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The Crowning Political Matriarchy in Homa Bay County (1963-2022)



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The Crowing Political Matriarchy in Homa Bay County (1963-2022)

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Abstract

Purpose: Crowing Political matriarchy in Homa Bay describes the female's political take over as an impact of the prolonged pursuit of gender equality in Kenya. The takeover is due to policy frameworks intended to address gender gap. While these policy frameworks have been instrumental, historical aspects relating to gender egalitarianism has been underscored to providing elaborate intervention on gender inequality. This paper investigated the impact of the pursuit of gender egalitarianism amidst the survival of patriarchy in Kenya with specific reference to Homa-Bay County since 1964.

Methodology: Study is guided by Patriarchal Theory of Robert Filmer which highlights how patriarchal ideology elevated men to superior positions. In the contrary, policy framework; legislative, institutional, and administrative interventions adopted towards gender egalitarianism appear to bear fruits in Homa Bay. A historical research design was applied together with non-probability sampling methods and procedures to identify informants during the study. Other primary data was gathered from the National Archives while secondary data were collected from theses, journal articles, books, and other publications from the internet, university, and other libraries. The data collected has been thematic analysis based of period. The findings may guide policy makers to review and re-assess the impact of the strategies established in the pursuit of gender egalitarianism. Paper deals with the state of gender and political transformation in Homa-Bay County since 1992.

Findings: Publication indicates that, legislative, institutional, and administrative interventions adopted in Kenya challenge the patriarchal legitimacy and political entitlement.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: This treatise reports that the gender egalitarian policies and practices make political voices of females in Homa Bay to crow louder than men. Female political voices in Homa Bay began with Asiyo and Bondo who were elected Member of Parliament and councilor respectively in 1980's. Nevertheless, the gender egalitarian policies have been legalized by the Kenya constitution 2010 to the advantage of females leading to the pinnacle of political matriarchy in Homa Bay.

Keywords: *Crowing, Egalitarianism, Gender, Matriarchy, Patriarchy*

1.1 Introduction

Publication is on consequences of the pursuit of gender equality on political transformation in Homa Bay County. It presents the outcome of the quantitative and qualitative gender equality mitigations which changes the gender balance and sensitivity in legal and policy frameworks of gender transformation respectively (Cheryl, 2012). It evaluates the shifts on the gendered political relations and attitudes in the area since 1963 by treating gender as a socially constructed roles and relationships based on a person's biological sex. This paper assumes that gender is an economic, social, and cultural roles, behaviors, attributes and opportunities which are associated with being female or male. It asserts that in the pre-colonial Homa Bay, gender relations were largely patriarchal, hence this work highlights the genesis of the current gender equality debate and the resultant political transformation whose current equality gradient favor female than male creating political matriarchy. Like other societies, Homa Bay experienced socio-economic and political gender inequalities which undermined females' deliberation, representation, legitimacy and ownership in the democratic processes. They were relegated to domestic chores and child bearing as men made fundamental decisions for the masculine entitlements.

In the past male were cocks whose political crows were unchallenged in society. As gender equality debate leaned in favor of females; their voices began to make political decisions on affairs of the society challenging Amadiume (2000) statement that women report less socioeconomic and political involvement across political participatory activities and attitudes. The assertion of Atieno-Odhiambo (1979) that there is persistence of gender differences across sectors is not applicable in Homa Bay where women political voices are heard at individual and organizations' level. The attitudes and orientations that reduced women from active political participation is slithering off in Homa Bay witnessed in the increase of females' political power as the value of males wanes in the gender discussion amid policies that changes the nature of the gender demographics in favor of the females. The rising political opportunities for females decline male stakes in public and private domains leading to matriarchal political age in Homa Bay. This is inline of Karp's (2008) that women's political behavior is active in political preferences, political participation and political party's engagement.

1.2 The Background to women political involvement in Homa Bay (1963-1992)

This writing is based on school of thought that participation of women in Kenyan politics has been for long decided on patriarchal structures and processes in pre-colonial and colonial period. There has been concentration of political power and authority within patriarchal hierarchies making women dependent on male for improvement of their status into early decades of independent Kenya. In exposing the status of women in the past, Nzomo (1996) argues that females have been incapacitated in the way that they still find it difficult to compete on an equal basis with male in the society which is contrary to current gender state in Homa Bay. The term “gender gap” is used to mean gender differences in the level of political participatory preferences between male and female. During the investigation, it was identified that in the first two decades of independence, there were wider difference in vote choice, partisan attachments, ideology, and political attitudes based on gender relations in Homa Bay. This study investigated the narrowing political gender gap and exposes ways in which female overcomes patriarchal politics to establish political matriarchy in Homa Bay. It also reports a considerable transformation on gender relations over time as manifested on women political progresses in Homa Bay.

Although nature of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender complicate theories and empirical analyses for feminists’ political participation, Smooth (2006) insists that it is “a mess worth making” so as to explain political gender relations. In this study such complexities made it possible to understand contemporary gender political behaviour in Homa Bay. The bulk of the earlier studies on gender and political behavior in Kenya developed a literature which compares gender differences across various communities which provides an ideal design to compare the effects of divergent social, political, legal, and economic contexts to understand the political gender relations in Homa Bay. As women in the third world were framed into non-Western “other” (Amutabi, 2007) and their political plight blamed on colonialism, Fatton (1989) blames pre-colonial patriarchy which viewed women as passive victims of barbarism and primitive practices. This paper focuses on the diminishing political gender gap and the efforts made by the governmental and non-governmental organizations have leveled the ground for females’ political take up in Homabay. The publication established that in current elections, the manifestoes of women candidates resonate better with electorates than their male counter parts. This paper also taps on the perspectives and experiences of individual women political benefactors of Homa Bay such as Phoebe Asiyo, Roselyne Onyuka, Eve Obara, Lilian Gogo and Mildred Mabona.

