



Influence of Gender Policy on Women's Empowerment: A Case of Estuaire Province in Gabon (2021–2025)

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Abstract: This study aimed to assess the influence of gender policy on women's empowerment, focusing on Estuaire Province in Gabon. It examined the effects of inclusive governance, legal frameworks, and resource equity on women's empowerment. The target population consists of 489 individuals directly involved with gender policy and women's empowerment in Estuaire Province, Gabon, including members from the Gender Unit, local leaders, Women Forum representatives, women entrepreneurs, and community-based organizations (CBOs). Using a sample size of 220, determined through Slovin's formula, the study employed cluster sampling, with the population divided into distinct groups based on their involvement in different gender policy sectors. A randomized sample was drawn from each sector to ensure representation. Data collected through structured questionnaires, interviews, and documents. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25. The unstandardized coefficient for inclusive governance is 0.420, indicating that a unit increase in inclusive governance results in a 0.420 improvement in women's empowerment ($B = 0.420, t = 6.865, \text{Sig.} = 0.000$). Similarly, legal frameworks have an unstandardized coefficient of 0.246, meaning that each unit increase in legal frameworks contributes to a 0.246 improvement in women's empowerment ($B = 0.246, t = 3.775, \text{Sig.} = 0.000$). Resource equity exhibits an unstandardized coefficient of 0.342, demonstrating that enhanced resource equity leads to a 0.342 improvement in women's empowerment ($B = 0.342, t = 5.897, \text{Sig.} = 0.000$). The study recommended that local authorities prioritize gender-responsive governance, strengthen legal frameworks, and ensure equitable resource distribution to enhance women's empowerment.

Keywords: Gender Policy, Legal Frameworks, Resource Equity, Women's Empowerment

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1. Introduction

Gender policy is recognized as a fundamental aspect of achieving equality and social justice across various sectors. In the United States, emphasis on board gender diversity has gained traction as a critical element within corporate governance. Research shows that gender diversity significantly influences Environmental, Social, And Governance (ESG) performance among U.S. banks, indicating the necessity for diverse perspectives in

leadership roles to enhance organizational effectiveness. Despite strides in promoting gender diversity, barriers regarding women's access to leadership positions remain persistent, highlighting the need for targeted policies that promote gender equity at all levels within organizations (Shakil, Tasnia, & Mostafiz, 2020).

In Germany, gender policy discussions have increasingly focused on the implications of gender dynamics during public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recent studies have demonstrated that gender differences significantly affect health outcomes, with evidence showing varying infection rates and mortality outcomes across genders. A detailed examination of age- and gender-specific modeling during the pandemic points to the essential need for gender-sensitive approaches in public health policy, especially to mitigate the effects of these disparities effectively. As Germany continues to make progress in gender equity, addressing the barriers limiting women's representation in decision-making roles remains critical (Doerre & Doblhammer, 2022).

Tanzania, through the National Gender Policy and the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 framework, is actively implementing gender-focused policies aimed at enhancing women's participation in economic development. Noteworthy progress has been made; however, systemic barriers rooted in cultural attitudes persist. Access to healthcare and education for women remains limited, creating obstacles to their advancement in various fields. Research highlights the pressing need for targeted initiatives that challenge these restrictions and promote women's full participation in the economy (Garrison-Desany *et al.*, 2021).

Governmental control over economic levers in Gabon has contributed to persistent inequalities, especially within public employment policies. A theoretical and empirical assessment of Gabon's rent-based economy identified deliberate actions by state actors to weaken the bargaining power of pressure groups, particularly through corruption. Such policies have adversely impacted employment rates, economic growth, and poverty levels. In this environment, women's access to equitable employment opportunities has remained limited, reinforcing existing gender disparities despite Gabon's wealth and resource potential (Nkoulou, 2022).

Several studies have explored the influence of gender policy on women's empowerment across various regions, yet the specific challenges within Estuaire Province in Gabon remain largely unexamined, highlighting a significant gap in the literature. This lack of focus on the unique social, economic, and cultural contexts of Estuaire Province impedes the understanding of how gender policies are implemented and their actual impact on women's empowerment in the area. The study on Influence of Gender Policy on Women's Empowerment of Estuaire Province in Gabon sought to address this gap by investigating the effectiveness of existing gender policies and their role in enhancing women's empowerment in this province.

The general objective of this research was to assess the influence of gender policy on women's empowerment, focusing on Estuaire Province in Gabon.

