

Political Dyadic Networks and Electoral Participation in the 2013 and 2017 Gubernatorial Elections in Uasin Gishu County-Kenya

Geoffrey Towett

PhD Candidate, Department of History, Political Science
and Public Administration, Moi University, Kenya

Dr James Chelang'a

Dr Paul Opondo

Senior Lecturer, Department of History, Political Science
and Public Administration, Moi University, Kenya

Abstract: International law and states' constitutions in liberal democracies provide for free, fair and regular elections as an unfringeable right of the voter in the choice of political leaders. Electoral participation and outcome globally, is however shaped by various determinants. This research interrogated political dyadic networks prevalent in gubernatorial elections in Uasin Gishu County-Kenya, and which shapes electoral participation under the Constitution of Kenya-2010. A descriptive survey research design was adopted and targeted all 450,055 registered voters in Uasin Gishu County as per Independent Electoral and Boundary Commission statistics of 2017. A sample size of 384 respondents participated in the study and was drawn from 12 selected Wards in all the six Sub-counties in Uasin Gishu County. Questionnaires, interview schedules and Focused Group Discussion were used as key research instruments in the collection of primary data and corroborated with the existing secondary data. Data analysis was carried out through the use of convergent parallel mixed method for the purpose of presentation. The study revealed entrenched vertical political dyads aimed at enhancing patron-client networks and electoral participation and included political candidate' vertical dyads with; ethnic political patrons, business associations, community groups, the media, religious groups, professionals' trade unions and directly with voters, with each dyad established and sustained by use of clientelistic goods and services. The study concluded that electoral participation and outcome was significantly shaped by political dyadic linkages established by political candidates and the voters during electioneering period. The study recommended that established Constitutional commissions such as Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, National Cohesion and Integration Commission, and Kenya National Human Rights Commission should develop civic education training frameworks that incorporate and inculcate liberal democratic values as opposed to clientelistic practices that characterized the established political dyads. Cross national studies on political dyadic networks with other African countries are recommended for further research in order to enrich existing literature gap.

Keywords: Patron, Political Dyadic Networks, Electoral Participation, County, Kenya

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, electoral participation forms the bedrock of representative democratic societies and refers to the involvement of individual citizens in choosing leaders to represent them in different levels of government (Aspinall and Berenschot, 2018). The United Nation through The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), emphasizes that a legitimate government must be founded on the will of the people expressed through periodic and genuine elections

conducted under universal and equal suffrage and should be held by secret vote (UDHR, 1948 and ICCPR, 1976). This is an expression that the authority to govern must be based on regularly contested elections with a comprehensive equal right to vote and based on citizens' free will (Yamamoto, 2014). Electoral participation grant citizens the right to choose their desired leader(s) for public office, legitimizes the government's authority and institutions, articulates interests and demands, and a means through which public officials are held accountable in the management of public affairs and resources (Aspinall and Berenschot, 2018). In order to

maximize on their chances of winning, political candidates and parties often establish a patron-client dyadic network with different prospective voters.

Dyadic networks are the linkages established by politicians (patrons) and voters (clients) to maximize on their symbiotic relations; votes for goods and/or services (Berenschot, 2018). As noted by Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984), the first studies of the patron-client networks was in the 1950s in small rural communities and tribal settings and thus used the term "patron-client networks" to refer to a specific type of interpersonal relationship that is usually institutionalized in the form of a contractual agreement between individuals of unequal socio-economic status, namely the patron and the client. In contemporary political science, Osayi (2015) describe the patron-client networks/linkages as an informal contractual relationship between persons of unequal status and power, which imposes reciprocal obligations of a different kind on each of the parties. As a minimum, what is owed is protection and favor on one side and loyalty on the other and the relationship is on a personal, face-to-face basis, and it is a continuing exchange relationship. Kura (2014) also defines the patron-client networks as a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services and loyalty to the patron.