Women participation in politics began during the struggle for independence in Kenya. Just like their male counter parts, women came out during Mau Mau rebellion to the period of declaration of the state of emergency in 1952. When Kenya African Union mobilized the jobless in Nairobi in late 1940s to take oaths in solidarity to protests against the colonial state, women were not left out but joined the movement and were used to pass secret information to members (Zeleza, 1988).

Women in the rural areas also started sabotaging crop production as they refused to carry out agricultural conservation measures. According to Asiyo (KII; 08/03/2021), women in Kenya had realized that grievances had to be articulated within the context of colonial domination and the only solution once and for all was by fighting for independence. With the declaration of state of emergency, Mau Mau rebellion broke out in full scale, women became active participants in the rebellion. They undertook risky tasks like transporting food into the forests, hid firearms and written messages under their skirts from the village to the detention camps where the Mau Mau warriors were. It is established that village women also became instrumental in the provision of the shelter to freedom fighters whenever their lives were in danger.

During the day women in rural areas were assigned duties of fetching firewood, cooking, washing and guarding the hiding places for Mau Mau warriors while in urban areas, they were used as spies on security forces and colonial administrators from whom they obtained information on military plans and operation for use by the freedom fighters (Kabira, & Nzioki, 1993). An early historical record asserts that the Mau Mau rebellion would not have lasted as long as it did if the women had not made many sacrifices and contributions to keep their husbands and sons alive. According to Kanogo (1987), some women were co-opted into the political arena and some women like Muthoni Ngatha rose to the senior position of field marshal and officer of ranks which was initially believed to be a domain of men. During the struggle women lost their lives in the rebellion just like men as justified by the case of Kirwara Massacre of 1954, where it is estimated that around twenty women were killed together with twenty four men (Waiyego, 2004).

Women from western Kenya were part and parcel of the Mau Mau struggle, although comparatively in small numbers. According to Ochieng (2002), workers from Nyanza who lived in Nairobi and Gikuyu towns such as Nyeri, Ruiru and Nyahururu were actively involved in the rebellion. When the Islands of Mageta, Sayusi and Oyamo Islands of Lake Victoria were formed the second largest Mau Mau detentions after Manyani, between 1953 and 1958, Luo women played their political roles. The arrest of Achieng Oneko did not go well with KAU activists in Yimbo (Miguda, 1987). In support of the arrested KAU and Mau Mau leaders, the Luo women and girls composed pro-Kenyatta songs and spread it (Odinga, 1992). In this publication it is saddening that when men attained independence, women continued to struggle for their emancipation from the male political yolk. In Luo land rose prominent women, such as Magdaline Aboge, Grace Onyango, Phoebe Asiyo, Carren Bondo and Roselyne Onyuka who continued to articulate the problems of women at the time when the pressure within and from the international community was too much in the colonial state which initiated changes ultimately leading to Kenya's independence in 1963 based on the adoption of the independence constitution which was drawn up in London. Though women were actively involved in the nationalist struggle for independence, they were sidelined during the negotiations for independence, therefore, when men's

independence dawned, gender gap widened and women struggle for political inclusion and involvement continues into the post-independence era.

During the struggle for independence, a woman from Nyanza called Magdalene Aboge Alila also known as “Mama Uhuru” played active role (Khasiani & Njiro 1993). It was in line with Aboge’s economic interests that she got involved in politics that was by then dominated by the colonialists which even African men were struggling to penetrate. Aboge points out that it was not easy for Africans, to trade in Kisumu Municipality, where commerce and trade were dominated by the Asians (The Standard, March 15, 2009). In 1959, Magdalene as a vendor in Kisumu mobilized fellow vendors to rebel against colonial local authorities. This was after the colonial government issued a decree barring all Africans from selling their trade items within the town center. It is reported in this study that the rebellion by women acted as Magdalene Aboge’s spring board into politics and consequently made her a star among women, politicians and trade unionists. Consequently, the then outspoken Luo men politicians such as, Dickson Oruko Makasembo, Otieno Oyoo and Ombok, incorporated her into the African District Association (ADA) and appointed her as the leader of women wing. This study established that ADA which was formed as a welfare group in the late 1950s to serve the interests of Nyanza people later turned into a forum for articulating Africans demands for independence and was secretly plotting to overthrow the colonial government. The position enabled her to traverse all parts of Nyanza and got a chance to visit Homa Bay where she sensitized women on the value of struggling for independence so as to trade freely and explained that she joined politics because she hated the fact that women could not be given trade licenses to trade in their own country. It is worth noting that even after independence, Aboge continued her active participation in politics and joined a group of women picked by Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, to visit Sudan, Egypt, Romania and Russia which exposed them to international politics. She met Indira Gandhi in 1960 before she became a Prime Minister of India and discussed many issues about the political liberation of women in Kenya. During a Kenya African National Union (KANU) meeting in Nairobi, some people questioned the continued presence of colonialists in the newly formed independent government. This did not go down well with the Kenyatta administration which felt that they were agents of secret group from the western part of the country who wanted to overthrow the new government in favor of pro-communist radicals. Hence she was arrested alongside other eight men and jailed in Langata Women’s Prison for three months despite being the only woman who among nine men who demanded for President Kenyatta’s release from prison in Kapenguria (KNA/AMP/5/57). The action silenced women’s political engagement.

