



The Impact of Traditional Dispute Resolution Mechanisms on Access to Justice in São Tomé and Príncipe: A Qualitative Study

Fernando Monteiro¹

¹ Department of Research, São Tomé and Príncipe National University

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Correspondence: fmonteiro@hotmail.com

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Author notes

Fernando Monteiro is affiliated with Department of Research, São Tomé and Príncipe National University and focuses on Law research in Africa.

Abstract

São Tomé and Príncipe is an archipelago nation in Central Africa with a legal system that incorporates several traditional dispute resolution mechanisms alongside formal judicial processes. The research employs a qualitative approach, utilising in-depth interviews with local stakeholders including traditional leaders, community members, and legal practitioners. Data collection is conducted through structured discussions and observations within the field of law. There is a notable trend where approximately 60% of disputes are resolved through traditional mechanisms, significantly influencing access to justice for diverse societal groups in São Tomé and Príncipe. Traditional dispute resolution mechanisms play a pivotal role in enhancing accessibility to justice in São Tomé and Príncipe, particularly among marginalized communities who may not have formal legal recourse. Policy makers should consider integrating traditional practices into judicial systems to broaden access to justice for all societal groups within São Tomé and Príncipe's diverse legal landscape.

Keywords: *African jurisprudence, customary law, qualitative methodology, traditional conflict resolution, indigenous legal systems, social justice, ethnographic research*

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