According to Aspinall and Berenschot (2018), the distinguishing characteristics of patron client linkage are reciprocity, unequal exchange, proximity and diffuseness. The element of reciprocity is important both in the formation and maintenance of the patron-client relationship since the relationship continues as long as each party is in need of the supply the other party provides. The dyadic relationship is essentially based on a reciprocal exchange of different types of resources - instrumental and economic resources as well as political ones such as support, loyalty, votes, and protection (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984). Katz (2011), notes that the element of reciprocity is what gives the patron-client relationship its voluntary character and such relationships are voluntarily entered into on the basis of the expectations of mutual benefits. Chandra, (2017) argues that, although as a result of the patronage mechanisms, the ruling elites get privileges; these mechanisms function as long as they provide for the expectations of clients. However, if the client has valued services to reciprocate with, if he can choose among competing patrons, and if he can manage without the patron's help, then the relationship will be more nearly that of equals (Luna, 2014 and Sousa, 2008). In other words, the degree and the extent of the power of the patrons depend on both the degree of monopolization of goods and services and on the rarity of the resources such as employment or land, as well as on their importance for the survival of the clients.

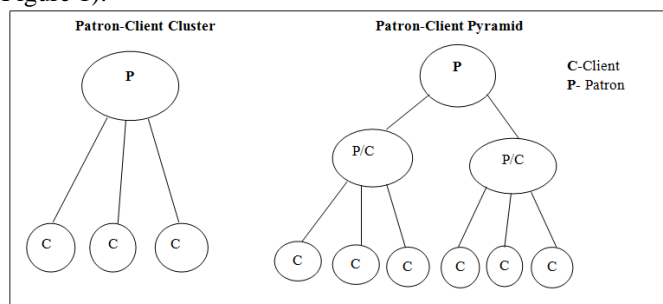
In patron-client network, the practice of inequality of the exchange is also important and based on differences of power between patrons and clients. Roy (2014) describes patron-client networks as essentially dyadic bonds between individuals of unequal power and socio-economic status. As

Stokes et.al, (2013) noted, as long as the patron and the client share similar values and cognitive orientations, the vertical relationship between them is perceived as legitimate and involves a degree of affection. Therefore, besides their basis in inequality and the element of reciprocity, two other distinguishing characteristics of patron-client ties are their face-to-face character and their diffuseness. According to Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984), there is a strong element of interpersonal obligation in the patron-client relationship. The development and maintenance of a patron-client networks/linkage rests heavily on face-to-face contact between the two parties. The continuing pattern of reciprocity creates trust and affection between the partners and according to Hutchcroft, (2014), the exchanges being intimate and highly particularistic depend upon such proximity.

Patron-client ties are also diffuse in their character; they are "whole person" relationships rather than "explicit, impersonal-contract bonds" (Hilgers, 2012). The element of diffuseness becomes crucial to the survival of the relationship during rapid social change; the patron-client networks tend to survive even during these times as long as the two partners have something to offer one another (Kura, 2014). Studies by Aspinall and Berenschot (2018) and Katz (2011) noted that patron-client network creates a dyadically structured system in which the basic structural unit is the dyad. They describe a dyadic relationship as a personal attachment involving some form of interaction between two individuals/actors (patrons and clients) in politics. According to Mares and Young (2016), there are two types of dyads; one is corporate dyads and the other is exchange dyads. In the former, the two persons behave as one, while in the latter they maintain their separate identities. The analytical characteristics of these types of dyads include; first, it binds persons of different occupational or class backgrounds as well as those of the same backgrounds. Secondly, benefits obtained through dyadic exchanges tend to be particular rather than categorical (exchanging rewards does not mean that each partner support the goals of the whole category to which the other belongs). Thirdly, dyadic exchanges tend to involve some degree of reciprocity, but need not achieve exact reciprocity since the achievement of the latter facilitates the termination of the dyad (also Hicken, 2011).

Aspinall and Sukmajati (2016) also noted that dyads are usually linked to other dyads in larger structures and all the dyadic ties within a society constitute a dyadic network. In addition, each member of a dyadically structured system has a personal combination of dyadic partners which is uniquely his own. An individual's personal set of dyadic relationships constitute his dyadic web. Aspinall (2014) argued that personal webs can be subdivided analytically into horizontally and vertically structured ones. Horizontal webs are those whose central individual has status, resources or power roughly equal to those of his various partners and when they are political, these relationships become a "personal alliance systems" (Osayi, 2015). On the other hand, vertical webs are those whose central individual has greater status, resources or power than his dyadic partners have. Aspinall and Sukmajati (2016) calls vertical webs of political nature as "personal following" and a specific sub-type of this type of webs are patron-client systems.