By 1980s, the notion and understanding of „woman“ in the world societies changed. Apart from defining a woman as „a unitary and a historical category“, scholars started to embrace an understanding of „woman“ as the plurality of identities in a single subject (Abbott, P., Tyler, M., & Wallace, C., 2006). At the center of these developments in feminist analyses, was the attempt

by the Black feminists to challenge the erasure of experiences of black women on international platforms, such as the 1985 UN conference in Nairobi. Even with the shift in focus on women, feminist analyses within western feminism emphasized the unity of women as an oppressed group. During the clamor to rekindle political pluralism in Kenya by 1990's, Aboge together with Phoebe Asiyo joined Jaramogi Odinga, Kenneth Matiba, George Nthenge, Oyangi Mbaja, Martin Shikuku and George Anyona and became common figures at the meetings organized by the original Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) party that later split into FORD

Asili and FORD Kenya. Though Jaramogi's death in 1994 devastated women in their political pursuit, they remained involved in politics. The two women politicians motivated others and promised that struggle must continue until women get what they always wanted. In the description of Raila Odinga, Kenya's second Prime Minister, the duo are scion of political transformation and liberation to women in Kenya as they show other women the strength to soldier on into the Second Liberation (John Oyua: The Standard; March 15, 2009).

Aboge's political activism continued as she wondered why women are sidelined even after participation in the struggle for Kenya's independence. Aboge motivated women from Nyanza to fight for their political emancipation. In Homa Bay, she supported and campaigned for Phoebe Asiyo who then became woman member of parliament which transformed politics in Homa Bay and the country. She also supported woman councilor, Grace Bondo in Homa Bay town. Aboge advocated for the use of women groups as vehicles for getting and winning political posts in Nyanza region making women groups to be a major vehicle for rural development even after independence among women of Homa Bay.

1.3 Reintroduction of political pluralism on women politics in Homa Bay (1992-2010)

Reintroduction of pluralism in 1992 and promulgation of the constitution 2010 in Kenya provided legal narratives on a more equitable number of women in democratic institutions. Subsequent policies introduced the quotas for women that legalize gender affirmative action and provide women constituencies in counties and national platforms. The patriarchal traditional and religious leadership positions began to transform and become gender sensitive in Homa Bay. Through Maendeleo Ya Wanawake, Phoebe Asiyo motivated women to resist attempts by male of pushing them out of politics and leadership within Homa Bay unlike before, women political activities oscillated around formal channels like interest groups and women based organizations as training ground on women future political engagement. Women organizations made feminists to behave „like men“, and understand leadership under a patriarchal society, consequently, women such as Phoebe Asiyo, Gladys Wanga, Lilian Gogo, Eve Obara, Mildred Mabona and Joyce Osogo have whittled space for themselves to the top political arena. Women organizations have trained women on the language of politics and behavior as the only way to fit to the male coveted positions in the County. According to Kamau, (2008), women continue to change the gender debate in the society

by acting as an agency against a male-dominated society for other women leading to establishment of matriarchal political society. While Osogo (IO; 08/09/2022) confirms that any woman who wants to swim in the male dominated politics can only remain a float when they are fully masculine in language and actions.

According to the understanding of Kamau (2008), the current studies have been acknowledging that the small number of female parliamentarians in Kenya is a hindrance to the investigations on individual women's political agendas and experiences. In the same argument Asiyo (KII; 08/03/2021) states that data collected from the few women legislators gives an understanding of political possibility of „women“s leadership in Homa Bay. This paper agree that legalization and adoption of the international agreements and conventions such as CEDAW asserts that without the perspectives of individual women at all levels of decision making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved“ in any society. Success of Phoebe Asiyo and the late Carren Bondo in political leadership in Homa Bay by 1980s convinced men and women to accept women“s political and administrative leadership aptitude. Their innovations and strategies as individual women corrected the impression that women are lazy and unable to succeed independently (Asiyo, KOI, 04/04/2021), exacerbating the emergence of political matriarchy.

Female politicians in Homa Bay critically analyze male discourse and construct different roles that define their new unmatched identities than ever before. According to Griffin and Newman (2005, April), such identity is defined in terms of capacities or roles that make individual women “concrete organisms” and gives them a “forte in life” that men denied them in pre-colonial Homa Bay. Even though there is a likelihood of rollback in gender democracy in Kenya as evidenced by the failure of the members of parliament to pass the gender bill in various occasions, women organizations and women politicians in Homa Bay continue to “appeal” to the patriarchal discursive options. This is aimed at resisting the extant patriarchal political structures and procedures which establish political matriarchy. Women of Homa Bay continue to take advantage of government policies and unequivocal women numerical strength in the census. Female political aspirants and contestants also draw their manifestos and ideology on aspects of male identities within patriarchal framings as a strategy to enter the male-dominated political structures in Homa Bay. In addition, they use formal strategies, such as seeking support from “the gender clubs” and non-governmental organizations. Despite the fact that most women do not make it to political offices, the few successful ones have succeeded in retaining their seats in the formerly patriarchal politics and the constant push in the decision making tables overturns the gender gap in favor of fellow women.

This publication established that Hon. Gladys Wang'a, who is the daughter of the former Kisumu councilor Mr. Nyasuna, was at the time of writing this treatise the party county Chairperson of the dominant political party Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) which made it easy to become the

Governor of Homa Bay. At the period of the completion of this paper she was nominated to contest for gubernatorial seat in the 9th August 2022 general election after a contested consensus with other chief male rivals in the party primaries such as Joseph Oyugi Magwanga, Isaiah Ogwe, Hamilton Orata, John Mbadi, Evans Kidero and Akello Misori. This was because of the significant role Wanga had played in the party at both national and county levels apart from being the only female contender. She was later elected the first woman governor of Homa Bay beating her close competitor, Dr. Evans Kidero, by a wide margin. It is noted that Wanga also took over the party County chairmanship from the late Monica Amollo, another woman who passed on through fatal road accident on her way from party politics. It is, therefore, noted that the dominant political party ODM is by number and leadership been viewed as a women's club in Homa Bay politics. It is also true that the party structures accommodate and embraces female membership and participation as was witnessed when party gave direct ticket to all the women members of parliament aspirants in the run up to 2002 general election.

