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Bridging the Gender Gap: Governance as a Catalyst for Women's Empowerment in Developing Economies

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Abstract

The phenomenon commonly referred to as women's empowerment may be analytically conceptualized as the capacity that women possess to exercise autonomous agency in charting their own social, political, and economic trajectories. In modern research, the ability of women to be involved in social, political, and economic activities is significantly limited, an issue that is more severe in the developing economy. Gender inequality has been formalized as the fifth objective of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The current paper provides an analysis of a continuum of mechanisms that aim to empower women. To evaluate the effectiveness of these empowerment strategies, this empirical study uses panel data based on thirty nine (39) developing economies between period of 2004 and 2024. The Gender Inequality Index (GII) used in the current research serves as a proxy of women empowerment and used as a dependent variable. The proxy of governance is the Governance Index (GOVI). The control variables include Gross Domestic Product Per Capita Growth (GDPPCGR), Labor Force, Female (LFF) and Gross Capital Formation (GCF). The Driscoll and Kraay (DK) standard error (based on fixed effects estimation) technique employed for addressing the problem of heteroskedasticity, autocorrelation, and cross-sectional dependency in the models. The findings of study show that governance has a strong impact on women empowerment.

Keywords: Governance, Women Empowerment, Developing Economies

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Women have suffered more than any other marginalized group in the world. They have endured a variety of ill-treatment, including assault, poverty, rape, and famine. Women are subjected to subservience and deprivation on a variety of social, political, cultural, and religious levels across the globe, especially in developing economies (Bayeh, 2016; Dr Tanu Tandon, 2016; Völker & Doneys, 2021). They are treated unfairly and denied participation in the democratic processes of their separate economies. If fifty percent of the public does not engage in the decision-making process, democracy loses all value (Duflo, 2012; Kumar, 2022; Nandedkar, 2019). The enduring issue of gender inequality has commanded the attention of scholars, development practitioners, policymakers, and civil society organizations for more than three decades. The continuous differences between men and women in terms of control and access to resources is the root of this focus (Post et al., 2019). Furthermore, it is now commonly recognized that historical discrimination against women poses a serious obstacle to the advancement of both national and global development agendas. Notably, the pursuit of gender equality is closely linked to more general sustainable development objectives, such as poverty reduction, human rights, environmental sustainability, good governance, and inclusivity in the strategy and execution of development projects(Rashid, 2022).

Empowerment has become a broad concept with no single clear definition (Trommlerova, 2015), it has gained popularity and become one of the most elastic buzzwords in the international development lexicon (Cornwall, 2016), with over 29 definitions (Elshaer et al., 2021; Trommlerova, 2015). A popular concept in many fields of study, particularly those concerned with development and politics, is the concept of empowerment. As a result of its widespread use in scholarly and practice literature, many authors no longer bother to define it in terms of how they employ it. The meaning appears to be clear and unmistakable, but it is a concept with a lot of baggage (Lenao & Basupi, 2016). Additionally, the World Bank, 2021 outlines empowerment as the method of strengthening a human being or group's ability to make decisions and convert those decisions into desired actions and results. Efforts to improve individual and group resources as well as the competence and equality of the institutional and organizational framework that governs how these resources are used are at the center of this development (Bexell, 2012).

In general, and in developing countries particular, the discussion and debate about women empowerment are becoming increasingly popular around the world. Women are more vulnerable in developing countries for a variety of reasons, some of which include low-wage jobs and limited financial resources (Islam, 2014). In almost all developing countries, female-headed households have a higher likelihood of being poor.