Patron-client relationship is undertaken between or amongst individuals or networks of individuals in a vertical fashion rather than between organized corporate groups and they undermine the horizontal group organization among clients and patrons themselves (Osayi, 2015 and Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984). Dargent (2014) insists that the basic patron-client relation transforms into a clientelistic social formation which usually consists of numerous patron-client dyads with multi-tiered network of relation, and a pyramid shaped figure. Stating about the link between patron and client, Aspinall and Berenschot (2018) and Scott (1972) states two typical representations of such links. First, is the links in which clients are directly tied to patron forming a patron-client cluster. Second, is the links in which vertical links of clients are tied to patron thus forming a patron-client pyramid (see Figure 1).



Source: Aspinall and Berenschot (2018) and Scott (1972)

Figure 1: Patron-Client Network

As shown in Figure 1, a patron in a patron-client cluster is part of a two person exchange, of superior rank of his/her clients, and operates with resources s/he himself owns or directly controls. In a patron-client pyramid, the intermediary has to play a dual role. The intermediary, usually, has to serve as a middleman (broker) to arrange an exchange or transfer between two parties who are not in direct contact. This happens if the intermediary functions as an agent and does not him/herself control the benefits to be gained. However, if the intermediary controls the benefits/gains, then s/he functions as a patron, or s/he can function as a client if s/he is in a real need of anything.

Different studies globally acknowledges the role played by patron-client dyadic network in creating a varied and a broad electoral support base towards electoral victory of political leaders (Aspinall and Berenschot, 2018; Aspinall and Sukmajati, 2016; Osayi, 2015; Kura, 2014; Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984 and Scott, 1972). While most of the studies demonstrate patron-client dyads in western liberal democracies, there is scanty empirical research in Kenya including in Uasin Gishu County. It is against this background that this study assessed political dyadic networks and electoral participation in Uasin Gishu County-Kenya and with a specific focus on gubernatorial elections in the 2013 and 2017 general elections. The County is largely a peri-urban and cosmopolitan and thus able to provide the varying attributes of patron-client dyads and practices in electoral participation from the different ethnic groups and from a cross urban and rural setting.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is an output of a research study that was conducted in Uasin Gishu County in Kenya. A descriptive survey research design was adopted and targeted all 450,055 registered voters in Uasin Gishu County as per the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission statistics of 2017. A sample size of 384 respondents drawn from 12 electoral Wards participated in the study. Questionnaires, interview schedules and Focused Group Discussion were used in collection of primary data and corroborated with the existing secondary data. Data analysis was done through the use of convergent parallel mixed method for the purpose of presentation and strict adherence to research ethical considerations. The paper significantly revolves around political dyadic networks and electoral participation in the 2013 and 2017 gubernatorial elections in Uasin Gishu County-Kenya.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The subsequent sections highlight the discussion of major finding of the study.

A. POLITICAL DYADIC NETWORKS IN GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS IN UASIN GISHU COUNTY, KENYA

Research findings on the influence of the listed activities and actors in enhancing political dyadic network in gubernatorial elections were as indicated in Table 3.1

	Much Influence (A)	Some Influence (B)	Sub-Totals for (A+B)	No Influence (C)
	Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents
i) Associating with religious groups and their activities.	57(16.2%)	162(46.2%)	219(62.4%)	132(37.6%)
ii) Collaborating and working closely with Ethnic political patron	266(75.8%)	49(14.0%)	315(89.8%)	36(10.2%)
iii) Working with Community Associations such as youth groups, women groups, PLWDs	216(61.6%)	78(22.2%)	294(83.8%)	57(16.2%)
iv) Associating with professionals and their Unions, e.g teachers, nurses, lecturers, doctors etc	26(7.4%)	172(49.0%)	198(56.4%)	153(43.6%)
vi) The nature of political party/coalition e.g. in terms of ethnic composition of affiliate parties	105(29.9%)	162(46.2%)	267(76.1%)	84(23.9%)
vii) Use of the media such as Radio, Television etc	64(18.2%)	168(47.9%)	232(66.1%)	119(33.9%)
viii) Working and associating with business associations/Groups	63(17.9%)	165(47.0%)	228(64.9%)	123(35.1%)

Source: Field Survey (2021)

Table 3.1: Activities and Actors in Enhancing Political Dyadic Networks in Gubernatorial Elections in Uasin Gishu County

The findings in Table 3.1 indicates that 219(62.4%) respondents acknowledged the importance of associating and working with religious groups and their activities, 315(89.8%) cited the need to collaborate and work closely with ethnic political patron, 294(83.8%) cited working with Community Associations, while 198(56.4%) respondents noted the need to associate with professionals and their respective Unions to enhance dyadic network. Furthermore, 267(76.1%) respondents acknowledged the centrality of the nature of political party/coalition in enhancing dyadic network, 232(66.1%) cited the role of the media while 228(64.9%) respondents acknowledged the importance of working and associating with business associations/Groups to enhance dyadic network.