Increase of women representation in the decision making organs is a key indicator of the transformation of gender relations which Cheryl (2012) states as critical in promoting gender equality in the decision making platforms. Nevertheless, Asiyo (08/03/2021) states that gender equality cannot be reduced to the number of women in an organization but includes key aspects that need to accompany the numbers such as; women's participation in decision-making structures, gender sensitive policies and practices, access to skills development and equal opportunity, changed institutional cultures and transformed power which has been achieved in Homabay. Similarly, it is noted that winning an election, especially for female contestants, begins with the penetration into the dominant political party structures and rule. Thus, for Wanga to have acquired party leadership at the county she confesses that "a woman can only assert herself in the noisy and turbulent Kenyan politics by involving themselves in the specific topics that are part of the patriarchal political discourses but not their number as women." Women have to show a masculine face and energy to move on, otherwise, they will be underrated and viewed as public kitchen occupants (Wanga; KII, 16/03/2021)

The institutional, cultural, economic and societal factors that used to limit women's opportunities and abilities to participate in decision making are no longer attainable because a new trend of political "reverse role" witnessed in men as they do not only seek political advice from women but also partner with female politicians so as to win elections. This justifies the progressive emergence of political matriarchy in Homa Bay (Asiyo, KII; 08/03/2021). The reason behind the partnership is to raise men chances of winning election in the tight political contestations. In the same strength, some men swallows their pride and accept to deputize women aspirant as was the case of Joseph Oyugi Magwanga deputizing Wanga which was initially unheard of. Even though Waring (2011) states that political representation is not an adequate measure to reflect women's empowerment and gender equality, such representation influence flexible approaches to successfully capture

interventions across a range of activities which are better related to the diversity of women's roles in leadership, empowerment and governance in spite the MDG 3 assertion that the proportion of seats held by women in assemblies" is not the only indicator to measure progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in any society.

Homa Bay leads the rest with the highest number of elected women members of parliament on common roll election only to be rivalled by Nakuru County after 2022 general election. According to Onyuka, (KII; 18/03/2021) this could be because of the foundation laid by the strong Luo women such as Aboge, Grace Onyango, Phoebe Asiyo and Grace Bondo giving new gender equality narrative in Homa Bay. It is worth noting that at the time of this study there were five men and four women members of national assembly in Homa Bay. Political matriarchy in Homa Bay is also seen in the administration where there unlike before about 33 women assistant chiefs of the possible 63 sub locations (Lilaan, KII; 27/04/2021) as the domination of men in the position of power at the local level including and traditional leadership, local politics and village organizations shifts to favor women. The societal constraints that made it difficult for women to leave their traditionally assigned domestic chores for more public roles outside homes weakens to pave ways for women political crowds in Homa Bay (Nyandiko, KII; 10/04/2021). Institutional barriers such as political systems that operate through stiff schedules that did not consider women's domestic responsibilities are also giving way because of digitalization of politics, such social norms that dictated and confined women to domestic roles is no longer realistic.

Women who have been active in the informal roles within the community as mothers, teachers, volunteers, entrepreneurs and community leaders are now outward looking and participate in public and private domain. Pre-colonial women „quiet and private leadership" which focused on community service are of late harnessed and formalized to give women advantage on political and formal decision making power in Homa Bay. Nevertheless, Waring (2011) explains that women in some regions and cultures are still primarily a minority within patriarchal political systems making it difficult for them to have their voices heard on their own without the support of their male patrons. According to Ogwe (KII; 15/04/2021), women started by leaning on male political patrons so as to flourish on their political ambitions and make their agenda be felt in the society.

In Homa Bay women were in an environment where community issues required the attention and participation of male villagers (Nnaemeka, 2001). This has changed because currently women have learnt that men are part of the gender equality problem hence they have perfected to make them part of the solution in Homa Bay. The increased number of female legislators in Parliament contributes to the development of pro-women policies and organizations in and out of parliament. Female in the legislative chambers in the County and national assemblies, influences the support of male legislators hence transforms the relationships between female legislators and civil society actors at the national and county government levels leading to the establishment of patriarchal-

matriarchal ties for the benefits of women. In an interview with Gladys Wanga (KII; 16/03/2021), she explains that Politics is no longer viewed by men and women as male domain where women struggle to make a numeric contribution but ideas as is in party politics of Homa Bay which according to her, no longer talk about the number of men or women representation but what makes it easier for both genders to get on party lists as voters and aspirants.

Female representation and leadership which initially was at the grassroots level and based on social welfare positions, is changed to political agitation and participation as many women secure political offices apart from having substantial number in the assemblies. Despite all the advantages for women, Gogo (KII; 19/03/2021) states that political progress of women in Homa Bay still faces challenges such as intimidation or threats in running for offices as men gang against them due to the fact that at times men's local customary make them feel that their traditional patriarchy is under siege. Consequently, women political progress isolates them from potential husbands and at times breaks their families (Obara, KII; 06/03/2021). They also fail to raise families because men are scared to engage them as social partners in marriages. Among the reason could be because women politicians find it difficult to balance their public responsibilities with their domestic chores. In support to the above, Asiyo (08/03/2021) posits that in order to get elected, many female candidates are forced to downplay the fact that they are concerned with women's issues, or of being a wife for fear that it may alienate male voters and hence undermines women agenda. The emergence of national and local legal and social gender movements such as feminists FIDA and the gender justice activists, gives women a legal multiapproach strategy which Horn (2013) describes as pivotal in transforming, demanding, making and sustaining female though not available to the male.

During this study it was realized that women's rights organizations have had significant impact on a number of occasions in Homa Bay. It is worth noting that women's organizations often access national and international funding which empower local women economically and politically. A case in point is the formation of Homa Bay women Sacco and Abedo by Gladys Wanga which continue to attract funding from the government and the senior politicians, as well as international organizations. Meanwhile the scope for action for such organizations is often limited due to the competition for scarce resources and dishonesty which limits such women's organizations from working cooperatively since cases of mismanagement and embezzlement are not rare.

