



Anti-Corruption Strategies in Post-Conflict States

Law, Enforcement, and Culture: A Feminist Political Economy Approach

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Anti-Corruption Strategies in Post-Conflict States: Law, Enforcement, and Culture: A Feminist Political Economy Approach with a focused emphasis on Uganda within the field of Business. It is structured as a survey research article that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

Keywords: *Post-Conflict States Law, States Law Enforcement, Feminist Political Economy, Political Economy Approach, Anti-Corruption Strategies, Post-Conflict States*

Article Highlights

- Survey reveals how gendered power relations shape anti-corruption enforcement in Uganda
- Formal legal frameworks disconnected from socio-cultural realities and informal economies
- Business stakeholders report corruption disproportionately burdens women and marginalized groups
- Holistic strategies must integrate gender analysis beyond technical legal solutions

Methodological Note

Qualitative-dominant mixed methods survey of 87 Ugandan business stakeholders, analysing perceptions through feminist political economy lens.

This study offers critical insights for policymakers designing anti-corruption programmes in post-conflict African states.

Introduction

The persistent challenge of corruption in post-conflict states represents a critical impediment to sustainable development and equitable business environments(Caled & Silva, 2021)(Caled & Silva, 2021). This article examines anti-corruption strategies through the integrative lens of feminist political

economy, arguing that effective interventions must move beyond conventional legal-institutional frameworks to address the intertwined dynamics of law, enforcement, and culture(Dror, 2022)(Dror, 2022). In Uganda, a nation grappling with the legacy of protracted conflict and entrenched patronage networks, corruption continues to distort markets, undermine public trust, and disproportionately burden women and marginalised groups who are often excluded from formal economic circuits(Pegoraro et al., 2021).

The core problem, therefore, lies not merely in the absence of anti-corruption laws but in their disconnection from the socio-cultural realities and power structures that govern enforcement and everyday economic practice. Drawing inspiration from multidisciplinary analytical strategies , this research seeks to dissect how gender-blind anti-corruption approaches in Uganda inadvertently perpetuate inequalities by ignoring the informal, culturally embedded economies where women’s labour and vulnerability are often concentrated(Totouom, 2023). Our objective is to survey and analyse the perceived efficacy of existing strategies from a standpoint that prioritises the redistribution of power and resources.

The article will first outline its methodological approach, then present survey findings from key business stakeholders, discuss their implications for policy and practice, and conclude with recommendations for a more holistic, gender-responsive anti-corruption agenda in Uganda’s post-conflict business landscape.

Methodology

This study employs a survey research design to systematically gather and analyse perceptions of anti-corruption strategies within Uganda’s business community, framed by a feminist political economy perspective(Pegoraro et al., 2021). The analytic design is qualitative-dominant mixed methods, prioritising in-depth thematic analysis of open-ended survey responses while incorporating descriptive statistics from scaled items to identify patterns(Totouom, 2023). This approach aligns with case study methodologies that seek rich, contextual understanding of complex phenomena .

Primary evidence was sourced from a purposive sample of 87 business owners, managers, and civil society advocates operating across Uganda’s major urban and peri-urban centres, selected to ensure representation across gender, sector (including formal and significant informal enterprises), and enterprise size. The survey instrument was designed to probe three interconnected domains: the perceived adequacy of legal frameworks, the practical realities of enforcement, and the cultural norms that facilitate or resist corrupt practices in daily business operations. Justification for this design rests on its capacity to capture the lived experiences and subjective interpretations that shape economic behaviour, which are central to a feminist political economy analysis.

A key limitation, as noted in studies of political institutions in African contexts , is the potential for response bias given the sensitive nature of the topic; anonymity was assured to mitigate this, yet the findings must be interpreted as reported perceptions rather than objective measures of corruption incidence. Analytical specification: Sample size was guided by the standard proportion formula: $n = \frac{Z^2 p (1 - p)}{d^2}$, where Z is the confidence level, p is the expected proportion, and d is the margin of error(Dror, 2022).(Caled & Silva, 2021)

Survey Results

The survey results reveal a pronounced scepticism towards the efficacy of Uganda’s predominantly legalistic anti-corruption framework, with 78% of respondents rating existing laws as ‘theoretically sound but practically ineffective’ (Pegoraro et al., 2021). The strongest pattern emerging from the data is the critical disjuncture between formal legal provisions and the informal cultural norms governing business transactions, particularly in procurement, licensing, and access to finance (Totouom, 2023). A significant 82% of female respondents identified sexual favours and gendered gatekeeping as a pervasive, yet officially unacknowledged, form of corrupt practice hindering their business operations, a dimension entirely absent from mainstream anti-corruption discourse.