From the findings, gubernatorial candidates in the 2013 and 2017 elections enhanced a strong dyadic bond with voters from different religious organizations by working and associating with their respective activities and practices as cited by over 60 percent of the respondents. Discussants in FGD noted that gubernatorial candidates adopted different strategies such as provision of monetary support the different religious groups, as well as visiting and worshipping with their congregations to earn the loyalty and electoral support. Consequently, members of the clergy would give time to candidates to campaign, give special 'prayer of success', and allow their respective members to campaign for a candidate of choice. In reciprocity, candidates would commit to support religious projects such as construction of church offices, provide water and electricity connection, give scholarship and bursary to support youth, as well as giving monetary gifts to the clergy for miscellaneous use. Similar to presidential elections, this study established that the gubernatorial candidates' capacity to frequently associate and provide support to religious faiths and denominations awakens mutual cordial relationship with the clergy who in return rally their congregations to vote for such candidates.

As a means of establishing a strong political dyadic bond with the voters, gubernatorial candidates would closely collaborate and work with ethnic political patron as cited by 315(89.8%) respondents. While ethnic patrons were largely involved in national and presidential related activities, they significantly played a role as a king maker in gubernatorial election owing to the immense support they enjoy from the electorates as they are perceived as an embodiment of ethnic interests. It is therefore imperative that for any aspiring gubernatorial candidates to have electoral support, they must have unquestionable loyalty and support to the ethnic patron who would then rally the constituents to support such a candidate. A key informant quipped that;

Just like in other parts of the country, you cannot win gubernatorial election unless you first pledge your unwavering loyalty and support to ethnic political patron [William Ruto] as the incumbent governor did in 2013 and 2017 elections... (Key Informant, Male, 52 years)

Key informants and discussants noted that prior to the 2013 gubernatorial election, the incumbent governor Jackson Mandago drawn from the URP Party had the endorsement of the URP Party leader and the Kalenjin de-facto ethnic patron-William Ruto and consequently contributing to his overwhelming victory over Margret Kamar from ODM party.

Similarly, the 2017 gubernatorial elections involved two candidates Jackson Mandago (Jubilee party) and Zedekiah Bundotich (Independent candidate) pledging their support to the Deputy Jubilee party leader (William Ruto) as a strategy of winning votes from the dominant Kalenjin electorates. However, the endorsement of the incumbent governor by the Deputy party leader contributed to his electoral victory for the second successive period as the County governor. While Wanyande (2009) emphasizes on ingrained practice of ethnic politics by the political elites at the national level politics, this finding depicted intra-ethnic political dynamics where loyalty to the ethnic political patrons is a significant determinant of electoral outcome in County level politics.

According to Gherghina (2014), dyadic networks constitute a mechanism through which voters can be recruited and mobilized to vote for a political candidates or party in democratic societies. As noted in this study, political dyadic networks in gubernatorial elections could be enhanced by aspirants working closely with community associations such as youth groups, women groups, and groups for PLWDs base as cited by 294(83.8%) respondents in order to broaden electoral support base. Based on Article 176 and the Fourth Schedule of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, the County government under the leadership of the governor is mandated to address the welfare of youth, women, PLWDs and set funds for their respective activities. Key informants and discussants cited that in the run up for the 2013 and 2017 elections, gubernatorial candidates used clientelistic strategies such as financial support to group projects, payment of group outstanding bank loans, organizing free business and farming training and seminars, donation of farm tools and equipment, promise of award of county tenders and contracts as well as promise for special financial kitty for PLWDs. A key informant noted that;

Gubernatorial candidates are expected to outline how they intend to address the issues affecting majority of the voters who are largely the youth and women. In the 2013 and 2017 elections, aspirants could promise to create jobs for youth and women. Aspirants could also give monetary donation to youth groups, promise tenders and contracts, paid registration fee for aspiring groups as well as facilitating youth and women empowerment training ... (Key Informant, Male, 56 years)

While most of the programmes targeting social groups were programmatic and provided for under the Constitution as well as political party's manifestos, aspiring gubernatorial candidates tend to use them as a means of enhancing their dyadic network with potential voters. Further probing with discussants and key informants noted that members of community groups often reciprocate to aspirants' incentives by mobilizing themselves, their families and friends to vote for a particular candidate depending on their propensity to dispense clientele goods or services to their group members.