1.4 Establishment of Political matriarchy in Homa Bay (2002 to 2022)

Earlier than 1992, women were politically conservative in ideology, party attachment, and vote choice because of their ties to religious conservativity (Lipset, 1960). This was necessitated by fewer women in the paid workforce, thus were unlucky to join trade unions which were the only way to political activities. In the decades of colonialism and into independence, women's voting participation in Homa Bay trailed that of men up to the time when political pluralism of 1992

reversed political gender gap against men. It is after then when matriarchal voting power became increasingly noticeable. The recent realignment of political and electoral behavior enable women to take active political roles alongside men (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). The above has been reinforced by the entrance of women into the paid workforce in post-World War II era. It is noted that despite their political emancipation before 1992, women were comparatively less likely to vote as men. Asiyo (KII; 08/03/2021) says that even after controlling social, economic, and political variables that were against women's political activities, political gender gap still existed in Kenya up to 1992. The IEBC record shows that more men than women voted up to 2002, then voting pattern changed and women began to overtake men till 2022 elections. This gender transformation, according to Onyuka (KII; 18/03/2021), accounts for the positive values realized when more women vote in elections and stamp their numeric political authority. It is argued that women expected a lot of life changing services whose absence are felt more by them. This is because they are the main care givers in the families. According to Asiyo, (KII; 08/03/2021), women naturally and in their overall pattern of life more supportive of the democratic processes than men.

Giving reference from the IEBC of 2002 election, women votes were 57% while men were 43%; in 2007 women votes were 53% while that of men were 47%; in 2013 women votes were 49% while men were 51%; and in 2017 women votes were 51% while that of men were 49%. As noted above and by contrast, the 2013 elections, the trend was not the same in the preceding years with more men voting than women. According to the data collected during the research, this was the effect of post-election violence of 2007-8 election that left many women than men in anguish leading to women voter apathy in the subsequent general election of 2013 in Kenya. It is worth noting that female voting pattern vary across the counties and ethnic groups in Kenya. Among the Luo, women were traditionally not likely to hold liberal ideology to support democratic ideals. This position is seen to be universal to all the Nilotes and Cushites where the wound of patriarchy has been slowly healing compared to the Bantu speakers. It is also realized that the gender gap is pronounced among older women compared to younger girls within the Luo community. Even though men and women prioritize different issues, values and social spending appear important to women than men among the electorates. This informs the highest women voter turnout in the 2002 elections than ever before, this was because the NARC manifesto during campaigns promised social revolutions and welfare issues than their patriarchal conservative competitor KANU.

It is also established that women participation in politics depend on decade, county, ward, type of participation, and subsets of women under contemplation. This study mapped the patterns in the gender gap depending on the types of participation, beginning with the most persistent forms of electoral participation, fresher forms of protest participation and the participatory attitudes as well as activities that encourage the participation per gender. This study recognized a small gender gap in voter turnout which favors women though with variation per constituencies and wards within

Homa Bay. The reversed gender gap by voter turnout in recent decades according to this study is attributed, to a greater extent, by the affirmative actions and gender mainstreaming strategies (Ndeda, 2002). Assiyo (KII; 08/03/2021) expounds this by saying that gender equality campaign in Kenya and the adoption of the CEDAW policies in the Homa Bay CIDP continue to promote female voting pattern in the last three decades. Another important factor established by this study is the contribution of Education as stated by Onyuka (KII; 18/03/2021). In relation to the past, many societies today witness greater women education and workforce opportunities which puts pressure on men's previous socio-economic and political domination.

Unlike in Homa Bay, Assiyo (KII, 08/03/2021) explains that other counties of Kenya, women are less likely to participate in many activities in politics such as making campaign contributions, joining political organizations and writing letters to elected representatives comparatively. In Homa Bay, women just like men remain significantly more likely to have contacted a politician, joined a political party, or attended a political meeting. Across the eight constituencies of Homa Bay, reports higher women's participation in political parties than men (Wanga; KII, 16/03/2021). This confirms the assertion of Onyuka (KII; 18/03/2021) that across the country, men's participation of late is more pronounced and relegated to the protest than electoral process contrary to women concentration on elections. According to Kamaria (KII, 20/04/2021), comparatively, in the recent past women control much resources which are crucial predictors of political engagement, consequently, Norris (2002), explains that women who have overcome lower levels of education, income, occupational prestige, civic skills, and acquired ties with mobilizing groups such as trade unions; compete favorably with men in political participation other than voting. In the opinion of Ogwe (KII; 15/04/2021), the speed of societal secularization brought about by democracy since 1992, opened the political arena for women participation and freed them from traditional social roles comparatively.

A keen look at the current structure of the economy, gender and political behavior in Homa Bay, it is clear that the economy remains considerably in the hands of females. This expiration of economic discrimination in terms of payment and employment which disadvantaged women in the past steers women into the contact with sectors of job market and money. Such sources of income and opportunity enable women to form and join welfare organizations which operate within the purview of politics. Moreover, Ogwe (KII; 15/04/2021) explains that welfare organizations which influenced men's and women's connection into political landscape, currently favors women more than men. Apart from the direct elective political participation, there has been an increase in the none-elective political participation controlled by women of Homa Bay. The analysis of Burn, *et al* (2001), asserts that none elective activities include "protest" or "unconventional" participation. In the view of Ndeda (2002), these activities are less electoral but are dedicated towards the issues affecting particular sub set of women as is evidenced in signing of petition against political process

or office, attending and participating in demonstrations or boycotting a product which is synonymous with women comparatively.

The study in Homa Bay indicates that women who participate in the protest are the ones who are schooled and are in the paid employment. Investigation of the eight constituencies of Homa Bay portrays that women have, in one way or the other, signed a petition and or raised money for a social or political group apart from physically joining a demonstration (Phoebe, KII; 08/03/2021). Some of these agitations are in the form of political consumerism which includes buying or boycotting products or services for political reasons to show their displeasure on the political development as it was evidenced in the 2017 election when women avoided some products for political reasons. Even though some citizens do not perceive boycotting as a political act, it is non-electoral activity of women who are recorded to be main buyers of the commodities compared to men.