1.2 Governance a Key for Women Empowerment

Since the beginning of human civilization, the concept of governance has been around, and its definition has broadened significantly over the years. Regarding the concept of governance, there is a lack of concord between the researchers and the scholars. According to Fukuyama (2013), it is the power of the government to impose laws, provide services, and make decisions, whether that government is democratic or not. Two definitions of governance are offered by the World Bank, 2022. The first term pertains only to the use of political power to handle matters of national concern, whereas the second definition centers on the application of power to the

administration of a state's social and economic resources to promote development (Aina & Olayode, 2011; Fasih, 2007; Katsamunska, 2016; Milazzo & Goldstein, 2019; Nandedkar, 2019; Rezazadeh, 2017). Making decisions and the methods by which they are carried out or not are together referred to as governance.

Governance means the act of ruling, the exercise of control or authority over the acts of subjects, and a regulatory framework (Oxford dictionary). In addition, one of the players in governance is the government. The media, political parties, NGOs, the military, and civil society organizations are some of the additional players in the governance process (UNESCAP, 2022). Good governance is a concept that tackles concerns of social equality and political legitimacy (Casey et al., 2011; Divakar, 2022; Jamil et al., 2022; Kabir et al., 2018; Milazzo & Goldstein, 2019; Mishra et al., 2020; Post et al., 2019; Seguino, 2000). Citizen engagement coupled with strong civic engagement is one of the basic mechanisms that drive good governance. To play any significant role, a person should not only have a considerable level of knowledge but also use systematic organizational approaches.

As much as they play irreplaceable roles in family level approaches to livelihood sustainability and household management, women are often left out of critical decision making platforms. As a result, the concept of inclusive partnerships in urban governance will have to critically analyze the complex obstacles that prevent women from participating in the world of politics, namely, a lack of relevant experience, limited access to resources, and insufficient time to meet numerous obligations simultaneously.

Within each civilization, there are a variety of perspectives held regarding the numerous challenges. The pursuit of agreement as the goal of good governance is necessary if it is to successfully mediate between the various interests that exist within society. In addition to this, it is imperative that the concerns of the most defenseless and marginalized members of society, specifically women, be taken into consideration.

It is essential to Governance those decisions be made in an open and honest manner. To accomplish this goal, the guidelines and policies that govern the execution of decisions need to be open and accessible. Especially in more conventional societies, those who are already at a disadvantage, such as women, would benefit the most from increased transparency.

In patriarchal cultural contexts, where it is considerably more challenging for women to have a public presence and to acquire knowledge than it is for their male counterparts, having direct access to information takes on an especially critical role for women. Because of such direct access to information, the system is better able to respond to the requirements of all the different groups.

In the context of good governance, effectiveness and efficiency refer to the degree to which processes and institutions can deliver results that are in line with the requirements of society while also making the most of the resources at their disposal. It is vital to consider the requirements of different groups, including those of women, to ensure that plans and programs are both effective and efficient.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to discover the role of governance in making women empowered.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Review of previous studies highlights the scarcity of scholarly contributions in the said field. Building on the previous research, the current study tries to lead the readers by initiating discussion on women empowerment and after that role of governance on empowering women.

2.2 Women Empowerment

In the context of gender equality, the concept of empowerment can be defined as the state of affairs in society when women and men have the same access to opportunities, outcomes, rights, and obligations in all the spheres of existence. This concept is generally considered to be one of the pillars of equality between genders. There are studies which examine the phenomenon based on the human development perspective, but there are also those which evaluate it based on structural perspective (Chaudhry & Nosheen, 2009).

The study by Rashid (2022) aimed to identify the sociocultural barriers to women empowerment in Punjab. The selected phenomenon is studied through qualitative research. Under this paradigm, researchers use case studies. Despite Punjab's developing and positive sociocultural settings for women, they do not feel empowered. Patriarchy, a less supportive family environment, domestic violence, and religious misinterpretation are obstacles to empowerment. The government may empower women to decrease gender imbalance and defend their rights.

