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The Role of Patriarchy, Women's Participation in Electing a Woman into Top Political Leadership of Kenya

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Abstract:
Leadership is not only contextual, but it's also significantly influenced by the patriarchal society. Unequivocally there is no consensus as to why women are underrepresented in the top echelons of the country. Since the inception, of the Kenyan government patriarchy has taken the center stage and even the women who fought for independence were never considered for leadership but were relegated to the periphery. The 2022 general elections in Kenya come at a time when the two-third gender rule has never been implemented. Even with Maraga ruling that the president dissolves parliament for failing to implement the two-thirds gender rule, it was also unheeded. Most counties have nominated a woman for the position of deputy governor. On the other hand, the patriarchal government has presented and nominated a woman for the position of Deputy President in the Azimio coalition. This is a position that has been received with mixed feelings, some with celebration and others with disgust. This disgust is based on their particular inclination. The question remains was she put there with good faith, or it's just to become a stepladder to help the Azimio coalition to gain mirage? Bearing in mind the entrenchment of the patriarchal ideologies in most tribes in Kenya will men vote for a woman in the office of the deputy president in Kenya? These are the issues feminist leaders are wrestling with. The purpose of this paper is to establish the barriers that hinder women from being elected to the top echelon of the leadership of this country, and secondly, to discuss the role of patriarchy in keeping women away from the decision-making table and the top leadership of the nation. The paper provides a solution to enhancing women's election into the top leadership in Kenya. It suggests that men must champion the election of a woman into top leadership. It contributes toward breaking the glass ceiling and political gender inequality, and suggests inclusivity as a way forward in having a woman in the top leadership of a country.
Also, the partnership between men and women to support and elect a woman leader is a prerogative. Breaking the glass ceiling and electing a woman to the top leadership position of being the deputy president in Kenya brings hope and inspiration not only to the Kenyan women but also to the whole society.

Keyword: Patriarchy, Gender inequality, Gender inclusivity, women leadership, and sticky glass ceilling

1. Introduction

Global politics indicates that politics is a male domain and is extremely hostile to women advancing for political positions. A report by United Nations women indicated that only twenty-four women are serving as heads of state in twenty-four countries (UN women, 2020). The report further indicated that gender parity may not be realized even in the next 130 years. In addition, the United Nations report indicated it's only in thirteen countries where women are in government and in ten countries where a woman is the head of state. This is a worrying trend that raises an alarm to all women activists and all those who advocate for gender parity. In Africa, women's participation in both parliament and local government is 29% and 17% respectively. Even though women in Kenya face very few legal obstacles to hinder their participation in politics, yet if compared with their male counterparts, their participation and election are insignificant. The determining factors for the situation are gender, cultural, economic and political issues. In addition, the social context of technology, education, state market relations, and framing among others contribute to the low number of women in the political space (Gerson and Peiss, 1985; Johnston *et al.*, 1995)

Since Kenya attained their independence in 1963, this country has never had a woman as a deputy or a president. With the devolution, a few women had become governors, members of parliament, and several other members of the local assembly. Moreover, according to UN reports, women are also predominantly marginalized in occupying state leadership roles. Further, the report asserted that only 11 women hold positions as heads of state (UN report on women in politics 2019). Women in ministerial positions are also lagging behind their male counterparts. In terms of cabinet membership, women make up only 17% of the cabinet ministers globally. This demonstrates that the higher levels of politics are extremely male dominant and women's roles are insignificant. The ability to achieve gender equality has been emphasized by the UN millennium development goals number five which states that there is a need to increase women's political participation as a key objective of gender equality (UN SGD, 2019). The two-third gender rule as entrenched in the constitution is far from being a reality in Kenya, notwithstanding the affirmative action that increases the number of

women nominations. With the low number of elected members of parliament in Kenya, it is evident that women in politics face various obstacles. So, the problem of women's participation, representation in decisions making, and sharing of the national cake remain a thorny issue in Kenya today. After Kenya realized independence in 1963 it was clear that women were absent in the first parliament. During Madaraka day on 1ˢᵗ June 2022, the President in his speech indicated that the first woman to be nominated as a permanent secretary was Margret Kobia in 1987, while honorable Nyiva Mwenda was the first cabinet secretary in1995 (Kenyatta's speech on Madaraka day June 2022). Likewise from 2012-2022, eleven women have been appointed as cabinet secretaries. We have had two women vying for the position of president these are honorable Charity Ngilu and Martha Karua yet got negligent votes less than one percent of the entire casted votes. It's therefore clear that women still find a sticky glass ceiling on their upward mobility in their endeavor to attain top leadership positions in this country. After Kenya's independence in 1963, it was clear that women were absent in the first parliament. The landscape can be described as an inheritance of the colonial mindset that stigmatized marginalized women and domesticated them in their homes to take care of the welfare of their families. This is contrary to the fact that women participated in the struggle for independence and supported the Mau Mau fighters. This was asserted by Kamau as follows:

> The independent state in Kenya emerged from a nationalist movement that involved women in heroic roles. Most of these women-led struggles were against colonial domination; they protested against colonial oppression, fed and protected veterans during the fight for Uhuru, led segments of the resistance armies against colonialism, and effectively participated in the political negotiations leading to independence (Kamau, 2010: 12).