1.5 The party political matriarchy in Homa Bay 1992-2022

Over two decades, recognition of the centrality of political parties has promoted women empowerment and decision making which consequently establishes political matriarchy. This is believed to be an impact of a progress made in the articulation of international norms and global commitments for redressing gender imbalances in political party's structures, positions and decision making. As a result, there has been an alignment of national and international commitments on gender equality in the leadership of political parties' level. The adoption of Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action of 1995 was a positive trend on the part of national gender equality advocates to focus on political parties' performance so as to promote women's political empowerment. In the world societies, scholars report persistence of gender imbalance in the leadership and decision making in political parties. Though situations vary among countries and parties, there have been some universal trends acting as barriers to women's equal participation and representation and decision making in political party positions making Homa Bay County unique for investigation among the Counties in independent Kenya. It is established that increasing the awareness of gender issues within political parties in Homa Bay County promotes democratic society and consequently gives female political space.

The clauses of the Kenya constitution (2010) confers equality before the law regardless of gender and the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law regardless of gender apart from warranting female the right to equal treatment and opportunities in political sphere. Moreover, the Constitution proscribes discernment against any person on sex and pregnancy (Part 2 (27) (1) (2) (4)) and also adopts affirmative action that states; „not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender“ in all the political engagement (Part 2 (27) (6) (8)). Therefore, while the national constitutions and laws are significant in terms of articulating and to guarantee gender equality and women's political empowerment, political party

in Homa Bay, translates this formal right into practical accomplishment. According to this publication, most of political parties that were formed in Kenya after 1992 had gender principles in mind and was later backed by constitution 2010. Such parties included gender equality objectives in their strategy documents and manifestoes. In reference, the strategy documents of ODM and Safina parties contain a specific objective on improving gender equality within the party to attain one-third representation for women in leadership. The two parties reserve seats for women in the party structure and also develop a gender program to make men and women understand mainstreaming of women and men's equality at all party levels. This has led to a new political transformation that never existed before in Homa Bay. Despite, it is worth noting that there are some conservative political parties in Kenya such as KANU, DP and FORD-K whose gender equality commitments are only in paper.

The interconnection between a party's constitution and its strategy documents advances women engagement to political party in Homa Bay. The operations of the dominant political party, ODM established political matriarchy in its fundamental principles of gender in party's strategy documents which transforms the political party's operations from male to female domination. This has been done through actualization of affirmative action and mainstreaming participation in party activities and structures at all levels. The ODM party manifesto promotes women empowerment through access to education, change of oppressive practices and laws, elimination of forms of discrimination against girls and women, ratification of conventions on women's rights, working progressively to realize gender parity in public bodies and actualize one third gender rules. This deliberate strategy makes women to overtake men in party's operations and management within Homa Bay County.

Even though political parties' membership in Kenya is open to male and female, and every member of the party has the right to elect and be elected to any leadership position of their choice, this was not the case before 1992. Generally, party structures in Kenya parallel the geographic structures in which they operate, with the broadest category of people at the grassroots level and few most powerful positions at the top. The analysis shows that across all political parties the most common highest decision-making structure is the National Convention which meets annually and sets the direction of the political party. The investigation on the gender and political party's transformation establishes that there is a key structure developed by political parties called the women's wing or women's league, which in many political parties is responsible for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment within and beyond the political parties.

In Homa Bay, the existence of county women league of the ODM party which calls themselves as „*Waremba na Baba*’ (Beautiful ladies support Raila) whose chairperson Hon. Florence Owidhi is included in the party's NEC. Such a provision of the party structure promotes women involvement in the party's key decision making from grass root to the top. Initially the inclusion of women in

the National Executive Committees of the political parties was to ensure that their “voice” is represented in key decision-making structures of the political parties and mobilize them to support male agenda.

However, Brown (2014) argue that placing responsibility for gender equality and women’s empowerment solely under women’s wing leads to the unpremeditated consequence of removing gender issues from the mainstream priorities of the party. He further asserts that although most political parties have women’s wings, their effectiveness and role in the management and decision-making processes is varied and questionable. This has to do with the fact that even if the women’s wing is represented in the National Executive Committee, their representation is always marginalized by the majority men. Just like the minimum of 30 per cent is not synonymous to equality thereby in Homa Bay, the reverse make men to scrawl to attain the 30 percent gender mark in political parties affairs from the current dominant females.

Even though women’s membership of political parties is not necessarily matched by their participation and representation in the leadership positions and structures, Homa Bay County is unique to the rest of the counties in Kenya because most of the top position of the party has ever been a preserve of the females. The lessons from the ODM party’s constitution in Kenya on composition of leadership structures in political party to include a minimum of 30 per cent women, is only comparable to political parties in Rwanda which goes beyond tokenism and give women a real voice in party decision-making structures.

During the ODM party primaries and nominations in Homa Bay on the 14th April 2022, in preparation for the 9th August 2022 elections in Kenya, all the serving women members of parliament such as Mildred Mabona, Dr. Lilian Gogo, and Dr. Eve Obara were given free ticket by the party amid the uproar from the male candidates. In spite, the then outgoing woman representative Gladys Wanga, was handed the free ticket and successfully vied for the gubernatorial position. This according to Wanga (KII; 16/03/2021), is a good practice and a step towards fostering gender equality in intra-party leadership and a justification of the political transformation in Homa Bay. It is unbelievable that by the time of this publication women’s representation in party leadership structures was more than the levels stated in parties’ constitutions and other policy documents in Homa Bay County which is an attribute of the Kenyan progressive constitution that promotes women. This study asserts that ODM as political party provides an ideal environment to push the advancement of women’s political participation. In regard, Asiyo (KII; 08/03/2021) states that the internal practices and democratic processes within the political parties are of momentous importance to the achievement of gender equality in politics and decision making in any society. This paper confirms that parties in Kenya are struggling to meet the global commitment to redress all forms of discrimination and gender imbalances in politics and meet the demands of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Such commitments are reinforced by the outcome of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies on the Advancement of Women convention and the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action together with chapter three of the 2000 Millennium Development Goals which is adopted in the CIDP of Homa Bay County.