Further, Sharma & Das (2021) construct a comprehensive approach for enhancing women's empowerment in rural regions of India. The study collected primary data from 3000 women in 60 villages across India's eastern, western, southern, northern, and central regions. The exploratory factor analysis revealed three primary aspects of women's empowerment: economic, social, and legal. The empirical investigation concluded that the replacement is necessary to enhance the economic empowerment of the rural women, to accord them with social liberty and proper facilities, and to formulate a strict, but accommodative legal framework.

In addition to this, Abrar ul haq et al. (2018) analyzed how household empowerment might reduce rural poverty. Multistage random sampling was used to obtain data from 24 villages in Southern Punjab, Pakistan. The current study confirms the negative nexus between household empowerment and poverty incidence of rural households. The study demonstrates that household empowerment helps reduce poverty in rural Southern Punjab, Pakistan.

2.3 Governance and Women Empowerment

The word “Governance” has numerous meanings. In a broader sense governance means managing or rule making (Kjær, 2014) . According to Fukuyama (2013), governance is the government’s ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or not. The influence of governance on the empowerment of women is diverse and mandatory. Good governance; be it at a national, regional or local level is an influential tool in determining the policies, legislation and institutions that may either enable the empowerment of women or hinder the process. Empirical findings in this study suggest that all-inclusive reforms are essential to enhancing the economic empowerment of women living in rural areas, providing them with socio-economic and autonomous independence, as well as the amenities they need, and a strictly supportive legal environment.

The course of policy making and the ensuing policy implementation has a determinant effect on the rights and opportunities open to the women; it is therefore the role of the government

institutions to take charge of policy making and policy implementation. The current academic views on the role of governance in empowering women may be grouped and summarized as follows:

Similarly, Divakar (2022) analyzes the implications of inclusive governance to women empowerment, reduction of poverty and overall developmental impact. Basing on Kudumbashree project, which is a self-help consortium based in Kerala, India, supported by the government, the study highlights the importance of involving the marginalized groups in participatory decision-making and policy formulation to achieve sustainable development in an inclusive paradigm. Additionally, the article recommends the implementation of new tools of analysis and strict cost-benefit analyses on the policy and project-wide level to promote the effectiveness of inclusive governance.

Moreover, Jamil et al. (2021) analyzed the nexus between the variables which are related to governance, women empowerment and reduction of poverty. The study focused on the role of women employment in alleviating poverty. The study used information gathered in the World Bank database and the Worldwide Governance Indicators to create a balanced panel of 2004-2016 of 29 countries and reached a number of salient conclusions. The study focused that there is a need to have strong governance frameworks with special focus on centrality of effective administration in the alleviation of poverty.

In addition to this, Millazo and Goldstein (2021) argued that the gender inequalities lie in the previously patriarchal social systems that have an unequal distribution of power, where men have a stronger hold over women. Their findings prove that the systematic changes have actually led to quantifiable improvements in the reduction of gender disparities.

Moreover, Hemachandra et al. (2020) pursued an analysis of the gender-specific weaknesses that have been experienced in the past by women during natural disasters. Their conclusions involve the suggestion that women have been disproportionately affected by such occurrences, and that one of the factors which has contributed to such increased vulnerability is the fact that women have been chronic under-represented in the decision-making systems of disaster management.

Similarly, Mishra et al. (2020) examined the association between women empowerment, gender parity and macroeconomic development in thirty countries in Asia. The authors have used a panel autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) model to determine how the growth patterns of these economies can be influenced by determinants that are gender-related between 1997 and 2015. Their findings are solidly based on the argument that a composite gender parity index, including the health, education, labour market, and political representation dimensions, has a positive effect on the long-term economic growth of Asia. In its turn, the analysis highlights gender equality as one of the key factors of economic development in the area.

In contrast, Agnihotri & Malipatil (2019) elaborated the important part of governance for women empowerment in India. The study highlighted that with gender Discrimination and without female education, women cannot be empowered. The study further highlights that government policies are necessary to bring improvement and advancement in women empowerment.

