



# Exploring Socio-Cultural Barriers to Gogo Women's Land Ownership in Tanzania

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**Abstract:** *The study aimed to explore key socio-cultural factors impeding Gogo women's land ownership in Bahi District, Dodoma-Tanzania. A descriptive survey design was employed, utilizing a mixed research approach to encompass both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The study utilized simple random and purposive sampling techniques to select a sample size of 100 respondents, consisting of 90 women and 10 key informants. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data underwent content analysis. The findings revealed that the key socio-cultural factors that impede Gogo women land ownership are polygamy system, property inheritance, women property ownership rights and patriarchal system. These factors undermine women's rights and contribute to underdevelopment within the Gogo society. Socio-cultural and beliefs play a great role in understanding how women are restricted to gaining access to land. The study recommends that the government, through Ministry of Land and Ministry of Gender should initiate nationwide campaigns to raise of women legal rights to inherit and own land. Furthermore, Educational institutions like schools, Colleges and Universities should incorporate gender rights education into curricula. Additionally, Policymakers need to revise the land law and if possible, remove the customary land laws that have been discriminatory to women. Besides, the NGOs suggest that outreach activities in the form of alliances and dialogues could be useful in tackling this problem. Finally, Local Leaders and Chiefs should be involved in community dialogues aimed at revising discriminatory traditional practices that limit women's inheritance rights. By implementing these recommendations, the Gogo community can foster a more inclusive environment that empowers women to claim their rights to land ownership.*

**Keywords:** *Gogo women's land Ownership, Socio-Cultural Factors, barriers to women's land ownership, Tanzania*

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## 1. Introduction

Land constitutes a significant asset for both genders. It offers opportunities for varied developmental alternatives in nearly all aspects of human life. Consequently, land control offers economic power, which frequently serves as the foundation of social authority and prosperity. It serves as a productive asset and a vital source of capital for the impoverished (Kivaria, 2020). A study undertaken by Kongela (2020) identified a direct association between women's access to, control over, and ownership of land in various factors, including enhanced food security, improved health and educational outcomes, enhanced earnings and personal savings, improved access to credit, and greater protection against gender-based violence. While land is a significant

asset in individuals' lives, access, control, and ownership often disproportionately benefit a particular group in many developing nations.

Globally, disparities in land ownership between men and women persist, reflecting deep-rooted societal norms and legal frameworks (Idris, 2018). In countries such as Australia, the USA, Germany, and France, women persistently encounter obstacles in land access and ownership. Statistics show substantial disparities; for instance, in Australia, women possess around 13% of agricultural land, whilst males hold 63%, and in the USA, women own about 30% of farmland relative to 70% owned by men (Newsome, 2021).

In Germany and France, women's land ownership rates are relatively low in relation to men's. Multiple studies

(Newsome, 2020; Glazebrook, Noll & Opoku, 2020; Leslie, Wypler & Bell, 2019) have studied this subject, explaining the details and consequences of women's land ownership across many contexts. And empirical research reveals substantial inequalities in land ownership rights across Africa. Akinola's study (2018) found that, women in Africa possess less than 1% of the land. For instance, in Uganda, despite legal reforms intended to improve gender equality in land tenure, women continue to meet significant obstacles in accessing and owning land. This is substantiated by research undertaken by Murphy, Carmody, and Okawakol (2017) which, discovered and revealed that women in Uganda possess merely 7-8% of the land individually, and 16-17% jointly owned with men. In contrast, men hold over 60% of the property, with the remaining 30% of the land being state-owned.

Doss et al. (2015) conducted research, which indicated that under 5% of women in Kenya possess titled land, in contrast to around 12% of men. In Tanzania, studies have revealed that roughly 20% of women possess sole ownership of land, in contrast to around 50% of men (Kongela, 2020). Furthermore, joint ownership with spouses is minimal among women, with roughly 10% participating in joint ownership, in contrast to roughly 40% of men (Nutz, 2022). A study by Massay (2020) disclosed that, the prevalence of land ownership among women in rural regions is significantly lower compared to that of women residing in metropolitan areas. Moreover, research conducted by TGNP in 2017 indicated that within the Gogo women of the Dodoma region, specifically in the Kongwa, Bahi, and Chamwino Districts, land ownership among men is significantly higher, with approximately 70% possessing ownership rights, whereas the rate for Gogo women is noticeably lower, estimated at around 30%.

A number of initiatives have been made by government and NGOs to reduce gender gap between men and women in land ownership in Tanzania. The Tanzanian government has implemented considerable measures to correct gender inequalities in land ownership via policies, laws, and regulations, notably the Land Act of 1999, which recognises and safeguards women's land rights, thereby ensuring their unbiased access to land resources (Miku et al., 2023). The Land Policy of 1995 underlines gender equality in land tenure, advocating for women's participation in land governance and decision-making processes. The 1995 Land Policy emphasizes land reform and the safeguarding of women's land rights. These statutes align with the United Republic of Tanzania's regulations concerning property rights, as articulated in Article 24(1), and the prohibition of discrimination outlined in Article 13 (Khadija, 2021). The prevailing constitution of Tanzania assurances equal property rights for both men and women; yet land access in Tanzania is excessively sympathetic to men over women (Idris, 2017). The Tanzanian government is a signatory to international treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), thereby reiterating its

commitment to promoting gender equality in land ownership (Florian, 2018). Further, In Tanzania, entities such as the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) and the Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA) have played a vital role in fostering women's land rights, especially in areas like Dodoma (Edgar, 2020).