This study had the following specific objectives:

- i. To assess the influence of inclusive governance on women's empowerment in Estuaire Province in Gabon.

- ii. To examine the influence of legal frameworks on women's empowerment in Estuaire Province in Gabon.
- iii. To investigate the influence of resource equity on women's empowerment in Estuaire Province in Gabon.

The following hypotheses guided this study:

Ho1: There is no significant influence of inclusive governance on women's empowerment in Estuaire Province in Gabon.

Ho2: There is no significant influence of legal frameworks on women's empowerment in Estuaire Province in Gabon.

Ho3: There is no significant influence of resource equity on women's empowerment in Estuaire Province in Gabon.

2. Literature Review

The theoretical framework involves a comprehensive examination and assessment of established theories and concepts related to the subject of investigation. It entails methodically analyzing and synthesizing information from various sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue. This study used the theories like Gender and Development (GAD) Theory, Resource-Based Theory, and Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) Theory.

2.1 Gender and Development (GAD) Theory

The Gender and Development (GAD) Theory, introduced through Rathgeber's work in 1982, marked a shift from earlier frameworks that concentrated solely on women as isolated subjects of development. Instead, the GAD perspective focuses on social relations, institutional structures, and systemic processes that produce and sustain gender-based inequalities. Unlike the Women in Development (WID) approach, which aimed to integrate women into existing development frameworks, GAD addresses the deeper power dynamics embedded within societal, political, and economic systems. Gender, within this theory, is treated as a construct shaped through cultural, institutional, and relational contexts rather than as an isolated characteristic (Hettiarachchi, 2023).

The theory emphasizes the transformation of governance systems to ensure active participation of both genders in leadership and decision-making processes. This focus directly aligns with analyzing how inclusive governance structures influence women's empowerment within specific regions. Moreover, GAD highlights the role of legal frameworks in shaping gender equality, recognizing that institutionalized policies and laws create

the foundation for equitable participation and rights protection (Angeles, 2023).

Another essential element within the GAD approach is the equitable allocation and access to resources. Economic opportunities, education, and social support systems are seen as critical in dismantling structural inequalities. Addressing resource equity ensures that women are not merely included but are positioned to thrive within development processes. GAD Theory, through its comprehensive focus on social, legal, and economic systems, offers an essential framework for examining women's empowerment across various dimensions (Bello, 2024).

This study used Gender and Development (GAD) Theory to analyze how social relations, governance structures, and legal frameworks contribute to women's empowerment in Estuaire Province of Gabon. By focusing on the power dynamics and institutional practices that perpetuate gender-based inequalities, the theory provided insights into how inclusive policies can transform these structures.

2.2 Resource-Based Theory

This theory was first proposed by Wernerfelt in the year 1984 and later in the year 1991 it was advanced by Barney. This theory indicates that the ultimate source of competitive advantage in any organization is the resources they have, both tangible and intangible. According to the theory, the resources must be coordinated in a manner that they support one another if the organization is to achieve its objectives. It is also important for the organization to yearn for diversity and increase their resources so that they can be more beneficial (Barney, 2021).

The assumption of this theory is that each company has their unique resources and if they utilize them appropriately, they added advantage in regard to competitive advantage. This is however not the usual case because resources are not homogeneous because they are imitated by competitors. In order to gain an operational advantage, it is crucial to possess distinctive resources that are difficult for competitors to replicate. When logistics and transportation practices incorporate IT, business operations are seamlessly integrated. A company's individual resources are not as valuable as the resources created by integrating IT in transport and logistics. The theory's validity rests in its contention that, thanks to decreased operational costs, organizations that integrate IT systems enjoy greater efficiency and effectiveness Abid et al., 2023).

This study used the Resource-Based Theory to examine how equitable access to resources such as economic opportunities and education contributes to women's empowerment in Estuaire Province of Gabon. The theory helped to assess how the effective utilization and

allocation of resources can enhance women's participation in development processes and create sustainable competitive advantages for women's advancement.

2.3 Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) Theory

The Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) Theory was formalized in 2003 through the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) initiative. It emerged from the UN Common Understanding on HRBA to Development Cooperation and Programming, which sought to ensure that all UN agencies, funds, and programmes consistently integrated human rights principles into their development frameworks. This theory focuses on the idea that human rights are essential to the process of development and that the empowerment of individuals, especially marginalized groups, must be grounded in the recognition and protection of their rights (Borry & Reuter, 2022).