Additionally, Kabir et al. (2018) analyzed the linkages between gender, poverty reduction and governance in Bangladesh. According to the findings, most of the women were merely their husbands' proxies who controlled them. Women still had insufficient and restricted access to

political decision-making processes, resources, and public discourse. To reduce poverty and enhance gender equality, good governance is essential.

Moreover, Bayeh (2016) performed a study to understand how women empowerment and gender equality might contribute to Ethiopia's sustainable development. The study discovered that women's labor force participation in the economic development of the nation was very low. In Ethiopia, men largely predominated the political scene, leaving little possibility for female engagement. The survey also made clear that women's rights were not sufficiently upheld, which resulted in several infractions that limited their ability to participate in national affairs. To promote sustainable development, the report urged the government to make a firm commitment to empowering women and realizing the full potential of the country.

Further, Herath (2015) discussed the place of women in Sri Lankan Society. The author highlighted that women remain subordinate in the society due to their socio-economic, cultural, and political status. He further elaborated that policy makers should design such policies to empower Sri Lankan women in the process of development and growth. Society and good governance at large must be proficient to change their traditional minds to empower women.

Likewise, Kabeer and Natali (2013) discussed the relationship between gender and economic growth. The extent to which gender equality contributes to economic growth, and conversely, the reciprocal relationship, has been a subject of growing interest in recent years. This nuanced viewpoint highlights the intricacy of the connection between gender equality and economic development, emphasizing the necessity for a multifaceted strategy to properly address these intertwined concerns.

Besides, as Bexell (2012) clarified, the United Nations and major corporations initiated the creation of joint programs in the poorest nations to empower women. The main argument of the study was that however, even though the economic situations of specific women may be improved, at least in a short period, by the means of the public-private partnerships that are supposed to empower women, it does not disrupt the gender-based systems that are deeply embedded in the global economy.

Additionally, Aina and Olayode (2011) have elaborated gender equality, women empowerment, and governance agendas in democratizing society. The study delves into the multifaceted issues and potential opportunities associated with embracing the principles of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) within a transitioning democratic state, exemplified by Nigeria. It examines the various legislative measures, policies, and programs that serve as strategic instruments in advancing the cause of gender equality in Nigeria. A critical inquiry into the roles played by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in advocating and implementing the GEWE agenda within the Nigerian nation-state is also undertaken.

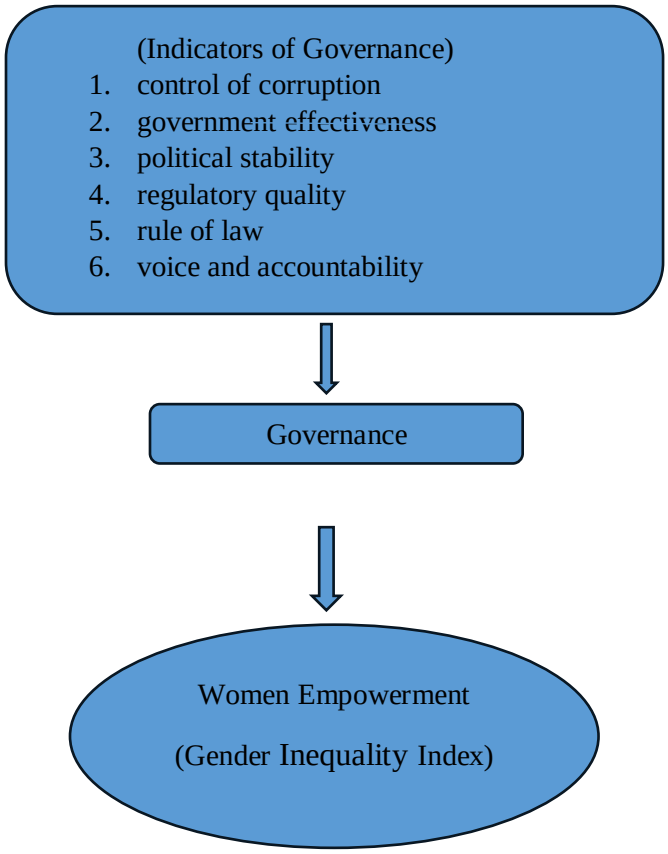


Fig 3.1: Conceptual model. Source: Author's calculations.