TGNP's programs include awareness campaigns, legal aid services, and community-based projects intended to economically and socially empower women in proclaiming their land rights. TAMWA significantly contributes to the promotion of women's land rights via media campaigns and community outreach initiatives, helping in the assurance that Gogo women in the Dodoma Region possess equal access to and control over land resources. Despite various global and local initiatives that purposefully intended to empower women in land ownership, the proportion of women who own land in Tanzania remains disproportionately low. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by identifying key socio-cultural factors impeding gogo women land ownership. The study by FAO, (2011), Ndeh's (2020), Djurfeldt (2020) and Haque, Aslam, and Malik (2022) have indicated that inability of women to own land is linked to socio cultural factors. These studies indicate that majority of women cannot own land because of direct and indirect socio-cultural norms and practices at the national, community, and familial levels. Therefore, identifying these key socio-cultural barriers is crucial for developing targeted interventions and policy adjustments to enhance gender equality in land ownership

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The review of literature and empirical assessments of many studies concerning the effects of socio-cultural factors on rural women's land ownership have generated some very useful insights. Previous studies have predominantly concentrated on examining gender inequality in land ownership. For example, Mrisho (2019) points out that in Africa, women account for up to 60% of the agricultural labour force, yet men have historically dominated decision-making processes. FAO (2018) discusses the disparities in land rights and ownership between men and women, emphasizing the influence of cultural norms and legal frameworks. Mbilinyi (2005) examined how customary laws affect women's access to land and their rights under statutory law. World Bank (2019) assesses the gender dynamics in land ownership and usage, highlighting key challenges faced by women. The study provides comprehensive insights into the issues of gender inequality in land ownership in Tanzania, focusing on cultural, legal, and socioeconomic factors. Nevertheless, these studies have failed to show the key social and cultural impeding gogo women land ownership. Therefore, the current study intends to fill the knowledge gap by identifying the key socio-cultural factors hindering gogo women land ownership. The findings of this study have important implications for policies aimed at promoting gender

equality in land ownership. By understanding the key socio-cultural factors that impede Gogo women's land ownership, targeted interventions will be developed to stop bad socio cultural factors hindering gogo women and other women to own land.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical Literature Review

The study is guided by African feminist theory. The theory was formulated by African women to specifically address the situations and needs of women residing in Africa, hence selected to guide this study. Feminist theory examines gender and its stories, forms, contexts, implications, and behavioral norms, sometimes in combination with other contemporary social constructs such as class, race, age, religion, and geography (Sylvester, 2021). African feminist theory examines how patriarchy, a psychological and political system that prioritizes males over females, utilizes law, tradition, coercion, ritual, traditions, education, labour, and language to overpower women in both public and private spheres. Nonetheless, the theory of African feminists advocates for the active pursuit of equitable societies and ignores the anticipation that men will ultimately redistribute privilege and power to foster improved and more harmonious opportunities for future generations (Lyonga, 2016). This theory is relevant to the examination of African traditions. African patriarchal traditions predominantly create distinctions between males and females throughout various areas, including household dynamics, marriage rituals, production methods, and sexual freedoms, sometimes to the disadvantage of females. The researcher employed African feminist theory to explain the socio-cultural obstacles that are crucial to the intricate experiences encountered by women in their efforts to get access to and control over land. The idea is relevant to this study as it analyses gender and behaviours within communities, specifically regarding African traditions. The study attempted to illustrate social cultural act as a barrier to women's land ownership.

### 2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Almazi (2016) conducted a study in Saudi Arabia, which revealed that the rate of women's land ownership in the respective country is merely 0.8%. The study further observed that, although Sharia law grants women complete legal rights to property ownership, deeply engrained socio-cultural norms have resulted on men inheriting double the amount of property compared to women. Besides, it was also found that, factors such as inadequate female education and deep-rooted religious beliefs further strengthen this discrepancy. The research also noted that women's educational shortages restrict their understanding of land ownership rights, while religious viewpoints that perceive women as inferior to men aggravate their exclusion from land ownership.

Generally, the study concluded that, this cultural bias not only limited women's economic involvement but also sustains gender inequity

### In the property rights

Agarwal (2019) conducted research that investigated on gender and land rights in India. The study discovered the existence of substantial societal and institutional prejudices against women in Hindu groups, especially those adhering to patrilineal inheritance systems. These conventional behaviours frequently result in significant male disagreement to conferring land rights to their daughters, therefore worsening and widening gender inequalities in the aspect of land rights and ownership. Ishaq and Memon's (2016) study examined the effect of socio-cultural elements, such as patriarchal structures and religious beliefs, on women's property ownership in Pakistan. The research showed that disagreements between spouses on numerous issues, such as land ownership, often result in discontent among women. The study further revealed that, patriarchal customs and religious doctrines that limit women's land rights aggravate their marginalization and obstruct their participation in economic progress.

Flintan's study (2018) examined the circumstances of Ethiopian women and revealed that a substantial number of women were illiterate and uninformed about their basic land rights. The study found that, conservative community leaders presented significant obstacles to individuals possessing legal expertise, which led to their hesitance to contest the prevailing discriminatory customary laws that are affecting women's welfare. Izumi (2017) conducted a study, which examined women's land rights in Uganda, a primarily patrilineal country where women's property entitlements are reliant upon their connections with male relatives. The study uncovered that, women often inherit less land than men, and land rights are generally obtained through marriage. The research noted that; despite certain amendments to customary and statutory property frameworks, yet traditional practices persist in hindering women's land ownership. A study undertaken by Lelelit et al. (2017) examined the influence of socio-cultural determinants on women's land ownership in Kenya, by emphasizing elements such as polygamy and patriarchy. Their findings demonstrated that these cultural characteristics significantly affect women's access to and control over land, underlining the need for making efforts to mitigate these prevailing hindrances affecting women's land ownership.