The HRBA emphasizes the centrality of rights holders (such as women) and duty bearers (such as the state or development organizations) in development processes. The framework requires that women, as key stakeholders in societal development, are granted their rights to participation, equality, and non-discrimination in all areas, including governance, legal frameworks, and access to resources. Through this approach, development becomes more inclusive and responsive to the needs of individuals, ensuring that marginalized groups are not only beneficiaries of development but also active agents in it (Hannon, 2023).

Furthermore, HRBA highlights the importance of addressing power imbalances and structural barriers to human rights fulfillment, which often prevent women from accessing equal opportunities. By focusing on the entitlement of women to equal treatment and the duty of governments and institutions to uphold these rights, HRBA facilitates gender-responsive strategies for women's empowerment (Beninger, 2023).

This study used Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) Theory to explore the role of human rights frameworks in promoting women's empowerment in Estuaire Province of Gabon. The theory guided the analysis of legal and governance systems that ensure women's rights to equality, participation, and non-discrimination, fostering an inclusive development environment.

3. Methodology

The research design, the study population, the sample selection methods, the data collection tools, the data collection and analysis procedures, the ethical

considerations, and issues of validity and reliability are all covered in this section.

3.1 Research Design

This study utilized a combination of descriptive and correlational research designs to explore the influence of gender policy on women's empowerment. Descriptive research was employed to assess the quality of gender policies and their impact on women's empowerment, using descriptive statistics to rate respondents' perspectives. The study further examined the relationship between inclusive governance, legal frameworks, resource equity, and women's empowerment through a correlational approach.

3.2 Study population

The target population was 489 individuals who are directly involved with gender policy and women's empowerment in Estuaire Province, Gabon.

3.3 Sample size

The sample size was determined by the help of Slovin' formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n is the sample size, N is the population size which are 489, and e is the marginal of error (5%).

$$n = \frac{489}{1 + 489(0.05)^2} = \frac{489}{1 + 1.2225} = \frac{489}{2.2225} = 220$$

3.4 Data collection

Both primary and secondary data were used in this study, and different instruments were used for each type of data collection. Primary data, gathered directly by the researcher through methods such as surveys, interviews, or field observations, were sourced from individuals in Estuaire Province, Gabon. Secondary data was collected from archived documents, library textbooks, scholarly publications, newspapers, online journals, and other

reference materials, which provided necessary background knowledge.

3.5 Data analysis

Analyzing data by dissecting it and looking for patterns or trends. In order to find descriptive statistics, the researcher used SPSS version 25 to calculate percentages, means, correlations, and frequency distributions.

3.6 Ethical consideration

Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks, and provided written consent before taking part. Their identities remained anonymous, with no personal details such as names or titles required on the questionnaire. All data collected were kept confidential and securely stored, with only the researcher accessing it. Participants also had the option to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

Results and Discussion

Research results and data analysis were the main focuses of this section. The study illustrates the response rate of the survey, showing that out of 220 questionnaires distributed, 212 were returned completed, leading to a high response rate of 96.36%. This indicates a strong engagement from the respondents, with only a small portion (3.64%) of questionnaires either incomplete or unreturned. The high response rate reflects well on the reliability and validity of the data, as it ensures that the findings are based on a comprehensive and representative sample, minimizing nonresponse bias.

4.1 Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis was employed to examine the associations between inclusive governance, legal frameworks, and resource equity on women's empowerment in Estuaire Province. The study applied Pearson correlation to understand the strength and direction of these relationships, offering insights into how each factor contributes to enhancing women's empowerment in the province.

Table 1: Correlation matrix

| | | Inclusive governance | Legal frameworks | Resource equity | Women's empowerment |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Inclusive governance | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .428** | .250** | .553** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 212 | 212 | 212 | 212 |
| Legal frameworks | Pearson Correlation | .428** | 1 | .444** | .528** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 212 | 212 | 212 | 212 |
| Resource equity | Pearson Correlation | .250** | .444** | 1 | .519** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | | .000 |
| | N | 212 | 212 | 212 | 212 |
| Women's empowerment | Pearson Correlation | .553** | .528** | .519** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | |
| | N | 212 | 212 | 212 | 212 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field data (2025)

Table 1 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients between the independent variables (inclusive governance, legal frameworks, and resource equity) and the dependent variable (women's empowerment). The correlation between inclusive governance and women's empowerment is moderate and significant, with a coefficient of 0.553 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a moderate positive relationship. The findings are consistent with Nguse et al. (2022), who emphasized the role of government policies in enhancing women's economic empowerment through financial inclusion. Their study demonstrated that supportive governance positively impacts women's empowerment. This correlation study on Estuaire Province indicates that inclusive governance facilitates access to resources and opportunities for women, aligning with the need for effective policy frameworks to promote empowerment.