In the above figure 3.1 Women empowerment is taken as dependent variable. Governance has a strong impact on women empowerment.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In this section detail model selection, definition of variables, data sources and estimation technique are discussed.

4.2 Model Selection

To conduct the empirical estimation, the study has established the following model.

$$GII = \beta_0 + \beta_1 GOVI + \beta_2 LLF + \beta_3 GCF + \beta_4 GDPPCGR + \varepsilon \text{ ----------Eq 4.1}$$

Where GII=Gender Inequality Index, GOVI=governance index, LFF=Labor force, female, GDPPCGR=gross domestic product per capita growth.

4.3. Gender Inequality Index (GII)

The GII is used to measure the female labor force participation, reproductive health and political and educational empowerment (United Nations Development Program, 2024). In the current research, the dependent variable is GII which serves as a proxy of women empowerment. GII has

a range of 0 to 1, showing that if value is close to 1, gender gap is greater and vice versa (UNDP, 2024). To carry out empirical analysis, this research will convert the GII scale from 0-1 to 0-100 (Roy et al., 2020).

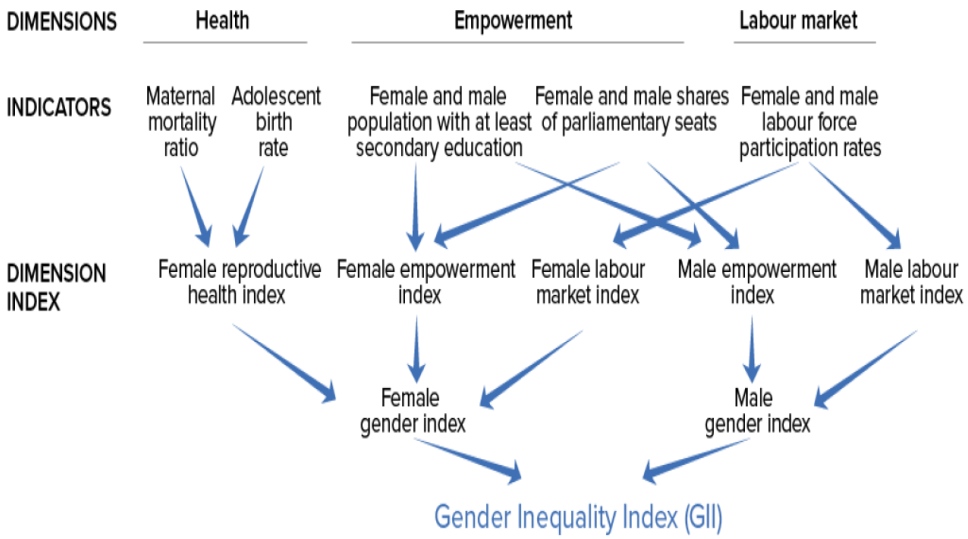


Fig 4.1 Gender Inequality Index. Source: United Nations Development Program

4.4 Governance Index

Governance index is applied to check the impact of governance on women empowerment. Governance has the following six indicators: 1. Control of Corruption, 2. Effectiveness of Government 3. Political Stability and Absence of violence/Terrorism 4. Regulatory Quality 5. Rule of Law 6.Voice and Accountability.

Data of governance indicators had been taken from worldwide governance indicators for the time period 200-2024 and index is made using Principal Component Analysis (Fukuda, 2017). The study hypothesized that governance index significantly affects the women empowerment.

