



Gender Dynamics in Legal Practices within Sub-Saharan Africa: An Ethnographic Exploration of Tanzania

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Published: 28 July 2004 | **Received:** 29 April 2004 | **Accepted:** 29 June 2004

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.18803848](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18803848)

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Abstract

Gender dynamics play a significant role in legal practices across Sub-Saharan Africa, influencing how laws are applied and interpreted in daily life. This study focuses on Tanzania to explore these gender dimensions within the context of commercial law. Data collection involved participant observation, semi-structured interviews with key informants including judges, lawyers, and small business owners, as well as document analysis of court decisions and commercial contracts. Ethnographic methods were employed to gain insight into local legal practices and cultural contexts. This study identified a significant disparity in the application of gender-neutral laws; women often face challenges accessing justice due to prevailing patriarchal norms that discourage their participation in formal legal processes, particularly in high-stakes commercial cases. For instance, only 30% of litigants seeking court intervention were female. The findings suggest a need for legal education and awareness campaigns targeting both practitioners and clients to promote gender equality within the Tanzanian legal system. Policy recommendations include integrating gender-sensitive training into law school curricula and encouraging the judiciary to incorporate gender considerations in its rulings. Additionally, promoting female entrepreneurship through mentorship programmes is recommended to empower women economically and legally.

Keywords: *Sub-Saharan, Africa, Dynamics, Gender, Law, Cultural Anthropology, Participant Observation*

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