The adoption of the African Union's Protocol to African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in 2003, gave women right to enjoy social and political equality with men in all spheres of life. Contrary to the commitments above, Burns, *et al.* (2001) state that beyond the written commitments true gender equality must involve direct measures to be fulfilled at all levels starting from the inside of the existing political parties. In Homa Bay; the dominant political party translates written commitments into a practical approach by providing insights on the principles and organizational structures of the party which promotes internal gender democratic processes and practices which establishes political matriarchy.

Contrary to the assertion of Eshiwani (1985), that women voices in decision making is insufficient, and nonexistent in the political parties of Kenya, Asiyo (KII; 08/03/2021) states that the position of Homa Bay County is different to the above since women are both voters and active supporters of political party mobilization and campaigns. Their participation is included in party policy development and decision making as witnessed in Homa Bay where Chairperson and majority of the delegates were women at the time of research. Case of Homa Bay County is unique to itself within Kenya because among the 47 counties, this is because in Homa Bay, the chairperson of the dominant party (ODM) has consistently been women apart from the party boasting of highest number of elected women members of parliament nationally at the time of study only rivaled by Nakuru County which joined it is the 2022 general election. Women of Homa Bay are active in political parties' administration and participation in level beyond men.

According to national chairman of ODM party at the time of this journal, Hon. John Mbadi (KII; 21/04/2021), women involvement in party's administration accelerates their access to the political space in Homa Bay and Kenya as a whole. In the 2022 general election, the Homa Bay County ODM party chairperson Hon. Gladys Wanga used her influence in the party not only to acquire gubernatorial party certificate against male contenders but also ensured that all women seating members of parliament acquired direct ticket without party primaries slated for 14th April 2022 as a deliberate effort to raise their political voices and standing.

The current women involvement and participation in party politics in Homa Bay, is a growing recognition that access of women in political and electoral processes is influenced by intra-party democratic ideals and processes. Ogwe (KII; 15/04/2021) contends that, such ideals include the gender based identification, selection and nomination of candidates for internal leadership and public decision making positions. According to Onyuka (KII; 18/03/2021), political parties are the "real gatekeepers" to positions of power and decision making in any society therefore the strategies

for women's political empowerment within political parties afford an adequate enabling environment for their influential participation in politics within Homa Bay making the dominant party be seen as women's club. According to Osodo (OI; 12/04/2021), women of Homa Bay swim in the gender equality clauses within political parties policy documents and manifestoes. Comparatively, ODM party seems to be providing rules and regulations for identifying, selecting and nominating women candidates for leadership positions within than other political parties consequently propelling women to political matronage.

It is therefore established that ODM is a gender responsive party as witnessed when the party organ reduced nomination fees during party primary of 14th April 2022 for women aspirants so as to encourage their candidature in elective and public positions. Party also waived primary elections in constituencies which were held by women such as Rangwe, Suba North and

Kabondo Kasipul, just like in some wards in order to retain and increase women's participation and representation in leadership and decision-making positions (Mbadi KII, 21/04/2021). To this end, it is certain that political parties are aware of gender issues but the challenge is how to move beyond this first step and mobilize awareness into pragmatic actions that institutionalize gender equality in party politics to rival Homa Bay where ODM party give female a head start in the politics. This paper notes that the inclusion of texts on gender in political parties' policy documents displays political transformation and acknowledgement of female domination of party politics within Homa Bay. Asiyo (KII; 08/03/2021) asserts that current political parties' awareness and acknowledgement of gender issues is a measures which eliminates patriarchal practices consequently establishing political matriarchy in Homa Bay. Female control of political processes in Homa Bay continues to enhance participation of the individual women unlike in the past when they played a second fiddle in political parties and were isolated from mainstream political representation and participation. Ogutu (KII, 11/04/2021) posits that men took advantage over women on party politics because of the domestic chores a case which women have overcome in Homa Bay County. Although with variation in the involvement of women across political parties, of late women report greater political interest, political discussion, political knowledge, and attention to news about party politics comparatively.

Perception held by men and women that women are less politically knowledgeable on parties of choice is no longer tenable in Homa Bay. Women's political knowledge in Homa Bay is promoted by political party's schedules, constitutions, engagement and resource-based explanations. Though resources are connected to gender differences in political party's participation and knowledge, earlier socialization of traditional gender roles that discouraged women from participating in party politics is dazed by current trends in modern egalitarian world. In spite, women's levels of education and workforce participation advance their politics and representation

in Homa Bay. In the contrary to the past, today men fight for space in the female dominated political party in Homa Bay.

The above fulfills Atkeson and Carrillo (2007) assertion that the very presence of women in elected office breaks the political ceiling of earlier gender relations that was male dominated. Consequently, Mabona (KII; 10/03/2021) explains that the presence of women in elected office and party involvement is a new dispensation in promoting political egalitarianism as opposed to gender illiterate perception that promotes elite women club against men. As stated by Devlin *et al* (2008), gender gap in political party participation narrows in countries where women have a greater share of seats in parliament across a set of nations, the cross-national survey of adolescents, the intentions to political participation between girls and boys decline in countries with more women in office. In support of the above, Asiyo (KII; 08/03/2021) predicts that even though there is a likelihood of the alteration of the gender equality debate as men's representation is becoming an issue but new generation women politicians must rise to act as role models so as to inspire other young women to become active members of political parties. They have to avoid oscillating between men as their supporters to the point that they forget the gender agenda lest the gender equality gains in Homa Bay be lost in future. This is because, despite the political progress of women, relationship within their political elites in Homa Bay is at its poorest. The women leading politicians continue to work and tear against one another publicly and don't see eye to eye despite the fact that they all belong to same political party. This supremacy contest among women political leaders, according to this paper works against the gendered agenda and slowly retracts gender equality gains in Homa Bay.