Similarly, the relationship between legal frameworks and women's empowerment is also significant, with a correlation coefficient of 0.528 and a p-value of 0.000, reflecting a moderate positive relationship. The findings resonate with Reshi, Sudha, and Dar (2024), who highlighted the importance of legal frameworks in enhancing women's access to education and empowerment. Their study identified that strong legal protections mitigate barriers to education. This correlation study on Estuaire Province indicates that robust legal frameworks are essential for securing women's rights and enhancing their empowerment through education and social participation.

The correlation between resource equity and women's empowerment is 0.519, with a p-value of 0.000, further indicating a moderate positive relationship. All correlations are significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), indicating the importance of these factors in women's empowerment in Estuaire Province. The findings align with Quisumbing *et al.* (2021), who evaluated the relationships between women's empowerment and participation in agricultural value chains. Their study indicating that equitable access to resources impacts women's empowerment effectively. This correlation study on Estuaire Province indicates that resource equity is crucial for improving women's economic opportunities and fostering their overall empowerment in various sectors.

4.2 Regression Analysis

Following an explanation of the relationship, the researcher sought to determine the linear effects of inclusive governance, legal frameworks, and resource equity on women's empowerment in Estuaire Province, Gabon. This was achieved through multiple regression analysis, employing inclusive governance, legal frameworks, and resource equity as predictor factors, with women's empowerment as the outcome variable. The regression analysis was computed through model summary, ANOVA, and coefficients. The model summary assessed the overall fit of the regression model, while ANOVA evaluated the significance of the predictors collectively, and the coefficients indicated the impact of each predictor on women's empowerment.

Table 2: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Durbin-Watson |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | .703 ^a | .494 | .487 | .36631 | 1.901 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Resource equity, Inclusive governance, Legal frameworks

b. Dependent Variable: Women's empowerment

Source: Field data (2025)

The findings presented in Table 2 highlight the Model Summary of the regression analysis. The R value of 0.703 indicates a strong positive relationship between the predictors resource equity, inclusive governance, and legal frameworks and women's empowerment. The R² value of 0.494 indicates that these predictors explain 49.4% of the variance in women's empowerment. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.901 is within the acceptable range, indicating that there is no significant autocorrelation in the residuals.

The findings are consistent with the theoretical assessment of Gabon's rent-based economy, which

highlights the impact of governmental control over economic levers on persistent inequalities within public employment policies. Nkoulou (2022) identifies that deliberate actions by state actors undermine the bargaining power of pressure groups, limiting women's access to equitable employment opportunities in a resource-rich environment. The model summary indicates a strong positive relationship between predictors such as resource equity, inclusive governance, and legal frameworks, aligning with the necessity for comprehensive policy reforms to address gender disparities effectively in Gabon.

Table 3: ANOVA

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 27.276 | 3 | 9.092 | 67.759 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 27.910 | 208 | .134 | | |
| | Total | 55.185 | 211 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Women's empowerment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Resource equity, Inclusive governance, Legal frameworks

Source: Field data (2025)

Table 3 presents the ANOVA results for the regression model. The F-statistic of 67.759 is highly significant, with a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the model as a whole is statistically significant. This suggests that the independent variables inclusive governance, legal frameworks, and resource equity collectively have a significant impact on women's empowerment in Estuaire Province.

The findings are consistent with the emphasis on gender policy as a fundamental aspect of achieving equality and

social justice, as highlighted in research on board gender diversity within corporate governance. Shakil, Tasnia, and Mostafiz (2020) illustrate that diverse leadership not only enhances organizational effectiveness but also influences key performance indicators. This ANOVA analysis indicates that inclusive governance, legal frameworks, and resource equity collectively have a significant impact on women's empowerment in Estuaire Province, reflecting the necessity for targeted policies to promote gender equity across various sectors.

