


# Implications of Religion Engagement and Development Projects on Gender Equality: A Case in Tanzania – Sub-Saharan Africa

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## ABSTRACT

The study rationalized how development projects implemented through religion engagement (RE) implicates satisfactorily attaining gender equality. Reorganized establishment based on secondary data analyzed using qualitative and quantitative techniques found how social development projects implemented through RE increased gender equality, thus reducing gender gap index. And this is evidenced by how the gender gap index in Tanzania declined from 0.652 to 0.537 between 1995 and 2017. However, it was high, as by 2022 the gender gap index recorded 0.72 in Tanzania. This attributed by several factors, including agricultural and livestock development projects, increased gender inequality as men dominate more than women, and causal factors are that women lack capital and are inaccessible to credit services as they lack mortgage assets. The conclusion shows development projects implemented through RE are significantly increasing gender equality, but a gap remains a crucial problem facing Tanzanians and recommendations geared to policy makers to employ effective policies and adopt practical modalities.

## KEYWORDS

development projects, gender equality, gender gap index, Implication, policy, religion engagement, Tanzania,

## INTRODUCTION

### Background Information

#### *Religion and Development Projects on Gender Equality*

Influential and fundamental sociologists and demographist as elite activists desire to see human being lives such that they achieve gender equality, sustain and preserve at optimal level. That is possible, however, achievement at optimal level needs a use of concrete instruments and for long period it was thought religion engagement influenced development projects by guilding, directing, and activating the

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decision makers and implementers to boost gender equality in any community. Based on such thinking, justification was that religion as an instrumental factor which touches gender in any population. Then what is gender? The gender is a social issue incorporating woman and man in the development and thus why religion engagement was initially recognized as reliable tool for keeping gender equality. However, with experience, among Christians, women attend religious services more often, but among Muslims and Orthodox Jews, men attend more often (Keri, 2016). This reveals that even in religion, gender inequality exists and, in some cases, noted as creating discrimination in the community.

Despite the minor weakness of religion engagement on gender inequality, it spread worldwide such that it made many people became cognizant on it. Then what is the value of RE? It is defined differently. For instance, Religion engagement defined as a social – cultural way of worship, with a belief, containing spiritual behavior convincing that God serves human being strongly. Other literatures define religion as a social belief that God exists and the way they prosper is through God (Cunningham, 2014). Such philosophy substantiates how believers rely heavily on God, thus why many countries worldwide possess religion. However, their perception is that RE would stimulate development. As such many countries have religion, and their population varies differently on various religions.

In Africa continent, it is so interesting as worshippers belong to several religions engagement. As by 2020, in Africa continent, 56%, 34%, 5% and 4% of total population reported as Christians, Muslims, other and non-religion respectively (Tanzania Demographic, 2020). Such proportions indicate how majority of population in Africa are Christians and Muslims follow. This is not an unanticipated issue but it shows how foreign culture dominated in Africa through religion. As anthropological studies show that foreigners introduced their religions to Africans. This does not need elaboration as African had no Christianity until fourteenth century when Christian missionaries showed high purposive interest of touring part of African lands. As a result, Christian missionaries introduced and influenced Christianity, which spread and grew at a reasonable rate. End result was that in this century, it is so common to remark how Christianity overwhelmed by Roman Catholics and protestants. Whatsoever, this is not a strange result, as Roman Catholic were so popular due to Roman empire which existed in Africa continent for a long period, approximately a century. Regardless of religion importance, its coverage varies even in Sub Saharan Africa.

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), people worship God basing on the religion they preferred more suitable to their development. By 2015, Christians were 63%, Muslims were 30%, Folk religion were 3% and unaffiliated religions were 3% of total population (Pew Research Centre, 2015). Such proportion indicates how Christians lead and Muslims was the second. The situation by religion is similar in many countries in SSA including Tanzania. Although religion spread widely in Sub Saharan Africa, worshippers assumed strongly that gender inequality would not exist in the areas. As believers knew that religion would eliminate inequality through preaching, advocating on peace, love, comfort and largely educating the women and men to be equal in all aspect. However, gender inequality is still marked significantly. Table 1: shows selected countries in Sub Saharan Africa by gender gap index as by 2022 (Sub Saharan Africa, 2022). From the table is that Rwanda and Namibia were the countries in Sub Saharan Africa with lowest gender gap, recording 19. This implies that female has 19 lower opportunity as compared to male and for the same data, Togo and Lesotho were leading with higher gender gap, recording 30. Overall is that gender gap remains a problem in most of Sub-Saharan Africa. The Global Gender Gap Index measures gender-based disparities among four fundamental categories, namely economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. The highest possible score is one, which signifies total equality between women and men.

In Tanzania, population by religion changed with period. As in 2016, 65% and 30% were Christians and Muslims respectively (CIA World Fact book, 2021). However, due to development progress which associated with some factors influenced changes on religion proportion in the growing population. As by early 2021, literatures reported that 61.4%, 35.2%, 1.8% and 1.6% of Tanzanians were Christians, Muslims, folk religion and unaffiliated respectively (Tanzania Demographic, 2020).

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