

## Impact of Women Participation in Governance on Administration: A Study of Ethiope East and West Local Government of Delta State

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### Abstract

This study examined the impact of women's participation in governance on administration in Ethiope East and West Local Government Areas of Delta State between 2015 and 2024. Specifically, it assessed how women's involvement influences governance effectiveness, policy formulation and implementation, and local development. A cross-sectional research design was adopted, and the study was guided by three hypotheses and adopted a quantitative research design. The study was anchored on the gender and development (GAD) theory as its theoretical framework. The theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the impact of women's participation in governance on administrative processes in Local Government Areas. A total of 400 copies of questionnaire were distributed, out of which 361 valid responses were analyzed. Linear and multiple regression analyses were employed to test the hypotheses with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23. The findings revealed that women's participation in governance has a positive and statistically significant effect on governance effectiveness, policy outcomes, and local development. These results suggest that inclusive governance structures that integrate women not only improve responsiveness and transparency but also enhance service delivery and policy relevance at the grassroots level. The study affirmed that women bring participatory leadership styles that enrich stakeholder engagement and support policies that prioritize education, healthcare, and infrastructure. The study concluded that when women occupy leadership roles, development outcomes in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and community empowerment improve. It becomes imperative for policymakers, development partners, civil society organizations, and traditional institutions to take proactive steps in dismantling the barriers to women's participation in local governance. Based on the findings, the study recommended, among others, that local government authorities in Ethiope East and West Local Government Areas of Delta State should integrate more women into governance frameworks by creating inclusive leadership structures that reflect gender diversity.

### Article Info

#### Article History:

Received: 10 April 2025

Revision: 20 Juii 2025

Published: 25 September 2025

#### Correspondence:

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#### Keyword:

Women's Participation;  
Governance;  
Administration;  
Transparency;  
Accountability.

#### Type:

Research

## Introduction

Administration is a fundamental pillar of governance, responsible for policy formulation, implementation, and service delivery. It plays a critical role in ensuring

transparency, accountability, and efficiency in government operations. One of the most significant developments in contemporary governance is the increasing emphasis on gender inclusivity, particularly the participation of women in administration and decision-making processes (Krook & True, 2022). Women's participation in government is essential for fostering inclusive development, enhancing democratic governance, and ensuring that policies address diverse societal needs (UNDP, 2023).

Globally, efforts to promote gender parity in governance have gained momentum through international frameworks such as the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 on Gender Equality, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UN Women, 2023). These frameworks advocate for increased women's representation in leadership roles and decision-making processes. However, despite significant progress, women remain underrepresented in government positions worldwide. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2023), women constitute only 26.5% of national parliamentarians globally, highlighting the persistent gender gap in political participation.

The participation of women in administration has been linked to improved governance outcomes, including increased transparency, reduced corruption, and more inclusive policy development (Cheng & Tavits, 2021). Studies indicate that women in leadership roles tend to prioritize social policies, education, and healthcare, leading to better developmental outcomes (Kabere, 2022). However, systemic barriers such as cultural biases, patriarchal structures, financial constraints, and political violence continue to hinder women's access to political leadership positions (Goetz, 2022; Okereka & Okolie, 2022).

Thus, administration plays a crucial role in the governance and development of any society. It involves the formulation and implementation of policies, programs, and services that enhance the welfare of the people. In democratic governance, gender inclusivity is a fundamental principle that ensures equal representation and participation of all citizens in decision-making processes (Afolabi & Offong, 2019; Okereka, 2015; Mukoro, 2019). Women's participation in government, particularly at the local level, is essential for promoting inclusive governance, improving policy outcomes, and fostering sustainable development (UN Women, 2020).

Historically, women in Nigeria have faced systemic barriers to political participation due to cultural, social, and institutional constraints (Ogunyemi, 2018). Despite these challenges, there has been a growing recognition of the need for gender equality in governance. International frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) advocate for increased women's participation in governance at all levels (UNDP, 2021).

