules are not explicit on the issue of gender, the leadership hierarchy of the party is dominated by men who more or less serve as gate keepers and the party is not under any obligation to be gender sensitive when it comes to selection of candidates. They formulate the rules of the game and define the standards for evaluation. Mrs. Nyamoita confirmed this with the following expressions:

Most of the political parties have no definite policy on women. Rather, they prefer to relegate women and use them as supporters in the parties. Women are therefore made to continue to “cheer up” men than engage them in the activities that will uplift their status within the parties.

Party manifestos have no practical and clear structured on how women fit in the leadership arrangement. The selection and nomination process within political parties is biased against women. Men formulate the rules of the political game. Political life is organized according to male norms and values, and in some cases even male lifestyles. “Men are the major determinants of political actions and inactions generally concerned with the perpetuation of power of the state...when women compete with men for access to political power, they do so on the terms already established by men for competition among themselves. The Ford People and Kenya Social Congress were formed by individuals within Gusiiland. These individuals somehow are the backbone of these parties by providing a lot of logistical and financial assistance when and where needed amongst other things. Relying on their wealth and logistics, they influence the decisions that are taken within the parties, they secure party nominations for candidates of their choice, sponsor their elections including manipulating the electoral process, thus creating an unfair advantage for a few to the detriment of others. This was even more confusing when a seat specifically reserved for

women was created. A respondent, Mrs. Nyamwamu, revealed:

The electorate was not accustomed to women candidates. They also didn’t understand the new women representative seat and some of them said that they would vote not for this position at all. They thought that I am only going to represent women and therefore men shouldn’t vote that position.

M/s Benta Nyaboke said:

Some male rivals confused the electorate (by arguing) that women could not vie for any other positions apart from that of women’s representative, men are highly rated in society and the propaganda was taken as gospel truth.

According to Mrs. Ombuna:

When I first went to politics I wanted to contend against men, people kept telling me to run for women’s representative, saying I had no place for running normal seats, as there are seats reserved just for women. So I ran eventually for women representative.

4.3 Economic Challenges to women in Political Leadership

Most of the respondents revealed that women were outdone because they were not “smart” in corruption and bribery which in ekegusii, they coined it as ogoserwa. Bribery of voters took place at night when most women could not afford to move around freely. The situation was worsened by the fact that women were stinchy. According to one of the respondents, ya mokungu tiyana koriegwa keu (meaning, are very hard to part with money or what they have laid their hand on). The respondent continued to reveal that although it was a malpractice, men are generous but women are mean. This situation only helped to worsen the political blight because electorates only rewarded those who had “scratched their back”, simply meaning that a hand that had stretched itself could be assisted to ascend to political leadership.

It was also revealed by all the respondents that the irregular use of campaign funds served to further skew the odds against women candidates most of whom are ordinarily less financially endowed than their male counterparts. Respondents noted flagrant issuing of handouts by male candidates; thus predisposing the voters to request for handouts from women candidates and where they wouldn’t acquiesce this bestowed an unfair advantage to their opponents. Women faced financial difficulties in organizing campaigns. They said each time they

approached electorates with a political message, money was demanded from them. The women said they usually sponsor their own political campaign and activities with their own money which is not always enough.

As revealed by Mrs. Moikobu:

It is difficult for women to contest and win elections because politics is tied to 'cash and carry' arrangements whereby elections are won by the highest bidder. The electoral process ranging from party primaries, public campaigns, to the election process is monetized and this puts women in a disadvantaged position.

Voter bribery is a huge issue in Gusiiland. Campaigns entail a lot of spending or a form of bribery often referred to as "vote buying". Most respondents in this research claimed that votes are not properly campaigned for but often bought from people. Men manipulate the economic situation of the country by embarking on various forms of money politics by giving out money, food stuff and other material things to voters or communities as a whole in exchange for their support. This puts women at a disadvantage when they cannot measure up, since no one would be interested in what they have to say or stand to offer in advance. This also leads to women losing support of their fellow women. The argument is that because women are the poorer group in the community, they are often tempted to accept what is offered to them in exchange for their votes to the detriment of those that have nothing to offer. Politics in this setting is not based on merit thus a big challenge for women.