Minde (2015) examined gender roles in rural Moshi, Tanzania, specifically highlighting patriarchal structures sustaining disparities in land ownership and resource management. The research noted that conservative gender roles prolong inequalities between men and women, with men possessing greater authority and control over land: Ngolisa (2015) presented a comprehensive analysis of Tanzania's land tenure

regimes, classifying land into village land, general land, and reserved land. The study observed that multiple tenure systems regulate these classifications, encompassing village property rights, customary occupation rights, granted occupancy rights, and leasehold agreements. It also uncovered that, every system possesses distinct legislation governing land ownership and transfer, illustrating the complicated relationship between legal frameworks and socio-cultural practices in defining land rights. FAO (2018) examined gender and land rights in Tanzania, the report discusses the disparities in land rights and ownership between men and women, the report emphasizes the influence of cultural norms and legal frameworks. The study also recommended that, there is a need to break the gap existing between men and women towards land ownership. World Bank (2019) Tanzania Gender Review: Land and gender in Tanzania, this report assesses the gender dynamic in land ownership and usage, highlighting key challenges faced by women. The paper focuses on cultural, legal and socioeconomic factors.

These studies jointly provide comprehensive insights into the issues of gender inequality in land ownership global and in Tanzania, focusing on cultural, legal, and socioeconomic factors. Nevertheless, these studies, especially those that have been conducted focused more on showing disparities in land in Tanzania they have failed to show the key social and cultural impeding gogo women land ownership. Therefore, the current study intends to fill this knowledge gap.

### 3. Methodology

This study adopted a pragmatic research philosophy, as outlined by Creswell (2013), enabling the use of mixed methods to effectively address the complex research questions surrounding socio-cultural factors affecting women's land ownership in Bahi District, Tanzania. The research design utilized a descriptive survey approach, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon without manipulating variables. A mixed methods approach facilitated triangulation by examining the same phenomenon through both qualitative and quantitative lenses (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The population for this study consisted of 322,526 individuals in Bahi District, as reported by the 2022 Census. The study specifically targeted women from the Gogo tribe, who are directly affected by land ownership issues. This demographic focus enabled a thorough exploration of the socio-cultural factors impeding women's access to land ownership.

A sample of 100 respondents was determined using Slovin's formula, which provided a margin of error of 10% with a confidence level of 90%.

$$N(1 + n)$$

$$N = \frac{E^2}{n}$$

Where N= is the total population size of 322,526 total.

$$e = \text{Margin error} = 0.05$$

$$n = \text{Sample size}$$

$$322,526 (1 + 322,526)$$

$$N = \frac{322,526 \times 0.05^2}{100} = N = 100$$

The sampling procedures included:

Both simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were employed. Simple random sampling was utilized to select 90 women from the targeted villages, ensuring each participant had an equal chance of selection. Purposive sampling was used to identify 10 key informants, including villages and ward officials, who possessed specific knowledge related to land ownership issues (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Out of the 100 respondents selected, all participated in the study, resulting in a response rate of 100%. This allowed for a comprehensive collection of data. This study employed a mixed-methods research design. The study included both quantitative and qualitative elements, where quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires and qualitative insights were gathered from interviews with key informants. The research examined naturally occurring variables related to socio-cultural factors affecting women's land ownership without assigning participants to manipulated conditions. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Data analysis was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, consistent with the pragmatic research philosophy. Descriptive statistics were utilized to identify trends related to women's land ownership. Whereby, qualitative data were analyzed thematically to extract deeper insights from the perspectives of key informants, identifying major themes such as cultural beliefs, legal barriers, and community support mechanisms affecting women's access to land ownership.

#### 3.1 Ethical Consideration

To ensure that all research ethics are upheld, this research secured consent from St John's University such as asking for permission and research clearance also governmental officials from the Bahi district like village and ward executive officers, and any other parties from whom data was been needed. The consent briefing of the respondents about the research purpose, their relevance in the research process, and their expectations. It also preserves the privacy of sensitive information. Furthermore, assured that the information they provided would be treated as confidential and used for academic purpose only. These enabled respondents to participate with minimal risk.

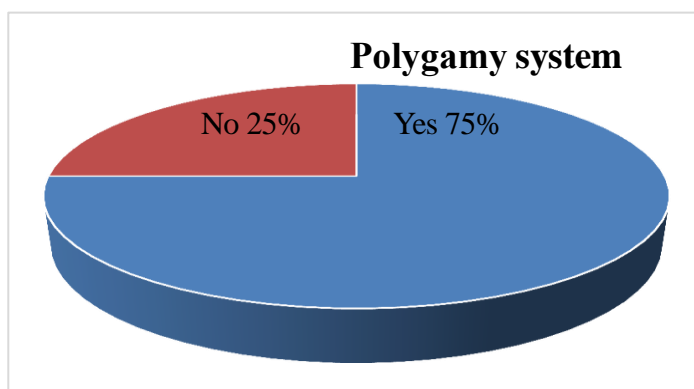
## 4. Results and Discussion

### Socio-cultural Factors Impeding Gogo Women from Land Ownership

This section discusses the socio-cultural factors impeding gogo women's land ownership. To achieve this, data were gathered through various methods, including questionnaires, documentary reviews, and interviews. These methods allowed participants to provide pertinent and in-depth responses to the designed research questions. The key socio-cultural factors identified in this study included polygamy system, property inheritance, women's property ownership rights and patriarchal system.