In Nigeria, efforts have been made to enhance women's representation in politics through policies such as the National Gender Policy (2006), which aims to achieve 35% affirmative action for women in decision-making positions (Arowolo & Aluko, 2019). However, women's participation in local government administration remains significantly low, particularly in Delta State. The situation in Ethiope East and West Local Government Areas (LGAs) reflects broader national trends, where women often struggle to secure leadership positions due to sociopolitical constraints (Eme & Ogbochie, 2020).

This study examined the impact of women's participation in government on administration in Ethiope East and West LGAs between 2015 and 2024., assessing the challenges they face and the potential benefits of their increased involvement in governance. The specific objectives were to:

1. Assessed the extent of women's participation in governance on level of governance effectiveness in Ethiopia East and West LGAs.
2. Examined the effect of women's participation in governance on policy effectiveness in Ethiopia East and West LGAs.
3. Evaluated the impact of women's involvement in governance on local development in Ethiopia East and West LGAs.

## Methods

The cross-sectional survey research design was used in this investigation. This is because there was no attempt to change, manipulate, distort, or control the variables under study; instead, measurements of the independent variable and dependent variables were made simultaneously with the various subgroups (Obasi, 2000). In this instance, the dependent variable (administration) and the independent variable (women's participation in government) was measured simultaneously without any direct or indirect influence, induction, control, pre-emption, or manipulation of either or both variables at any point in time.

The total projected population of this study was 553,200 persons. This was broken down as follows, as at June 2022, the total population in Ethiopia West was (277,800), and the total population in Ethiopia East was (275,400) (National Population Commission, 2022); making a total of 553,200 populations eligible for this study. The targeted respondents of the study comprise of public administrators, civil servants, and other stakeholders within Ethiopia East and West LGAs. This includes male and female personnel working in various administrative departments, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations involved in governance and administration.

The determination of the sample size of 400 was attained using the sample size determination of Yamane's formula:

$$n = N / 1 + Ne^2$$

Where N = Population size,

n = Sample sized,

e = Sampling error

Given the population size and with a sampling error of 5 percent, the required sample size was computed as:

$$n = N / 1 + Ne^2$$

$$n = 553,200 / 1 + 553,200 (0.05)^2 = 399.71 = 400 \text{ Approximately}$$

Consequently, a sample size of four hundred (400) was used. This study used a quantitative approach to gather data. This ensures that the study have the chance to generate balanced, more comprehensive, and detailed data. The primary method of data collection was asking respondents to fill out a questionnaire in order to collect primary data. Respondents were given a questionnaire to complete, retrieved, and compiled to gather important data regarding the impact of women's participation in governance on administration within Ethiopia East and West LGAs of Delta State between 2015 and 2024.

To analyze the data, the information gathered from the questionnaire was coded, and input into the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS version 23.0, 2020). The demographic data content of the respondents, which includes gender, age, marital status, and education, was analyzed using percentages and frequency, and the hypotheses was tested at the 0.05 level of significance using linear and multiple regression analysis. These are found suitable for the nature of the study of this work.

## Results and Discussion

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the data gathered from the sampled respondents using a questionnaire. The presentation is organized into distinct sections. The first section provides a descriptive analysis of the questionnaire distribution and the response rate. The second section focuses on a descriptive analysis of the respondents' demographic characteristics. The third section involves hypothesis testing to examine the influence of women's participation in governance on administration in Ethiopia East and West Local Government Areas of Delta State.

### Test of Hypotheses

The linear regression analysis which was conducted at 5% level of significance was used to test hypotheses formulated for this study. Summary results presented in Tables 4.3 below.

Table 1. Direct Effects

Variables	Direct effects	Coefficients	S.E.	CR	P	Conclusion
H <sub>1</sub>	WPG --> GE	0.657	0.167	8.520	0.001	Supported
H <sub>2</sub>	WPG --> PE	0.663	0.158	7.964	0.003	Supported
H <sub>3</sub>	WPG --> LD	0.729	0.150	7.471	0.005	Supported

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Keys: WPG = Women's Participation in Governance, GE = Governance Effectiveness, PE = Policy Effectiveness and LD = Local Development

The table 1 summarized the results of a structural model analysis assessing the direct influence of women's participation in governance (WPG) on three key administrative dimensions: governance effectiveness (GE), policy effectiveness (PE), and local development (LD). The model shows a statistically significant and positive relationship between women's participation in governance and the level of governance effectiveness. The high coefficient (0.657) indicates a strong effect, and the low p-value (0.001) confirms that the relationship is statistically significant. This suggests that greater involvement of women in governance roles contributes meaningfully to improved governance outcomes such as transparency, accountability, and efficient service delivery.