The issue of bribery of voters was noted by Tabachnik (2011) who noted that due to the desperate want of people—particularly in the rural area—to obtain money, they were disposed to accept kickbacks in order to provide for their families, pay school fees or buy clothing. Political parties—including both the opposition and the ruling party—comprehend this enormous need so they go door-to-door to purchase votes ahead of elections—a kilo of sugar in exchange for a mark on the ballot. This thus indicates that voters' bribery is not confined to Gusiiland but also to other parts of the world. This calls for a global fight against this vice.

It was found that the cost of organizing campaigns and mobilizing support to win elections is high and is only men who have the kind of money that is required for this venture. This is demonstrated in the following remarks by Mrs. Mwebi:

Men control state power and use the privilege in diverting funds in facilitating their political activities. Women lack access to such funds and

they may not be inclined towards diverting state funds for personal use.

Politics is increasingly becoming commercialized. A lot of money is needed to participate in politics. The interview revealed that though most of the respondents were engaged in one economic venture or the other, they could not raise enough funds to engage in national campaign, make posters and billboards, pay people who run errands for them, fueling of vehicles and many other activities associated with campaigns.

Politics is increasingly becoming commercialized. A lot of money is needed to participate in politics. The interview revealed that though most of the respondents were engaged in one economic venture or the other, they could not raise enough funds to engage in national campaign, make posters and billboards, pay people who run errands for them, fueling of vehicles and many other activities associated with campaigns. To overcome this challenge, Ogbogu (2012) noted that it was necessary for women to be empowered economically by making certain that they have access to credit facilities. This could possibly make them economically independent.

All the respondents indicated that women have limited resources. They have no money of their own; the money belongs to their fathers, their husbands or their in-laws. Given the rising cost of running an effective campaign, this poses a serious hurdle for ascending to political leadership. Financial resources are important during campaign for items including logistics, campaign materials, and media, as well as recruitment and sustenance of campaign teams—all important to enabling candidates to effectively reach voters. A study by USAID (2010) on elections in Kenya established that economic crippledness through unequal access to land and other assets made women a much inferior hope for official segment credits. This will continue being a serious challenge to women political contestants because even in a situation of joint purchase, women name are in most cases not included in the land title deed.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

From the data gathered, it is evident that despite their exposure to education, Christianity and various constitutional amendments, the socio-cultural practices of the Abagusii have historically disadvantaged women in all ways, politics inclusive. Historically, the community is patriarchal and therefore most decisions are centered on a man. Women have a role of taking care of the family and roles associated with child bearing and caring. Therefore, a woman's life is private thus limiting their interaction

with the public. The socialization processes does not model women to be leaders but are socialized to be humble and led by men.

At the same time, data collected revealed that women could not make decisions single handedly. While aspiring for political leadership, they had to get the consent of their husband and other family members. In most cases, the husband and family members object and she has to concede with their decision or risk being labeled as a rebel. This is made worse by the fact that marriage makes women have a weak political foundation in the area they are married. People prefer omomura bwe riroba (son of the soil) instead of a woman who has just been 'brought'. Belonging to two 'worlds'; place of birth and marriage confuses a woman's political bid and place men a notch higher because they 'belong to the soil' and have a long experience of their home area.

It was further established that although women constitute a large proportion of the voters, they are jealousy of each other and join the bandwagon of those waging sharp attacks on fellow women seeking political leadership. Some call them omokungu omosareku or omotayayi (a spoiled woman or prostitute). The social life of the Abagusii has been historically characterized by women listening to and not being listened to. Culturally, when a woman had an issue she wanted to pass across in ebaraza (gathering), she relayed the information to a man who in turn stood and talked on her behalf. Although this is not the case by now, the historical effect of such socialization still haunts the current crop of women who seek political leadership.