#### 4.1. Polygamy System

Regarding the influence of polygamy, the findings found that 75% of the respondents identified polygamy as a key socio-cultural factor that contributes to impeding women's land ownership within Gogo community, while 25% of them disagreed with this view. Generally, the study indicated that, polygamy is one of the socio-cultural factors contributing to the marginalization of women regarding land ownership in the study area. The study observed that, culturally, families often grant men the exclusive monopoly to control and manage property, including the power to transfer land ownership. This practice creates significant challenges for women seeking land ownership in the region. These findings concur with research undertaken by Choudhry et al. (2019) in Pakistan, which also highlights that socio-cultural factors including polygamy system restrict women's ability to own and manage property. Figure 1 summarizes the findings.



**Figure 1: Respondents Responses with regard to polygamy system (N=100)**

Source: Field Primary Data, 2023

The study revealed that men, having culturally granted a dominant power within families, they often make unilateral decisions concerning various matters, including land ownership. These decisions have significant impact on other family members, particularly wives and children. This is testified by one of the respondents who shared the following experience:

*The place where I live now belongs to my husband. He decided to leave me and our children and proceeded to marry another wife. Initially we had several farms, but to satisfy his desire he sold them all and abandoned me and children here. Consequently, I have no option except renting a land for farming and do some casual work every year in order to survive.* (Interview with a food vendor, aged 30, Mpamantwa Village, 17.07.2023).

Moreover, although some men do not personally support polygamy, this study has uncovered that they feel powerless to challenge their parents' decisions due to

prevalence of dominant traditional customs or norms. For instance, one of the respondents vented his frustration when he witnessed his father utilizing the land that his parents jointly purchased to support his father's new marriage. The respondent stated the following:

*There are still places where women are profoundly mistreated. I remember how my father abused my mother when he married his second wife. He used the land they jointly purchased and gave it to his new wife. I was upset, but I couldn't stop him because he was my father. However, learned a valuable lesson from the experience.* (Interview with a women entrepreneur, aged 28, Ibihwa Village, 17.07.2023).

These incidents continue to occur even though according to Section 3(2) of both the Land Act and the Village Land Act of 1999, "The right of every woman to acquire, hold, use, and deal with land shall, to the same extent and subject to the same restrictions, be treated as a right of

any man..." (URT, 1999, p. 26). Additionally, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights affirms in Article 17 that "Women shall have the right to live in a positive cultural context and to participate at all levels in the determination of cultural policies" (Njogu & Orchardson-Mazrui, 2006).

The study found that, in many cases, the polygamy system contributed to maltreatment of the first wife, who enthusiastically cooperated with her husband in acquiring wealth such as land. This situation contributed to family misunderstandings, conflict, and in worst case scenario a family separation in Gogo tribes. However, if women are made aware of their property rights, they can act responsibly and take steps to own land in accordance with their rights. The awareness campaigns are also crucial to make those who do not know about land rights and have been impeding women from rightfully owning land understand their mistakes and address them. Respondents also noted that, social and cultural factors should be considered in transforming the constitution into the more understandable and impartial versions. For instance, the results indicated that, those women who did not own marriage certificates lacked the confidence to claim ownership of land obtained during their customary marriage due to lack of formal evidence of their marriage.

During an interview in Bahi Sokoni, a female respondent revealed that in certain instances, women have tried to resist their husbands' desire to sell land, as testified by the following statement:

*What made me fight back and resist our family land from being sold, is my husband's persistent habit of selling family lands without firstly informing me or obtaining my consent, and also using the proceedings obtained for marrying another woman. (Interview with a woman Shopkeeper, aged 28 at Bahi Sokoni, date 17.07.2023).*

In the place where polygamy exists, marital conflicts often arise, especially when men do not show the same love to all their wives, which means discrimination occurs. For instance, researchers have observed that in many Gogo households, the first wife experiences segregation despite her active participation in wealth accumulation, whereas the second wife actively participates in the family's development activities including land disposal and receives what she desires from her husband. Consequently, conflict occurs between the husband, first wife, and second wife.

The study observed that, Gogo tribe is among the tribes in Tanzania that still have a strong affinity for their traditional norms and beliefs. Both men and women abide by and follow what they inherited from their ancestors. Because of their strong cultural beliefs and practices, the Gogo tribe still does not give women farmers equal rights to their own resources, such as land. Negative perceptions about women's land ownership created a community that believes women do not have the right to own land. As one male respondent said:

*In our Gogo customs and traditions, it is unusual for women to own property. A woman usually does not inherit her parents' possessions; only her brothers inherit. For example, female offspring are typically not permitted to hold land or property within their family. After marriage, a lady often acquires her possessions through her spouse. (Interview with Men Farmer, aged 48 at Ibihwa, date 18.07.2023).*

The findings show that cultural norms and practices in the research area have a substantial bearing on women's access to land, as men are traditionally seen as the main owners of valued property, including land, in many African communities. Furthermore, the study found that women's poverty had a negative effect on the advancement of their land rights. According to the findings, women's efforts to claim land acquired during marriage are often hindered by economic limitations, as circumnavigating legal and institutional frameworks can be quite costly.