Article 235 of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya provides for staffing of the County government by the County Public Service Board (CPSB) to execute devolved functions. While a number of appointments such as members of the County Executive Committee, Ward and Sub-County administrators are largely governor's appointees with the approval of the County Assembly, professionals such as accountants, doctors

and nurses are employed under the CPSB. This study as cited by 198(56.4%) respondents established that political dyadic networks are enhanced when gubernatorial aspirants associate and work with these professionals and their respective trade unions. Discussants and key informants interviewed noted that in the run up for 2013 and 2017 gubernatorial elections, aspirants sought to rally members of different professions such as doctors and nurses into their dyadic network on the basis that their issues such as wages, terms of service, scholarship for further studies, and housing will be addressed if elected.

Further probing with key informants however, established that the elected governors have limited jurisdictional powers to address every issue affecting county employees since they are bound by national policies and legislation on matters of labour relations for instance on regulation of salaries. Additionally, Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) on union members' welfare are done by the national union leaders at the national level and thus did not guarantee any aspiring candidates of workers' reciprocity in terms of electoral support. There were also several employees and unions working under the national government such as teachers and universities' staff whose issues are directly addressed by the national government and thus making it impossible for aspiring gubernatorial candidates to enlist them in their dyadic networks despite being voters at the County level.

Article 180(4) of the Constitution of Kenya provides for the election of the governor based on simple majority vote (GoK, 2010). Kanyinga (2009) opines that political parties in Kenya are surrogates of ethnicity and this was affirmed in the study where 267(76.1%) respondents cited that the nature of political party or coalition in gubernatorial elections constituted a significant determinant in enhancing political dyadic network with the voters. Key informants noted that the ethnic patrons who are also party leaders are considered by the voters as community spokesperson and thus influences the choice of community leaders including in gubernatorial elections. A key informant noted that;

In 2013 and 2017 elections, Uasin Gishu County was the epicenter of URP Party and Jubilee Party and led by William Ruto. Owing to the Kalenjin support for Ruto, loyalty to the Party including in the nomination and election of the governor was central and this contributed to the election of Jackson Mandago... (Key Informant, Male, 48 years)

Evident from the response was that loyalty to the party lead by ethnic patron was a significant determinant in enhancing a political dyadic network between any gubernatorial candidates and the voters. While the 2013 gubernatorial election in the study area attracted contestants from URP (Jackson Mandago) and ODM (Margret Kamar), it was noted that electoral victory of the URP party candidate was attributed to the political party (URP) having Uasin Gishu county as its political support base and the endorsement by the party leader. In addition, the political coalition between the URP and TNA at the national level had a trickle-down effect in rallying the dominant Kalenjin community largely supporting URP and the Kikuyu supporting TNA to vote for Jackson Mandago as the governor elect.

As noted by Heywood (2017), the media in democratic societies plays a significant role in political education and

mobilization and Article 34 and 35 of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya provides for the freedom of both print and electronic media. In this study, 232(66.1%) respondents noted that the media plays an important role in enhancing political dyadic network with the voters in gubernatorial elections. Key informants noted that local vernacular radio and Television station were widely used by gubernatorial candidates to reach out to voters owing to their capacity to reach out to large number of voters in the language they understand best. A key informant for instance noted that;

In the last two gubernatorial elections-2013 and 2017, gubernatorial candidates preferred using local vernacular radio and Television network such as Kass FM and TV and Changei FM to reach out to voters from the dominant Kalenjin community, and sometimes use Kiswahili radio or Television networks to reach out to non-Kalenjin voters... (Key Informant, Male, 52 years)

The study noted that all contestants in the 2013 and 2017 the gubernatorial elections were drawn from the dominant Kalenjin community in the County and these aspirants widely used vernacular radio and Television station to reach out and consolidate the Kalenjin voters in the County. Discussants from FGDs also cited social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp groups to create a unique dyad of supporters for every gubernatorial candidate. A discussant in FGD quipped;

BUZEKI in 2017 campaigns used Twitter to rally youth towards voting for him. He also had both open and a closed group Facebook accounts which he frequently used to reach out to his campaign agents, strategists and voters in the County. Mandago also used the same approach in the 2013 and 2017 gubernatorial campaigns and elections... (Discussant, Male, 36 years)

The use of media in gubernatorial campaigns and elections enhanced a strong Candidates-Voters dyadic network aimed at winning in election as cited by discussants and key informants. The use of vernacular radio and Television network helps to create and consolidate a strong political dyad based on ethnicity as primordial social bond.