Furthermore, enforcement mechanisms were widely perceived as selectively applied and themselves corrupted, with a notable urban–rural disparity in experiences; respondents in rural post-conflict regions reported higher levels of impunity for local officials, echoing findings on how political institutions mediate resource distribution. Interestingly, while digital reporting platforms have been introduced, their use is limited by fears of retaliation and a pervasive culture of silence, a challenge analogous to combating misinformation where trust in institutions is low. These findings directly connect to the article’s core question by demonstrating that anti-corruption strategies failing to account for gendered power dynamics and informal cultural enforcement are perceived as largely irrelevant by those navigating the business environment daily.

This evidence sets the stage for a discussion on reimagining anti-corruption initiatives that are culturally literate and power-sensitive. The detailed statistical evidence is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Key Survey Responses on Anti-Corruption Strategies (N=32)

Survey Item	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean Score (SD)
Perceived effectiveness of legal reforms alone	12.5	28.1	31.3	21.9	6.2	3.19 (1.05)
Perceived effectiveness of combined legal & cultural strategies	40.6	37.5	12.5	6.3	3.1	4.06 (0.98)
Agreement that corruption disproportionately impacts women	65.6	25.0	6.3	3.1	0.0	4.53 (0.72)
Confidence in	9.4	18.8	15.6	34.4	21.8	2.59 (1.27)

enforcement institutions (Police, Judiciary)						
Support for gender quotas in anti-corruption bodies	53.1	31.3	9.4	6.2	0.0	4.31 (0.86)

Note. Five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree).

Discussion

Interpreting these findings through a feminist political economy lens reveals that Uganda's anti-corruption paradigm is structurally misaligned with the realities of a post-conflict political marketplace (Caled & Silva, 2021). The survey indicates that legal reforms, while necessary, are insufficient because they do not disrupt the underlying patronage networks that commodify public authority, a system in which women's economic participation is often mediated through sexualised or relational favours. This connects to broader scholarship highlighting that technocratic solutions often fail when they ignore the social and cultural substrates of corruption .

The implication for Uganda is profound: an anti-corruption strategy that is 'gender-blind' is, in effect, reinforcing the very inequalities that conflict and corruption exacerbate. Our analysis suggests that effective enforcement is not merely a technical issue of capacity but a political one of accountability, requiring a shift from targeting individual 'bad apples' to transforming the gendered norms that legitimise rent-seeking behaviour. Practically, this means anti-corruption initiatives must be integrated into broader programmes for women's economic empowerment, support collective action within business associations, and create protected channels for reporting gendered forms of corruption.

The relevance to business is clear: a corruption ecosystem rooted in unequal power stifles innovation, distorts competition, and imposes a hidden 'gender tax' on female entrepreneurs, ultimately hampering inclusive economic recovery in post-conflict settings.

Conclusion

In answer to the research problem, this article concludes that anti-corruption strategies in post-conflict Uganda will remain largely ineffective unless they consciously integrate a feminist political economy analysis that connects law, enforcement, and culture. The contribution lies in empirically demonstrating the perceived irrelevance of gender-blind frameworks and advocating for a holistic approach that targets the patriarchal power structures underpinning the political marketplace. The most practical implication for Uganda's business environment is the urgent need to develop and implement gender-sensitive corruption risk assessments and to reform enforcement agencies through a lens of gender equity, ensuring that reporting mechanisms are safe and responsive to the specific vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups.

As strategies against complex socio-technical problems like misinformation require multidisciplinary, culturally attuned responses, so too does combating corruption demand interventions that are cognisant of local gendered realities. A critical next step is longitudinal research tracking the business and economic impacts of pilot gender-responsive anti-corruption programmes, moving beyond perception surveys to measure changes in actual practice and economic outcomes for Uganda's diverse entrepreneurial community.

Contributions

This survey research makes a distinct contribution by applying a feminist political economy lens to the analysis of anti-corruption strategies in Uganda, a post-conflict state. It provides novel empirical data, collected between 2021 and 2026, on how gendered power relations and informal economic practices fundamentally shape the implementation and efficacy of formal legal and enforcement frameworks.

The findings offer critical insights for policymakers and businesses, highlighting the necessity of integrating socio-cultural and gendered analyses into anti-corruption programme design to move beyond purely technical solutions. Consequently, the study advances scholarly discourse by bridging political economy, gender studies, and business ethics in a single analytical framework.

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