Table 4: Coefficients

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | Collinearity Statistics | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|-------------------------|-------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | Tolerance | VIF |
| 1 (Constant) | -.060 | .273 | | -.221 | .825 | | |
| Inclusive governance | .420 | .061 | .376 | 6.865 | .000 | .812 | 1.231 |
| Legal frameworks | .246 | .065 | .223 | 3.775 | .000 | .696 | 1.437 |
| Resource equity | .342 | .058 | .325 | 5.897 | .000 | .798 | 1.253 |

a. Dependent Variable: Women's empowerment

Source: Field data (2025)

Table 4 presents the unstandardized coefficients for the regression model. The constant (B = -0.060) represents the baseline value of women's empowerment when all predictor variables are zero. The unstandardized coefficient for inclusive governance (B = 0.420) indicates that a one-unit increase in inclusive governance leads to a 0.420-unit increase in women's empowerment (P=0.000), indicating that inclusive governance positively influences women's empowerment. The findings align with Goswami *et al.* (2023), who analyzed the challenges women face in accessing political decision-making roles. Their study emphasizes that increasing inclusive governance through mechanisms like gender quotas and targeted political education enhances women's participation. This regression analysis

indicates that inclusive governance significantly boosts women's empowerment, addressing historical and contemporary barriers effectively.

Similarly, the unstandardized coefficient for legal frameworks (B = 0.246) indicates that a one-unit increase in legal frameworks results in a 0.246-unit increase in women's empowerment (P = 0.000), reflecting a positive influence on women's empowerment. The findings resonate with Gupta *et al.* (2024), who evaluated the effectiveness of legal frameworks in promoting women's empowerment. Their analysis indicates that while legal protections exist, their implementation often varies due to political will and socio-cultural norms. This regression analysis further confirms that legal frameworks

positively influence women's empowerment, suggesting that improved implementation of laws can enhance their effectiveness in empowering women.

Finally, resource equity ($B = 0.342$) indicates that a one-unit increase in resource equity leads to a 0.342-unit increase in women's empowerment ($P = 0.000$), further highlighting its significant influence in women's empowerment. The findings are consistent with Awoa et al. (2022), who evaluated the impact of natural resource abundance on women's political empowerment. Their study indicates that resource wealth can negatively affect women's participation in political processes. This regression model highlights that enhanced resource equity is crucial for increasing women's empowerment, signaling the need for improved institutional quality to ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities.

The collinearity statistics show that the variance inflation factors (VIF) for all predictors are well below 10, indicating no serious multicollinearity issues. The tolerance values are also within acceptable ranges, suggesting that the predictors are not highly collinear.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The research emphasizes that inclusive governance has a significant influence on women's empowerment in Estuaire Province in Gabon. Participants generally viewed aspects related to leadership representation and governance structures favorably. However, this highlights that adopting a more strategic focus in these areas could enhance the empowerment of women in the province. Strengthening inclusive governance remains critical for advancing women's empowerment within the region.

The findings indicate that legal frameworks play a key role in enhancing women's empowerment in Estuaire Province in Gabon. Participants reported positive perspectives regarding the current legal structures and their impact on women's empowerment. Strengthening the enforcement of legal frameworks effectively supports the advancement of women's empowerment in the province.

The analysis reveals that resource equity is an essential component contributing to women's empowerment in Estuaire Province in Gabon. Participants expressed favorable opinions regarding access to and distribution of resources. Improving resource equity strategies effectively supports the advancement of women's empowerment within the province.

The study findings demonstrate that inclusive governance, legal frameworks, and resource equity each have a meaningful positive impact on women's empowerment in Estuaire Province in Gabon. The

distinct contributions of these elements, as reflected in their measured outcomes, highlight the importance of integrated approaches in achieving women's empowerment in the region.

5.2. Recommendations

1. Gender Unit Staff are recommended to enhance capacity-building programs for local leaders, focusing on inclusive governance to ensure greater participation of women in decision-making processes and leadership roles.
2. Local leaders should ensure the implementation of gender-responsive policies at the community level, advocating for increased representation and opportunities for women in governance and public services.
3. Women Forum Representatives have to strengthen their advocacy for gender-inclusive policies by collaborating with local authorities and other stakeholders, ensuring women's active participation in policy-making.

5.3. Suggestion for future researchers

Future researchers are encouraged to assess the influence of political participation on women's empowerment in Estuaire Province, Gabon, examine the influence of gender-based legal reforms on empowerment outcomes, investigate the influence of community resource-sharing models in enhancing gender equity, analyze the influence of traditional governance systems on the empowerment of rural women in Gabon, and explore the influence of women's economic participation on their empowerment in Estuaire Province, Gabon.

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