Cultural Trends Influencing Parliamentary Elections: The Case of Webuye Constituency, Kenya, 2013

Kundu, Amos Nadasaba Kundu

Abstract:

This study set out to investigate cultural trends which influence parliamentary elections in Webuye Constituency, Kenya. Webuye Constituency has had four elected MPs, since its creation in 1987, .out of whom three hail from among the Bukusu which is the dominant sub-ethnic group in the constituency and one from among the Tachoni which is one of the minority sub-ethnic groups in Webuye constituency. The fact that Alfred Sambu, a Tachoni, beat Musikari Kombo, a Bukusu (w~o was not only a cabinet minister but also a party chairman) in the 2007 parliamentary elections; does not only challenge many studies that have found out that voting in Africa is primarily done on cultural identity lines but also indicates that there is a change in the voting behaviour of the constituents. The cultural trends investigated are traditional values', ethnic identities and religious affiliation. The main objective of the study was to establish the cultural trends which influence peoples' attitudes and choices during parliamentary elections. To achieve this objective the study was guided by the hypotheses that the electorates' traditional values, ethnic identities and religious affiliations have significant impacts in parliamentary elections. The Interaction Interpretive theory was the main tool used to probe the various aspects and elements of politics. To carry out an effective investigation, the study utilized both qualitative and quantitative data collected through questionnaires, oral interview, observation and written sources. The target population was randomly and ' ill specific cases' purposively sampled. The findings are that traditional values, ethnic identities and religious affiliation influence voting behaviour of the electorate in parliamentary elections. It IS recommended that the government should not only formulate policies that encourage positive cultural identities and those that discourage negative cultural identities in parliamentary elections but also provide a framework for NGOs, CBOs and other civil society organizations to freely conduct voter education with the goal of informing the community on the importance of positive cultural interactions and. the effects of negative cultural identities.