The model also shows a statistically significant and positive relationship between women's participation in governance and policy effectiveness. With a coefficient of 0.663 and a p-value of 0.003, the findings suggest that increased representation of women leads to more effective policy-making processes, likely due to greater inclusivity, diverse perspectives, and attention to community-oriented issues. Moreover, the model further implies that women's involvement in governance significantly enhances local development, including areas like education, healthcare, economic empowerment, and infrastructure. This is the strongest effect among the three, with the highest coefficient (0.729). The low p-value (0.005) confirms that the result is statistically significant.

Thus, all three hypotheses (H1–H3) are empirically supported, indicating that women's participation in governance positively influences key aspects of administration in Ethiopia East and West LGAs such as governance becomes more effective, policies are better designed and implemented, and local development efforts are more impactful. The findings reinforce the argument for greater gender inclusion in local governance, not just for equity, but for improving administrative performance and community outcomes.

Table 2. Multiple Regression Results

Model	B	Sig.	R <sup>2</sup> -change	F	Model-R <sup>2</sup>	Sig.
(Constant)	.735	.036	-			
Governance Effectiveness	.659	.001	.0734			
Policy Effectiveness						
Local Development	.537	.005	.0562	13.620	.358	<0.05
	.530	.007	.0395			

Independent Variable: women's participation in governance

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

This table 2 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis aimed at examining how women's participation in governance affects three dimensions of administrative processes. The analysis provides unstandardized coefficients (B), significance levels (Sig.), changes in R-squared values (R<sup>2</sup>-change), and the overall model fit (F-statistic and Model R<sup>2</sup>). The result shows that women's participation in governance has a positive and statistically significant effect on governance effectiveness. A coefficient of 0.659 indicates that for every unit increase in women's participation, there is a corresponding 0.659 increase in governance effectiveness. The p-value (.001) is well below the 0.05 threshold, confirming the significance of this effect. The R<sup>2</sup>-change (.0734) suggests that about 7.3% of the variation in governance effectiveness was explained by women's involvement in governance.

Also, the coefficient of 0.537 indicates that increased involvement of women in governance leads to more effective policy formulation and implementation. The R<sup>2</sup>-change value of 5.62% shows that women's involvement explains a meaningful portion of the variation in policy effectiveness across the studied local governments. The result further revealed that women's participation in governance has a positive and significant impact on local development, with a coefficient of 0.530 and a p-value of .007. The R<sup>2</sup>-change of 3.95% indicates that while the effect is positive and significant, women's involvement accounts for a smaller portion of the variance in development outcomes compared to the other variables.

The overall model summary shows that the overall regression model is statistically significant, meaning that the independent variable (women's participation in governance) significantly predicts the combined administrative outcomes. The Model R<sup>2</sup> of .358 implies that approximately 35.8% of the total variance in the three administrative indicators attributed to women's involvement in governance. This is a substantial proportion, reflecting the impactful role women play in shaping governance quality, policy, and development at the local level. The multiple regression analysis confirms that women's participation in governance significantly and positively affects governance effectiveness, policy formulation, and local development in Ethiopia East and West Local Government Areas. This finding underscores the critical value of gender inclusion in administration as a means of driving improved outcomes and sustainable local governance.

## Discussion of Findings

This study explored the impact of women's involvement in governance on administrative processes in Ethiopia East and West Local Government Areas of Delta State. There were three hypotheses formulated for the study and the first hypothesis' results demonstrated that that women's participation in governance has a positive and statistically significant effect on governance effectiveness in Ethiopia East and West Local Government Areas of Delta State. Specifically, the regression analysis revealed a strong

relationship between women's involvement and improvements in key aspects of governance, including transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and service delivery. This finding aligns with a growing body of literature that emphasizes the transformative impact of women's engagement in decision-making processes.

