



Theatre and Performance as Social Commentary in West Africa: An Action Research Study from Tanzania,

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Abstract

Theatre and performance have long served as powerful vehicles for social commentary in West African societies. In Tanzania, these forms of expression have been used to address various societal issues such as cultural preservation, gender equality, and political governance. The research methodology employed an action research approach, involving participatory observations, interviews with local artists, and participant observation in selected theatre productions. Data were collected through ethnographic field notes and semi-structured interviews to capture the lived experiences and perspectives of Tanzanian communities. Findings indicate that theatre and performance serve as a significant tool for social commentary, particularly in addressing issues related to gender equality and cultural preservation within local communities. A notable theme observed was the use of traditional storytelling techniques to highlight contemporary societal challenges. This study highlights the effectiveness of theatre and performance in fostering dialogue on critical social issues among Tanzanian communities. The findings suggest that integrating these forms into educational and community development programmes could enhance public engagement and support for social change initiatives. Recommendations include incorporating theatre and performance workshops as part of curricula in schools, encouraging local artists to produce more content addressing societal issues, and supporting the establishment of performance spaces in marginalized communities.

Keywords: *African, Theatre, Performance, Ethnography, Anthropology, Methodology, Community Engagement*

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