According to KNBS (2019), over 35 per cent of the population in Uasin Gishu County are largely urban dwellers and engages in small and medium enterprises. Conversely, the 65 percent of the population who are rural dwellers are mostly involved in agro-business enterprises as well as both small and large scale crops and animal husbandry. Based on this study, 228(64.9%) respondents acknowledged that gubernatorial candidates often work and closely associate with the different business associations/Groups as a means of establishing a political dyad aimed at consolidating support base and consequently increasing chances of winning in election.

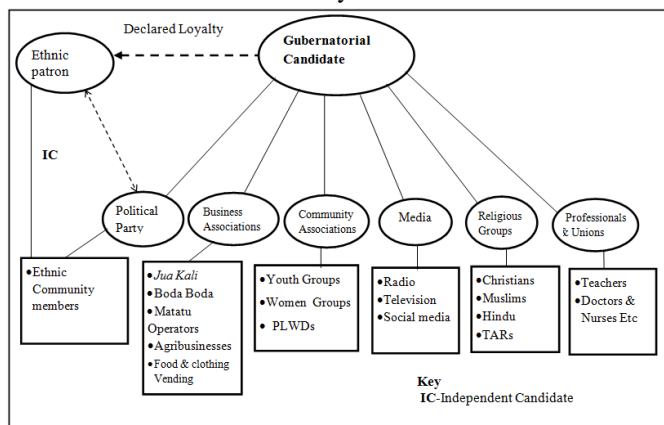
Discussants and key informants from the business associations noted that their primary goal was to have a favourable business environment that allows them to transact their businesses and will always support gubernatorial candidates having such programmatic measures. A discussant noted that;

Every business operator such as the Jua Kali artisans, 'watu wa mitumba', Matatu and Boda boda operators needs a favourable working environment such as business stalls, maintained roads, timely processing of business permit as well

as solid waste disposal around their business premises. The incumbent governor has been able to address this and thus winning votes from most of the business operators in the county... (Discussant, Male, 58 years)

The jurisdictional mandate of the office of the governor in addressing the interest of different business associations provided gubernatorial candidates with a cleavage to leverage on, in relation to their political campaigns and election. As noted by discussants, gubernatorial candidates often use clientelistic goods to establish dyadic networks with business groups/associations such as monetary donations. It can be observed from this finding that gubernatorial candidates' working and associating with business association on the basis of mutual reciprocity helps to establish political dyadic network geared towards broadening political support base and vote loyalty.

In summary, gubernatorial candidates establishes political dyadic networks with voters through specific activities and actors premised on reciprocity and social exchange relations. Gubernatorial aspirants must establishes dyadic network with ethnic patron and vie using his political party in order to gain electoral support of ethnic constituents. Similarly, they must also establish dyadic bond with business groups/associations in order to broaden electoral support base. Political dyadic bonds with community associations such as youth and women groups and groups for PLWDs was also very important just like dyadic bonding through the media outlets like vernacular radio and Television networks, and the social media. To broaden political base and electoral support, gubernatorial candidates also establishes dyadic network with religious groups as well as with professionals and their respective trade unions. On the basis of mutual gain, reciprocity and social exchange relations, gubernatorial candidates' appropriates clientelistic goods and services as trade-offs to sustain the political dyad with the voters. Figure 3.1 summarizes the political dyadic network in the 2013 and 2017 gubernatorial elections in Uasin Gishu County.



Source: Field Survey, 2021

Figure 6.2: Political Dyadic Networks in Gubernatorial Election in Uasin Gishu County

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, citizen participation in electoral process is a key hallmark of representative democracies, and allows

electorates to choose leaders to the different levels of government. Electoral participation and outcome is significantly shaped by political dyadic linkages established by political candidates and the voters during electioneering period. The study recommended that established Constitutional commissions such as Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, National Cohesion and Integration Commission, and Kenya National Human Rights Commission should develop civic education training frameworks that incorporate and inculcate liberal democratic values as opposed to clientelistic practices that characterized the established political dyads during the electioneering period. Cross national studies on political dyadic networks with other African countries are recommended for further research in order to enrich existing literature gap.

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