One of the respondents shared his experience by describing how a guy tried to defy neighbourhood stereotypes by enabling his wife to own and manage land. This resulted to many members of the community members objecting by raising many questions due to his decision. The man explained:

*They were surprised and asked me questions, including If I wanted to be controlled by my wife to control and her family inherit my properties after my death? I informed them that my property would be under my wife's supervision because I am a grown-up person and my family members have no right to control or decide anything concerning my household's affairs. My decision was actually influenced by the incident which occurred following my brother in-laws' death, whereby his family expelled his widowed wife and restricted her from taking anything from her late husband's wealth. (Interview with Male Farmer, Age 52, Ibihwa, July 18, 2023).*

The findings relate with data from the United Nations (2017), which found that women worldwide own less land and have less secure land rights than men. Women are often not considered landowners or farmers, and as a result, they are frequently barred from owning land. In the absence of secure tenure rights, women are evicted from their homes when their husbands die, lack resources if expelled by abusive partners, are excluded from land ownership decisions, and have no claim to compensation if their land is appropriated by investors or corporations that are backed by governments or influential politicians. Furthermore, it has been observed that, customarily, families in the research area traditionally allow men to control over property, including land ownership and transfer rights, which makes it difficult for women to possess land.

This discovery is consistent with a study conducted by Choudhry et al. (2019) in Pakistan, which discovered that socio-cultural factors such as polygamy, property inheritance customs, male supremacy, migration, and

gender roles hinder women's access to land and property. Female respondents also identified polygamy as an issue that reduces both physical and financial support from spouses, further limiting their ability to own land. The local property inheritance system promotes male family members, providing women less opportunities to inherit. This finding is consistent with study undertaken by Moyo (2017), which discovered that cultural traditions have been limiting women's ownership of individual property and inheritance rights.

The report also recognized male supremacy as an obstacle to women's land ownership, noting that many married women defer to their husbands when making land decisions. Women's reproductive duties, defined by socio-cultural norms, and male migration were found to have a lower impact on women's land rights. This is corroborated by Wineman and Liverpool-Tasie (2019) who discovered that in Kagera, Tanzania, both men and women favour their sons when making bequest decisions, with males showing a stronger preference. The study also discovered that polygamy reinforces negative attitudes regarding women's land rights, particularly in rural parts of the Gogo tribe. In many households, men have the authority to sell or transfer land without their wives' agreement, utilizing it for personal gain, consequently weakening women's ownership rights to land and other physical properties.

In some cases, polygamy has contributed to misunderstanding among co-wives due to fear that husbands transfer properties to other wives. During an interview, a female respondent expressed this concern.

*My husband has transferred or sold the land to the first wife. As a result, I have been struggling to meet the basic needs of our family, due to restrictions imposed by the first wife. This situation is unfavourable for me, since my daughter has been sick and I lack the means to secure her treatment. I discovered this, after asked my husband to or use the land as collateral to get money for treatment of our daughter, but he refused to do so and left everything on my own. (Interview with woman farmer, aged 52 at Bahi Sokoni, date 19.07.2023).*

This provides huge evidence that, the polygamy system is a contributing factor to family conflict and separation among the Gogo family and has negative impacts on women. A normally negative attitude towards land ownership for women contributes to misunderstandings as other wives assume that their husbands transfer land to another household. Given the first woman's attitude, it's likely that she will need to confront the first wife to ensure their daughter receives proper treatment. This is supported by Akinola (2018), who argued that, although in Tanzania marriage provides secure access to land, still as long as women remain married, traditionally their husbands have all the power to transfer it without even consulting them.

## 4.2. Property Inheritance

This is a method of land acquisition, whereby the household head leaves his or her properties, including land, to the children, relatives, and friends in accordance with his or her will. Customs and tribe's traditions guide the system of inheritance in some parts of Tanzania, such as Kilimanjaro. For instance, the Chagga societies in Kilimanjaro attribute land inheritance to father and son or clan members (Mhkumbi, 2000). This study identified inheritance rights as another element of social-cultural effects that affect women's land ownership in Gogo tribe. The investigation showed that 60% of women had commented that they had hope of owning land one day, but if the inheritance laws and regulations of the society and country as well will give them power and opportunity of owning property, while (40%) of women seemed to lose hope in owning property.

Since, despite the current constitution and land laws legislated in the country providing equal rights to own land for both men and women, yet the system of land inheritance based on clan lineage (males only) is still dominant across the country and within Gogo tribe where this study was conducted. Table 1 provide a summary distribution of the opinions provided by Gogo women concerning their hope of owning land within the customary inheritance system.

Table 1: Respondents Responses with regard to property inheritance (N=100).

| S/N | Property inheritance | Frequency  | Percentage  |
|-----|----------------------|------------|-------------|
| 1.  | Yes                  | 55         | 60          |
| 2.  | No                   | 45         | 40          |
|     | <b>Total</b>         | <b>100</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Source: Field Primary Data, 2023

One of the women expressed her frustration by stating:  
*Right now, I'm too old and I don't think I have any chance of owning land. Besides, I have inadequate knowledge to*

*claim and manage land ownership, and my father doesn't believe that women should own land (Interview with Female Farmer, aged 52, Bahi Sokoni, 18.07.2023).*

This sentiment is supported by Horan (2019), who explains why most women do not own land. According to some estimates, women account for nearly half of the global smallholder farmers in developing nations, and they increasingly represent the majority of farmers in areas where men have migrated to cities in search of better work. However, women often lack recognized rights to the land they farm, mainly due to poverty and lack of education. Many access land through their husbands or sons, farm on communal property, or work as day labourers in large collectives. However, when women have sufficient control over assets, they gain greater bargaining power, which often leads to improved welfare outcomes for households, particularly in areas like children's education.