Studies have consistently shown that inclusive governance structures, especially those that involve women in leadership roles, are more responsive to the needs of diverse populations and tend to adopt policies that prioritize education, healthcare, and social welfare (UN Women, 2020; World Bank, 2022). Women's participation is often associated with a collaborative leadership style, which fosters consensus-building and citizen engagement (Oluwole & Hassan, 2019). This leadership style can contribute to improved administrative outcomes and better governance effectiveness at the grassroots level.

In agreement with this finding, Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) provide empirical evidence that local councils with female leaders are more likely to invest in public goods that benefit communities, such as clean water and roads. These findings are particularly relevant to Nigeria's local government system, where service delivery is often hindered by bureaucratic inefficiency and lack of citizen inclusion (Waylen, 2023).

The implication of this finding for local government administration is profound. To enhance governance effectiveness, local governments must prioritize the inclusion of women in policymaking, budgeting, and leadership roles. This can be achieved through affirmative policies, gender-sensitive governance frameworks, and capacity-building initiatives that empower women to contribute effectively. By doing so, local governments will not only improve service delivery but also strengthen democratic governance and social equity. Thus, local governments in Nigeria should institutionalize gender quotas to ensure equitable representation of women in councils and administrative structures, invest in training programs that empower women with leadership, planning, and decision-making skills and promote participatory governance by creating platforms where women's voices are heard in community planning and development.

With respect to the second hypothesis, the study found that increased participation of women in governance significantly enhances the effectiveness of policy formulation and implementation in Ethiope East and West Local Government Areas of Delta State. The regression analysis indicated a positive and statistically significant relationship between women's participation and policy outcomes, suggesting that women's inclusion contributes not only to the development of more inclusive policies but also to their efficient execution.

This finding aligns with existing literature that highlights the distinctive approaches women bring to policy-making. Women are often more attuned to issues of social welfare, education, healthcare, and community development, which directly impact the quality of governance (UN Women, 2021). They tend to adopt a consultative and participatory style of leadership, fostering greater stakeholder engagement and ensuring that policies reflect the needs and interests of broader segments of society (OECD, 2019).

Swamy, Knack, Lee and Azfar (2001) in supporting the finding of this study, affirms that governance systems with higher female representation tend to be more transparent and less corrupt, which contributes to better policy enforcement. Furthermore, Goetz and Jenkins (2016) argue that women's presence in policy spaces can reshape institutional priorities, ensuring that marginalized groups are represented in the decision-making process. These attributes are particularly critical for local governments, which are often the first point of contact for grassroots communities.

In the Nigerian context, where local governments play a vital role in grassroots development, empowering women to participate meaningfully in policy processes can transform administrative outcomes. Women's experiences and insights help ensure that

policies are not only well-designed but also practical and community-responsive. Their commitment to collaboration and social justice also enhances the likelihood of successful policy implementation and sustainability (Oluwole & Hassan, 2019). Therefore, local governments Nigeria should develop and institutionalize gender-inclusive policy development frameworks that actively involve women in all stages of policy-making, from agenda-setting to evaluation and establish dedicated gender units in local government secretariats to monitor, advise, and ensure that gender considerations are embedded in policy initiatives. This is because strengthening their participation can improve public trust and cooperation, which are critical for successful policy implementation.

With respect to the third hypothesis, the study found that women's participation in governance has a positive and significant impact on local development in Ethiope East and West Local Government Areas of Delta State. The statistical analysis indicates that increased representation of women in decision-making roles enhances developmental outcomes, including improved infrastructure, healthcare, education, and community empowerment programs. This result reinforces the growing recognition that gender-inclusive governance structures are essential for sustainable development at the local level.

Women's involvement in governance often brings a grassroots perspective that helps to prioritize community needs and promote inclusive policy initiatives. According to UNDP (2016), local development processes are more effective when they involve the voices and leadership of women, especially in planning and resource allocation. Women tend to advocate for issues affecting families and marginalized groups, thereby broadening the developmental agenda.