1.6 Conclusion

Women's political journey in Homa Bay began in the colonial era though with differences in the level of participation and voting preferences between men and women. This led to the multiple gender gaps with considerable variation overtime and across cultures in Kenya. Among the Luo community some women accompanied their husbands in the European farms in central Kenya where they took direct role in struggle like their counterparts in those areas. Luo women who were around Mageta, Sayusi and Yamo Islands sneaked food and secret messages in their skirts to the fighters and composed songs in praise of the detained freedom fighters. Women struggle for political space did not end even after independence since the dawn of men independence ushered in women's struggle for inclusion and consideration. The resurrection of the notion and understanding of women in Kenya was rejuvenated in 1985 after the UN conference on women in Nairobi which lifted earlier notion that portrayed woman as oppressed and helpless group. From then hence forth women like Phoebe Asiyo were able to wither the patriarchal storm to contest and win the position of Member of Parliament in Karachuonyo constituency. Women from Homa Bay

like Asiyo joined hands with Oginga and others for struggle in the second liberation by demanding the political pluralism in Kenya which culminated to the formation of FORD.

Women organization has been used as a platform for political leadership at the time when politics was a men's domain in Homa Bay. Women of Homa Bay also took advantage of the Kenyan constitution 2010 that provided a legal leap on the claim of gender equality in Kenya through its affirmative action and quota system for women. The support of international communities such as CEDAW which obligated countries to promote gender equality and give women socio-economic and political space encouraged women in Homa Bay. People's credence on women political leadership and ability changed in Homa Bay. The influence of women in Homa Bay in the leadership of dominant political party advantaged them to acquire direct tickets to contest in various political positions. This promoted political matriarchy as the number of women in political leadership consistently rose since 2012 indicating a paradigm shift on women political achievement. The rise made the then silent women domestic leadership to be outward looking public and private participation which became nondependent on men.

Though there is political achievement of women, their progress in equality still subject them to intimidation and isolation by fearful men who feel threatened and undermined by women's socio-economic and political influence. Women also find it difficult to balance public and domestic responsibilities making them to be branded as poor mothers and wives of their generations. Political matriarchy in Homa Bay is visible as women who were politically conservative in ideology, party attachment and vote choices are of late out do men on the same areas.

Historical investigation shows that among the factor that establishes political matriarchy in Homa Bay includes Luo women interaction with Bantu women a part from the changing political priority from ideology to value and social security which are more feminist. The political parties manifesto since 2002, has also propelled number of women contestants and voters in Kenya. However, it is worth noting that the increase of women in voting and elected positions is not uniform in Kenya. It depends upon the decade, county, ward, type of participation and set of women understudy. A part from education, women political activism in Homa Bay is boosted by among others, affirmative action, the constitution of Kenya 2010, related party regulations strengthened by the adoption of the regional and international conventions such as CEDAW.

It is believed that the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action in 1995 legally and conventionally promoted the positive trend in terms of analyzing political parties' roles and performance in context to the creating legal grounds for women political empowerment in Kenya. The momentum gained has increased the attention paid to the critical need for measures to ensure women's access to and full participation in positions of power and decision making. This is based on the national and local platforms opportunities that women of Homa Bay have seized resulting to the establishment of political matriarchy. In view of researchers, access to political power,

leadership and decision making begins at the political party level; hence creation of enabling environments for the meaningful participation and representation of women in ODM political party in Homa Bay has been crucial in establishing political matriarchy. The party moved beyond promotion of women political awareness instead mobilized pragmatic actions which institutionalized gender equality in party politics which advantaged the female gender.

The consequence of the emergence of political matriarchy in Homa Bay is visible in the decline of the use of the masculine generic terms such as; „he/his“ “chairman”, “sons of the country”, “menfolk”, being replaced by more gender sensitive statements, such as, our, “chairperson”, “people of the country” and “women folk”. Within political parties“ constitutions, particularly in reference to leadership positions such as the party President, Chairperson or Vice Chairperson, Secretary General or Treasurer, which for long been used to equate access to leadership positions with maleness, at the time of this paper „she“ was only used in reference to the leadership of women“s wings. The act of making gender issues to be people“s a gender results into the gender questions as mainstream priorities of the political parties. The main worry of this publication is that as political matriarchy emerges, there is evidence of decline of masculinity and patriarchal political extinction leaving males without a voice to advocate for men.

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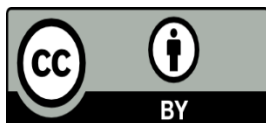
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Informant Interview

S.N	NAMES OF INFORMANTS	SEX	INTERVIEW DATE	CONSTUENCY	PLACE

1	Asiyo Phoebe	F	08/03/2021 20/12/2021	Karachunyo	Home
2	Gogo Lilian	F	19/03/2021	Rangwe	CDF Office
3	Kamaria Judy	F	20/04/2021	Suba North	Home
4	Mabona Mildred	F	10/04/2021	Suba North	Mbita
5	Mbadi John Ng'ong'o	M	21/04/2021	Suba South	Home
6	Lilaan Moses	M	27/04/2021	Homa Bay	County Office
7	Nyandiko Ngadi	M	10/04/2021	Ndhiwa	Home
8	Obara Eve	F	06/04/2021	Kabondo	Home
9	Ogwe Isaiah	M	15/04/2021	Homa Bay	TAUSI
10	Onyuka Rose	F	18/03/2021	Kasipul	Oyugis
11	Osodo Dancun Jomo	M	12/04/2021	Ndhiwa	Home
12	Osogo Joice Bensuda	F	08/09/2022	Karachuonyo	Home
13	Wanga Gladys Atieno	F	16/03/2021	Rangwe	Home



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