The current study highlights the desire and ambition of women to own, control, and manage land. However, traditional beliefs and the lack of suitable level of education create significant impediments to women's empowerment in land ownership. Despite representing 43% of the agricultural labor force, women rarely own the land they work on, nor do they have secure tenure or control over it. The study observed that many women face poverty, which exacerbates their inability to own land and increases their dependence on their husbands.

In the Gogo rural communities, property inheritance is profoundly tilted in favour of men due to the perpetuation of cultural beliefs and norms. These traditions make it difficult for women to own land or access resources, as families that strictly adhere to these norms often deny women the right to land ownership. A 2017 study by the Tanzania Gender Networking Program (TGNP) in the Dodoma region, specifically in the Kongwa, Bahi, and Chamwino districts, revealed that approximately 70% of men have land ownership rights, while only 30% of Gogo women possess similar rights. Inheritance laws further limit women's land ownership, as customary norms dictate that sons are responsible for protecting women, particularly widows and the elderly.

During an interview, one female respondent stated:

*My husband does not allow me to own land, but he gave my son a plot of land. I feel that he is limiting my access*

*to basic rights, as I have personal challenges that I would like to address independently, without constantly relying on him for assistance. I have asked him multiple times to help me acquire a plot of land, and although he said he would, nothing has been provided to me so far* (Interview with a woman entrepreneur, 48 years old, Mpamantwa, 16/7/2023).

This statement highlights the cultural norms within the Gogo tribe that restrict women from owning land, which in turn undermines their ability to access basic necessities, such as education or the means to fulfill personal needs. To address this, Gogo women need to be educated on the importance of dismantling these negative cultural beliefs and practices that hinder development.

Miggiano (2013) supports this view in her study on women's land rights and gender justice in land governance. The study found that women with insecure land ownership are more vulnerable to poverty, ill-health, food shortages, and face significant social and economic consequences. The research emphasized the need for increased awareness around women's land ownership rights and recommended providing rural women with information on their rights, along with basic legal assistance. Women's land rights are crucial, as land can serve as collateral for loans from financial institutions, empowering women to meet their basic needs, such as healthcare and food security. Therefore, rural women must raise their voices to challenge and eradicate the customary norms that undermine their access to these essential rights.

### 4.3 Women Property Ownership Rights

The findings showed that, the existence of shaky property ownership rights is among socio-cultural factors that affect women's right to land ownership. The study revealed that (80%) of the investigation Gogo women seemed not to have guaranteed right to own land due to existing traditional customs and beliefs pertaining to women's land rights, while (20%) of those who own land have succeeded in acquiring and owning land through buying using their own money. See Table 2.

Table 2: Respondents response with regard to women's property ownership rights (N=100)

| S/N | Property inheritance | Frequency  | Percentage  |
|-----|----------------------|------------|-------------|
| 1.  | Yes                  | 55         | 60          |
| 2.  | No                   | 45         | 40          |
|     | <b>Total</b>         | <b>100</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Source: Field Primary Data, 2023

The findings revealed that some women in the study area had purchased land outside of their immediate

communities. This is largely because women are often unable to make independent decisions within the



household without the agreement of men, whereas men are free to make decisions without consulting women. An interview during the study demonstrated this dynamic:

*I have land in the next village, which I purchased in 2017 while married to my husband. However, he is unaware of it because he does not believe in women owning land.* The interview took place on 16/7/2023 with a 40-year-old woman entrepreneur from Mpamantwa.

Adams and Turner (2020) echoed this sentiment, stating; "women's marginalization in development policy is obvious. Land policies have typically been blind to the gendered nature of property and its consequences. Studies have shown that, the development process has disadvantaged women, who frequently started from an already inferior position. Women's tenure of rights continue to weaken due to the commercialization of production, individualization of tenure systems, and formal titling schemes (Adams & Turner, 2020: pp. 4-5).

These results demonstrate that socio-cultural factors are significant hindrances to women's land ownership. A lack of education and engrained beliefs, often upheld by local elders, contribute to women's weakened confidence in partaking in decision-making processes alongside their husbands, particularly in matters of development.

*When I was 22 years old, I was ignorant, believing that men had authority over everything." However, a friend of mine inspired me to own land after she bought five hectares, while I had nothing* (Interview with a farmer, 32 years old, Ibihwa, 15/7/2023).

This illustrates the importance of empowering women. Through empowerment initiatives, women can challenge the socio-cultural practices that hinder their land ownership. Training programs, such as seminars and educational initiatives, are critical in helping women change their circumstances and assert their rights to land ownership.

*My husband purchased land without my financial contribution, so he registered it in his name. "Although I use it for subsistence farming under his supervision, I have no claim over the land and cannot make any decisions regarding it* (Interview with a 28-year-old vegetable seller, Ibihwa, 15/7/2023).

Men undermine property ownership among rural women, despite their significant contribution to agricultural production. After harvest, it is typically men who make decisions regarding the crops, further restricting women's agency.