Agarwal (2010), Okafor, Fagbemi and Hassan (2021) who concurred with this finding, asserted that when women are actively engaged in governance, communities benefit from more equitable access to resources, better project targeting, and improved service delivery. For example, local governments with strong female participation often invest more in public health, child welfare, water sanitation, and educational facilities (World Bank, 2022). These contributions are critical to achieving bottom-up development, which is the cornerstone of local government administration in Nigeria.

Importantly, this finding has significant implications in the Nigerian context, where local governments serve as the most direct contact between government and citizens. Enhancing women's participation in governance can lead to better planning, accountability, and responsiveness, all of which are vital for addressing local development challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality (Okafor et al., 2021). Thus, there is a need for legal and institutional reforms that mandate gender balance in local government appointments and elected offices to ensure women's voices are adequately represented in development planning. Encourage and institutionalize community-level committees with equal gender representation to enhance inclusive planning and participatory development.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This study set out to explore the impact of women's involvement in governance on administration in Ethiope East and West Local Government Areas of Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined how women's participation in governance influences governance effectiveness, policy formulation and implementation, and the overall development of local communities. The research was prompted by the growing recognition of gender inclusiveness as a key element in effective democratic governance and sustainable development, particularly at the grassroots level where the influence of local governance is most directly felt.

Findings from the study revealed that women's participation in governance has a positive and statistically significant effect on governance effectiveness. This supports the argument that women, when given the opportunity, contribute meaningfully to leadership by bringing diverse perspectives, promoting transparency, and fostering inclusive decision-making processes. The presence of women in governance positions can challenge traditional leadership paradigms, promote collaborative leadership styles, and ensure that policies reflect the needs of both men and women in the community.

Furthermore, the study found that increased involvement of women in governance significantly enhances the effectiveness of policy formulation and implementation. This can be attributed to women's inclination toward inclusive dialogue, accountability, and empathy-driven policies, which are essential for building trust and delivering services that address the actual needs of local populations. The results emphasize that gender diversity in policymaking bodies leads to better-aligned policies, particularly in sectors such as health, education, child welfare, and poverty alleviation.

Most significantly, the study revealed that women's participation in governance has a strong and significant impact on local development. This indicates that empowering women to take up leadership roles directly contributes to improved community services, infrastructure development, and social welfare. The implication is that women's leadership is not only a matter of equity but also a strategic necessity for achieving sustainable development at the local government level.

In conclusion, when women occupy leadership roles, development outcomes in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and community empowerment improve. It becomes imperative for policymakers, development partners, civil society organizations, and traditional institutions to take proactive steps in dismantling the barriers to women's participation in local governance. This includes legal reforms, capacity building, institutional support, and cultural reorientation aimed at promoting gender equality in public leadership. Empowering women is not only a democratic obligation but a development strategy that local governments must embrace to achieve inclusive governance and sustainable development.

This study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting gender mainstreaming in governance structures, particularly in sub-national contexts where local development is shaped. It also lays the groundwork for future research that can explore longitudinal impacts of women's governance involvement and assess outcomes across different regions and sectors in Nigeria and beyond. Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Local government authorities in Ethiope East and West Local Government Areas of Delta State should integrate more women into governance frameworks by creating inclusive leadership structures that reflect gender diversity. This will enhance governance effectiveness by ensuring that decisions and policies are representative of the broader population, especially in areas such as education, healthcare, and social welfare.
- ii. Policymakers and local council administrators in Ethiope East and West Local Government Areas of Delta State should foster an enabling environment for women to contribute actively to policy formulation and implementation. This can be achieved through the establishment of participatory forums, advisory panels, or consultative meetings that include women leaders and stakeholders from various sectors to enrich policy outcomes.
- iii. Local government councils in Ethiope East and West Local Government Areas of Delta State should increase investments in programs that support women's leadership and decision-making roles. This includes providing mentorship

opportunities, leadership training, and access to resources that enable women to drive initiatives in infrastructure, healthcare, education, and community development.

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