In 1952, the Maendeleo ya Wanawake (progress for women) was established by the colonialists to advocate for raising the standards of living and political participation. According to Nzomo (1975), the same Kanu government failed to co-opt the very aggressive women and instead opted for the conservatism of women in leadership positions, presumably those who cannot challenge the status quo. This clearly shows how men were not willing and ready to share leadership with women. This continuation of patriarchal structures, strategies, and practices continued to suppress women from attaining political freedom and space in politics. With the promulgation of the 2010 constitution and the entrenchment of the two-third gender rule, we may expect that there will be much change. Instead, it has only been implemented at the county level with women being elected as women representatives with disregard for top echelon leadership.

Maternal ideologies state that a woman is compassionate about nurturing and caring about their children. It's about winning the hearts of women through persuasion and so political women leaders are evaluated differently than men in the maternal ideologies play a key role (Muinde, 2017). All eyes are on the national elections envisaged on 9ᵗʰ August 2022 to test whether men will support and elect the Azimio Umoja coalition that nominated Martha Karua who would become the first Kenyan woman to hold the position of the deputy president if the coalition wins the elections.

2. Obstacles to Women's Participation in Politics

Increasing women's participation in politics is one of the gender equalities in the United Nations sustainable development goals. However, political structure stands have kept away many women outside the arena of politics (Deckman and Swers, 2019; 102). Walby (1989) asserts that politics is not a private matter but a public affair. Being a public affair, therefore, it's reserved for men and not women because women are expected to be in the private sphere in homes and family domesticated at homes. In traditional forms of patriarchy (private), women's subordination was explained through its exploitation at the household level, whereas the evolved form of patriarchy (public) is revolving around women's oppression in public spheres such as workplaces, churches, or the state. The same has been borrowed by African states that women are subordinate and should be under the rule of a man in their home while in the state the same pattern of male dominance is advanced in the political structures.

3. The Political Structure of Politics

It is argued that women in politics are seen as political actors but they are pawns to be used by the political maneuvers of men (Collier, 1974). According to data by the United Nations women, it states that 70% of parliamentarians are men. This indicates that politics are male-centered, male-dominated, and male-identified. Gender role ideologies place women in the private sphere of the home as wives and mothers. Such gender role ideologies are seen in politics even in the placement and distribution of roles to the women who have been considered to be part of the political elite. According to the UN women's report in 2019, women in ministerial positions are mainly placed to lead in areas of gender, youths, social affairs, family, children, youth, elderly, disabled, environment, natural resources, and energy. While male counterparts are placed in ministerial positions such as defense, internal security foreign affairs, defense, and finance among others. This translates that the political sphere is designed for men with the exclusion of women in many ways (Ackelsberg Shanley, (2018). Parties are the gatekeeper to parliament and other key leadership positions. In essence, parliament is a symbol of democracy and should not advance any discrimination against women. It is in this breath that the UN general assembly strongly encourages political parties to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women. Patriarchal structures of politics impose more barriers on women who are eyeing political positions, for instance, if a woman desires to join a party, there is a huge amount of money to be paid. Secondly, the campaign requires women to be out working late at night, so it's said not to favor mothers with small babies. In general, political structures have made it difficult for women to strike a balance between work and family. The decision-making power in most of the Kenya communities is vested in men. This entrenchment is more serious in Kenya rural areas where roles are even gendered with women identified with nurturing, child-rearing, and in general, subordinate roles. This kind of thinking

continues to hinder women's entry into formal politics and also suggests that women are shy in supporting a woman for a political position.

4. Patriarchal Socio-Economic Structures

In recent times, women have advanced in education and some are career women. So, the higher the rate of women in employment and business and the more educated they are, the more political participation from women is expected. Nevertheless, Courage Mlambo (2019) indicated that socio-economic barriers predominantly constrain and obstruct women's active political participation. Women's participation in the labor force has a contributing factor to the lack of women's participation in politics. In the labor market, it's only less than 30% of women are in senior leadership in organizations (Thornton, 2019). In addition, sexual division of labor favors men and has prevented access to financial resources for women bearing in mind that political campaigns are expensive. So, lacking financial resources is a major obstacle to winning any election race (Palmieri, 2011).