One of the respondents expressed her concerns about seeking legal assistance

*If you go to the police, you may receive assistance. However, the Officers are untrustworthy and do not keep matters confidential. They tell others, and once people hear that you've gone to the police, they begin to say bad*

*things about you. Ultimately, this discourages people from seeking help.*

(Interview with a 58-year-old food vendor, Bahi Sokoni)

This further emphasizes how sociocultural factors have a negative impact on women's land ownership. Becker (2020) links these factors to other adverse outcomes for women, such as lower levels of female entrepreneurship, higher rates of harmful practices like female genital mutilation, and increased restrictions on women's mobility and autonomy. According to the FAO (2023), women make up 60–80% of the agricultural workforce. However, they often experience marginalization and lack rights to land or agricultural products. This is particularly true in the Gogo tribe, where more women than men engage in agricultural production. Culturally, men believe that women should only have input on certain crops, such as cassava, legumes, and parts of the maize crop. Beyond these, men feel there is no need for women's involvement in land and crop-related decisions.

Maneno (2017) noted that even when women succeed in court and the judgment favours them, it is often difficult to enforce such rulings in communities due to existing hostile to women. Women who challenge traditional norms often face aggression, including physical, sexual, and emotional violence. Similarly, Meinzen-Dick et al. (2019) argue that poverty is a major factor in determining women's access to land and their security of tenure. Even when there are no formal legal or customary barriers to women owning land, economic limitations often prevent them from securing property. This is especially true in situations where financial resources primarily determine access to land. Women remain largely confined to the informal labor sector, engaging in work that is generally less secure and less profitable.

Moreover, opinion leaders, particularly religious and traditional leaders, influence property ownership perceptions. In rural communities, especially among the Gogo tribe, educational levels among women are still low. Elders and religious leaders hold negative views on women owning resources. For instance, traditional leaders view it as a lack of discipline for women to challenge men's decisions, excluding women from family decision-making processes. Many Islamic leaders similarly do not support women's ownership of land.

#### 4.4 Patriarchal system

The patriarchal system significantly impacts women's land ownership within the Gogo tribe. The majority of respondents (78%) indicated that this aspect of cultural system heavily influences women's inability to own land in the study area, while a smaller portion (22%) stated that this aspect of cultural beliefs had little or no effect on women's land ownership. This variation in responses can be attributed to differing perspectives across various villages. As shown in Table 3, the total number of respondents varied, as not all participants viewed

patriarchy system as a barrier to women's land ownership.

**Table 3: Respondents' response with regards to patriarchal system**

| S/N | Patriarchal system | Men       | Women     | Frequency  | Percentage  |
|-----|--------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| 1.  | Yes                | 8         | 70        | 78         | 78          |
| 2.  | No                 | 2         | 20        | 22         | 22          |
|     | <b>Total</b>       | <b>10</b> | <b>90</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Source: Field Primary Data, 2023

Many men feel a sense of pride and ownership over both family property and women within the households. One male respondent testified through this sentiment:

*Things are nowadays changing and we keep hearing people talking about the idea of 50/50, although most men are the ones who generate all properties and wealth in the family, and they subsequently just inform their wives about their possessions. But, in the past, if a couple divorced, the woman had no right to claim land and could not complain. When she is returned to her parents with nothing, no one would question why she left behind the land she had acquired with her husband—they would simply accept her, and she would remain at her parents' house (Interview with a farmer, 29 years old, Mpamantwa, 16/7/2023).*

When it comes to land ownership, many participants were against the idea of women controlling land, fearing that this would ultimately empower women to surpass men in wealth or status. Given the increasing value of land, some men have expressed concerns and fear that their wives might mistreat or even kill them if granted land ownership. These men believed that if women were financially stable through land ownership, they might leave them or dominate their husbands in decision-making concerning family matters.

However, there is some hope for change. Men are starting to acknowledge the difficulties women farmers encounter when family members or the community deny them their rights. Arising awareness of unwarranted customs and taboos has led some men to give their wives property and resources to protect them from mistreatment. Additionally, some men hold the belief that women excel in budgeting and planning, and for a family to succeed, hence they should have the authority to make decisions about family matters. The fear that women might harm or leave their husbands if given ownership of land underscores the need for educational programs for both men and women to inspire equitable sharing of resources, particularly land.

Fishbein and Ajzen (2019) assert that, both internal and external factors influence an individual's intention to perform a certain behaviour. The findings of this study indicate that the Gogo people have inherited norms and customs from their ancestors and take them as standards

that they should follow without fully understanding their origins. These norms continue to shape the behaviour of Gogo women farmers, who often feel powerless and lack confidence in the presence of men. Cultural change is a complex process that takes time, but people are constantly learning and adapting to new cultural practices. The ability of Gogo women and men farmers to change their behaviour largely depends on their cognitive readiness and the influence of their intentions. The findings show that many Gogo women farmers are ready for change but face resistance from elders, men, and the broader community.

Educational programs for both men and women should foster progress by facilitating discussions about the strengths of both genders in problem-solving, decision-making, and resource management. Changing men's perceptions of women's intelligence and capabilities is crucial, as is the need for male champions within communities to advocate for women's land rights and put an end to discrimination. Furthermore, United Nation's study FAO (2011) found that "providing education and skills training to women can help to break down gender-based stereotypes and promote their access to land.

Historically, African norms have prohibited women from owning land, and women's access to land is often dependent on men. Akinola (2018) notes that in many Tanzanian tribes, marriage provides secure access to land, but only as long as the woman remains married. For women in polygamous marriages, land ownership is even more challenging, as husbands often have the sole authority to transfer and manage land without consulting their wives. Customary laws constrain women's property rights, granting them minimal bargaining power or direct control over land ownership (Moyo, 2017). The current study observed that women often access land through male relatives—such as their mother's brother in matrilineal societies or their father or husband in patrilineal societies. However, even in matrilineal communities, individualism and intermarriage can exclude women from broader familial land rights.