For a long time, the Abagusii preferred taking their sons to school than girls. Even presently, when resources are scarce in a family, parents give boys first priority in matters of education. Although this study was not out to establish the relationship between literacy rates and women's involvement in political activities, education facilitates easy articulation of political issues. It is very difficult for women to talk, to argue, to press for their concerns because of limited education. Additionally, making rational decisions on issues related to voting, civic education and putting across their agenda during campaigns require education.

The findings of the study established the political landscape is so rugged for women who sought political leadership. Women are used to lobby, campaign and support parties but rarely get a chance to occupy decision making positions in party structures. Men formulate the rules of the political game. Political decisions within political parties are organized according to male norms and values. Men constitute a larger proportion of party membership and therefore when it comes to electing a

candidate for political leadership, the game is skewed in favour of men who use the tyranny of their numbers to ascend.

It was also established that although the issue of gender equity exists in most party manifestos and resolutions, they have no practical arrangements on how women fit in leadership arrangements. The party rules are not explicit on the issue of gender, the leadership hierarchy of the party is dominated by men who more or less serve as gate keepers and the party is not under any obligation to be gender sensitive when it comes to selection of candidates.

Political thuggery and intimidation is a major impediment to women who aspire to take political leadership among the Abagusii. In all cases, women who had contested revealed that their quest for political leadership was affected by hard hitting propaganda, verbal abuse and use of derogatory language meant to demean them. These are meant to tarnish their reputation in an attempt to discourage voters from voting for them. Male opponents equally pay out money to hecklers to boo down the female candidates at political rallies.

It was also revealed by the respondents that party meetings take place in hotels, sometimes go up to night and in most cases they attend such meetings as members and not as officials of the party or at times their role is to be part of the audience or entertainers. Under such circumstances, the findings of this study established that this is a serious obstacle to women who aspire for political elective responsibilities because those who attend meetings in such places are labeled as 'loose', irresponsible or prostitutes. At the same time, it was established that women aspirants fear travelling at rate hours which they called maiso abakungu (women's eyes).

The study established that although money is an important determinant of who wins in elections, women were financially handicapped. They said that each time they approached electorates with a political message, money was demanded. It was realized during the interview that some women were engaged in some economic ventures. However, they could not raise enough money to engage in campaigns, make posters and billboards, pay people who run errands for them, fuel vehicles, engage the media and pay nomination fees of between Ksh 5,000 to 20,000 for parliamentary aspirants and Ksh 2,000 to 5,000 for civic education. Moreover, most women interviewed that they are not as generous as men thus the saying, yamokungu tiyanya koriegwa keu (meaning, it is not easy to 'eat' a woman's money).

Historically, it was revealed through this study that assets and other means of production of the family were entrusted to male members. This relegated woman as custodians and managers (omokungu) whose power did

not include disposing them. Consequently, if there was no well-wisher or the family failed to sponsor the women, their dream of winning in elections remained a mirage. Additionally, most respondents revealed that votes are not properly campaigned for but often bought from people. Politicians engage in money politics by giving money, foodstuff and other materials to voters or the community as a whole in exchange for their support. This puts women at a disadvantage when they cannot measure up. Even their fellow women fail to support them because most of them compared to men are poor and therefore tempted to what is offered to them in exchange of their votes.

One key challenge to women victory in general elections is women themselves. They offer no support to themselves although they constitute the majority of the voters in Gusiiland. To this end, the respondents suggested that women should without jealousy rally behind any woman who stood up in an election. The idea of

mokanyarebe (so and so's wife) getting political leadership in order to go and take care of her family members should be an issue of the past.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the various findings established in this study, it is recommended that women undergo civic education through Non-Governmental Organizations, women leaders and the government. The education will seek to empower women to cherish women contestants and fully support them. This is because regardless of the socio-cultural, political and economic challenges women encounter, if women can fully support women contestants then, victory is assured. In any case, as per the latest population census, they constitute the majority of the voters. This means that if they decide to fully support women contestants, victory will be assured.

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