5. Patriarchal Cultural Structure

The patriarchal structure of culture has deliberately continued the marginalization of women in political activities. In societies, where patriarchy is strong, women are not only limited by society but also limit themselves in terms of opportunities (Inglehart and Norris, 2003). The self-limiting and internalization have made many women feel that politics is not for them and should not be a priority for women (Gouws & Coetzee, 2019). Defensive behavior has led women to develop lower self-esteem, lack of confidence, and lower competency to succeed in politics. In a society where egalitarian values are embraced, there are more women willing to engage in politics. Where stronger patriarchal structures exist, they hold traditional values that influence the advancement progress, and participation of women in a political process. Such patriarchal values continue to domesticate women in their homes. Religious cultural values dictate that a virtuous woman should portray wifely submissiveness, religious piety, sexual purity, and show contentment with her domesticated roles (Jackson, 2007). Biased stereotypes are deeply rooted and embedded ideologies play a role in impeding women from elective positions. In addition, gender structure and operating systems remain a deterrent. There is an implication that there is a relationship between cultural aspects that hinders women in electoral positions. Moreover, according to Arnal, & Ali, (2015), women are also disadvantaged because they are voted into power based on family, spousal name, ethnic leadership dynasty, and social affiliation. In Kenya patriarchy is at its worst even with some women defending male superiority by using the bible to defend their position.

6. Gender-Based Intimidation and Framing

Women in politics are negatively framed. Frames are generalizations that organize or structure messages and meanings (Goldman, 1974). Framing uses stories, metaphors, traditions, culture, slogans, art craft, and spin (Fairhurst Sarr, 1996). Frames can be viewed as organizing ideas, and putting together stories in a way depicting women negatively. Framing suggests how issues are presented to the audience and build up narratives over time across the political landscape. Women aspiring for political positions go through humiliation, gender stereotyping, electoral violence, male power play, and negative media coverage. Media covers women based on the way they were socialized. Several frames have been used on women in politics such as feminists and hard hard-handed, harsh, and iron lady among others. They are considered as women who emerge against the norms of what is expected of a woman. Secondly, they are framed based on traditional gender roles of the weaker sex (Sui, Chu & Ho 2015). Feminists, who disrupt the status quo, are also framed based on economic equality and women's political roles. Sex has also been used in the framing of women and gender is thought of as a barrier to a political career with negative gender idiosyncrasies. Negatively framing women affect their election to any political position.

Women in politics go through threats attacks and violence from their competitors who are meant to intimidate them to quit politics. Some go through harassment and when they sense their safety is in jeopardy they are forced to change their campaign techniques and sometimes they lose their elections. Psychological and physical violence is a major hindrance for women to get elective positions. For instance, in one parish I served a woman who was vying for the parliamentary position was told she was barren, with a broken family with nothing to offer, and that affect her esteem a lot. In addition, women continue to be nominated instead of being elected as a result they face discrimination and gender bias in resources allocation and decision-making (Sui, Chu & Ho 2015). Indeed, sometimes they are referred to as flower girls just for decoration, window dressing, and a token or checkbox for inclusion. Gender stereotypes also influence voters' choices and voters' impressions. According to the recommendations of Oguaiwima, Nwakalor and Ejikeonye (2021), there is a need for proactive male partnership with women and to end the gender stereotypes, framing, and societal inequalities as shaped by political, social and economic factors.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The theoretical paper has analyzed the key barriers to women attaining political elective positions. The supposition is that for a woman to win any elective position, maternal ideologies play a key role. Using feminine negotiation skills instead of masculine combative political strategies helps in gaining the hearts of the women who, in return, campaign and advocate for the agenda of a woman leader in Kenya. Without the full support of Kenyan women, it's hard to attain a leadership position at the top. The paper develops the ideology of winning the hearts of women by insinuating that we can only support a woman like us who advocates for our children and so becomes the hope of our children. Combating the stereotypes against women such as - women don't love each other, a woman's enemy is a woman,

must be deconstructed positively. Subsequently, winning the women's hearts is critical while using maternal ideologies renegotiating and refocusing can only be done by using a mother-like ideology and winning the women's hearts to convince the entire family that it's time to support a woman.

Patriarchal ideologies remain the key impediment to the attainment of women in the top position in the country. Thus, the government should be solicitous about women and leadership, and political participation to be inclusive. The human rights activists and religious women leaders should advocate for gender parity and equal space for campaigns and the electoral participation process. Women should not be used by male politicians for them to gain political landscape. Male politicians should make the decision to remove the glass ceiling barriers and the sticky ceiling that has blocked upward social mobility. Women harassment, intimidation framing, stereotypes, biases, and gender-based violence against women politicians should not be there if there will be free and fair elections that do not disadvantage women for elective positions.

There is a need to reshape the gender identities and roles and this should start from the smallest unit of socialization which is the family. There is a need to create an enabling safe environment for women in politics where they are not harassed, intimidated, or framed; instead, there should be fair competition. Civil society should create awareness, sensitization, and capacity building for women in politics. In conclusion, the government should put into practice the two-third gender rule at all levels of government. The findings of the theoretical paper provide the basis for an empirical study. It contributes toward breaking the glass ceiling, and political gender inequality, and suggests inclusivity as a way forward in having a woman in the top leadership of a country.

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