4.5 Gross Domestic Product Per Capita Growth

GDP per capita growth is a key economic indicator that measures the rate of change in a country's economic output per person over a specific period, usually expressed as a percentage. GDP is the final value of goods and services produced by all resident producers in the economy. It is hypothesized that GDPPCGR has a significant effect on women empowerment.

4.6 Gross Capital Formation

GCF is a significant economic indicator measuring the net accumulation of capital goods in an economy during a specific period.

4.7: Labor Force, Female

The female labor force (LFF) refers to the women aged 15 and above who are either employed or actively seeking employment. This includes both paid and unpaid work, but the definition typically focuses on formal and informal employment in various sectors of the economy. In the following table 4.1 detail of variables, measurement of variables, data sources and data link are given:

Table 4.1 Description of Variables and Data Sources

Variables	Measurement	Data Sources
Women Empowerment		
GII	Gender inequality index**	UNDP
GOVI Governance index (calculated by author using PCA combining data of six governance indicators) Estimate*		
CC	Control of Corruption	World Governance Indicators (WGI)
GE	Government Effectiveness	WGI
PS	Political Stability and Absence of Violence	WGI
RQ	Regulatory Quality	WGI
RL	Rule of Law	WGI
VA	Voice and Accountability	WGI
Control Variables		
GDPPCGR	GDP per capita growth (annual %)	WDI
GCF	Gross capital formation (% of GDP)	WDI
LFF	Labor force, female (% of total labor force)	WDI

* The estimate represents a country's performance on the composite indicator, expressed in standard normal units, with values typically ranging from approximately −2.5 to +2.5. For empirical investigation, the original 0–1 scale has been transformed into a 1–100 index.
Source: Author's calculations

4.8: Estimation Technique

Methodological framework of study is given in fig 1.

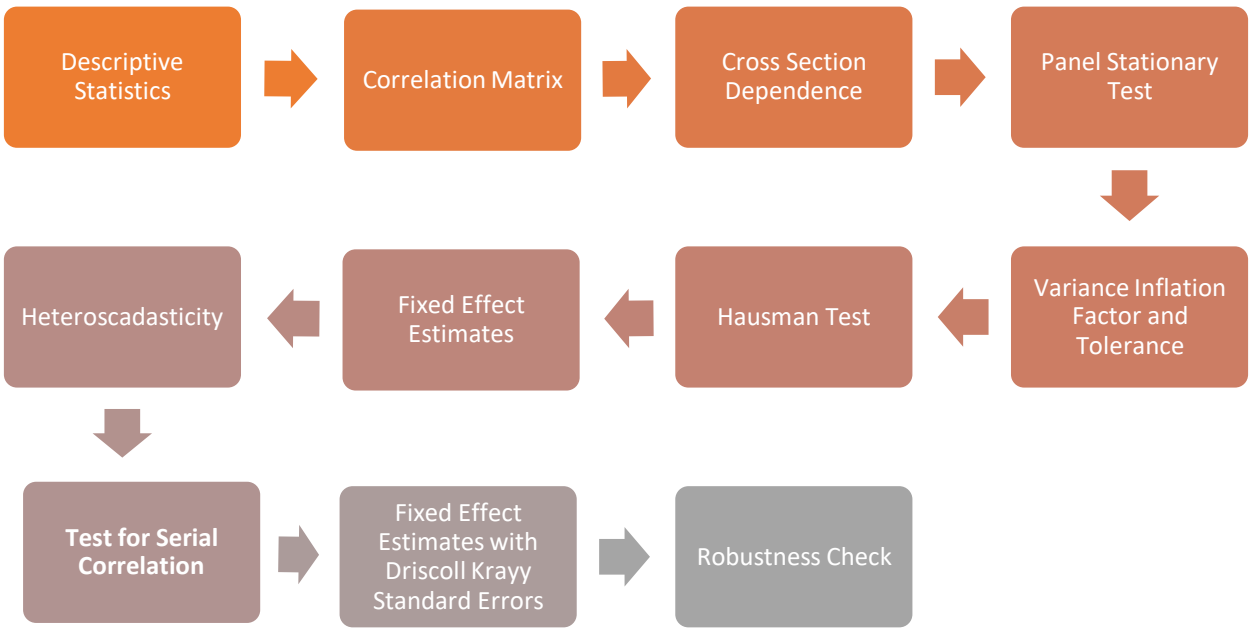


Fig 4.2: Methodological Framework of Study. Source: Author's calculations

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter empirical estimation is performed and interpretations are made specifically.