Furthermore, the findings emphasize the importance of understanding Tanzania's Land Act of 1999 and the Land Policy of 1997, along with the procedures for acquiring title deeds. In many parts of Tanzania, awareness of human rights—specifically women's rights to land

ownership as outlined in the Land Act of 1999—is low. Participants expressed that they were largely unaware of these legal protections. This presents an opportunity for informal training within communities to raise awareness about land rights and their importance for both individual and national economic development. To close legal loopholes and ensure the protection of people's rights, we must also address the confusion surrounding certain land-related government policies. Government and private institutions should establish clear, computerized mechanisms to facilitate the issuance of certificates of occupancy. We should prosecute corrupt and untrustworthy government officials and terminate their contracts to prevent further perpetuation of these issues. We should prioritize women in land matters and conduct land transaction processes with high levels of confidentiality to encourage more women to engage in land ownership.

The role of agricultural extension services is critical in educating the public about land use and land ownership responsibilities. During an interview, one respondent explained how male dominance poses a challenge to women's access and ownership of land:

*In our household, I participate with my husband in agricultural activities, and I can say I contribute more than he does, as he often claims to have other things to do. However, he is the one who makes all the decisions after we harvest and sell the crops* (Interview with a farmer, 50 years old, Bahi Sokoni, 17/7/2023).

This is consistent with Minde's (2015) study on the division of gender roles in Moshi Rural, Tanzania, which found that this division results in inequalities in land ownership, access, and control of resources. Minde observed that the Chagga patriarchal system perpetuates these inequalities.

The findings imply that patriarchal structures impede Gogo women's access to land ownership. People often view women in rural areas as weak in all spheres of life—social, political, and economic. This not only affects land ownership and tenure, but also perpetuates social and cultural beliefs that undermine women. In rural communities in the Kilimanjaro region, such as the Chagga and Pare tribes, taboos and traditions uphold male control over resources, restricting women's roles to domestic activities and reproduction.

These implications align with the findings of the FAO (2017) study, which examined gender inequalities in land ownership under customary land tenure systems. The study revealed that men are considered superior and hold the power to own and control land, while women often claim land rights only through their male relatives. Gender inequalities in resource ownership hinder development. Communities that embrace gender equality in development tend to experience progress, while those that adhere strictly to traditional norms are likely to remain underdeveloped and dependent on others.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

This study identified key socio-cultural factors that impede women's land ownership in the Gogo community. The study identified the key socio-cultural factors that impede Gogo women land ownership are polygamy system, property inheritance, women property ownership rights and patriarchal system. These factors undermine women's rights and contribute to underdevelopment within the Gogo society. Socio cultural and beliefs play a great role in understanding how women are restricted to gaining access to land. The study discovered that, traditional beliefs within Gogo community dictate that women's primary role is domestic sphere, and entrusting land to women could fragment family heritage. It found that, the property inheritance in Tanzania, including within the Gogo community, also affects women's access to land, since customary law has dominated and profoundly favouring male descendants in land distribution.

### 5.2 Recommendation

#### 1. Recommendation for Government

The study recommends that the government through, Ministry of Land and Ministry of Gender should initiate nationwide campaigns to raise awareness of women's legal rights to inherit and own land. This can be done through public media, community outreach programs, and legal aid initiatives targeting rural areas where traditional norms are strong. Additionally, the government needs to facilitate discussions and workshops involving both men and women to challenge traditional norms and attitudes regarding land ownership and promoting responsibility.

#### 2. Recommendation for Education Institutions

The report proposes that schools, colleges, and Higher Learning Institutions (Universities) should incorporate gender rights education into their curricula. This can start from primary schools, teaching both girls and boys about equal property rights and the importance of gender equality in inheritance and land ownership. Also, mentorship programs need to be conducted to create mentorship opportunities where experienced women landowners can guide and support those seeking to acquire land.

#### 3. Recommendation for Policymakers

The study recommends that the Policymakers need to revise the Land Law and if possible, remove the customary land laws that have been discriminatory to women. Policymakers should prioritize the revision of existing inheritance and land ownership to ensure they protect women's rights. Therefore, there is a need to undertake legal and policy reforms to address this situation, as well as alleviate the vulnerability that

women face including eviction from their rightful land. With these reforms and revisions of land laws, women can actively participate in resource ownership and gain control over their land.

#### 4. Recommendation for NGOs

The study recommends to the NGO that, outreach activities in the form of alliance and culture dialogue or representative offices could be useful in tackling this problem. Education that sensitizes women about land rights could accompany the seminars. They should embark on establishing campaigns and awareness programs to discourage cultural practices and patriarchal systems that hinder women from owning land, especially by educating both men and women about the advantages of doing away with these practices. The disapproval of norms and traditions that discriminate against women will reduce the elements of power relations embedded in the patriarchal system. Discouragement of these norms will increase women's opportunities to participate in societal matters like land control, decision-making, and leadership.

#### 5. Recommendation to the Local leaders

The study suggests that Local leaders including villages' elders and Chiefs play a significant role in upholding traditions and customs. These leaders should be involved in community dialogues aimed at revising discriminatory traditional practices that limit women's inheritance rights. Furthermore, Local leaders should act as mediators in inheritance disputes, ensuring that women's rights are upheld and promoting equitable resolutions based on legal standards rather than patriarchal customs. By acting as agents of change, Local leaders can influence the community's acceptance of new, gender-equitable practices.

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