5.1 Descriptive Analysis

The Descriptive statistics are represented in Table 5.1.

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	Skewness	kurtosis
GII	663	45.914	12.675	10.2	72.8	-.130	2.619
GOVI	663	9.50	1.00	-1.943	2.763	.437	2.723
LFF	663	42.986	14.705	15.135	88.84	1.079	4.516
GCF	646	23.336	7.313	10.522	58.151	1.448	5.834
GDPPCGR	663	2.067	3.773	-19.244	15.155	-.976	6.113

Table 5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 5.1 represents the results of descriptive statistics. Maximum value of GII is 72.8 and minimum value is 10.2. Standard deviation of GII is 12.67 and mean value is 45.914. TD has a minimum value -.811 while maximum value is 6.093. While SD of TD is 12.67 and mean is 45.91. Similarly, FI has a minimum value of -.37, maximum value is 6, SD is 1.00 and mean is

1.06. GOVI has a minimum value of -1.94, maximum value is 2.76, and SD is 1.00 and mean value is 9.50.

5.2 Correlation Analysis

In the current research, the correlation analysis has been used to investigate the relationships among the variables. This approach will help to understand the strength and the direction of relations. The correlation table, which establishes the relationship between the dependent variable (GII) and the set of independent variables, is presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Correlation Matrix

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
GII	1.000						
GOVI	-0.651	0.069	0.150	1.000			
LFF	-0.035	-0.187	0.040	-0.005	1.000		
GCF	-0.042	-0.024	-0.128	-0.093	-0.124	1.000	
GDPPCGR	-0.078	-0.088	-0.089	0.033	0.063	0.310	1.000

Table 5.2 shows results of correlation. None of the explanatory variable is highly correlated as the value of each variable is less than 0.8 ((Baltagi et al., 2007). All the variables are negatively related to GII.

5.3 Cross Section Dependence Test

CSD test was used to examine the presence and extent of interdependence among observations within a panel dataset. Results of cross section dependence are as under:

Table 5.3 CSD Test Results:

Pesaran's Test	Friedman's Test	Frees's Test
43.521 (0.000)	251.723 (0.000)	12.203 (0.1996)

Probability values are in parathesis.

Table 5.3 displays the cross-sectional dependence results. Pesaran, Frees and Friedman test is applied to check the cross-sectional dependence. If prob. Value is less than 5% level of significance as in the case of Pesaran and Friedman, the test findings show that the null hypothesis of no cross-section dependence is rejected. In the case of Frees test if the calculated value of F statistics is greater than 0.1, 0.5 and 0.01 there is problem of cross sectional.

5.4 Second Generation CIPS & CADF

Second generation panel unit root test was used due to the presence of cross-sectional dependency in the data. Im, Pesaran and Shin and Augmented Dicky Fuller unit root test is applied.

Table 5.4 CIPS & CADF

Variables	CIPS		CADF	
	I (0)	I (1)	I (0)	I (1)
GII	-2.134*	----------	-1.625	-2.053*
GOVI	-1.746	-3.282***	-1.516	-2.047*

LFF	-2.645***	--------	-2.618	----------
GCF	-1.280	-2.328***	-1.432	-2.741*
GDPPCGR	-2.815*	----------	-2.064**	----------

***, **, * indicates 10%, 5%, 1% respectively.

Table 5.4 presents the outcomes of the panel unit root test, providing evidence that rejects the null hypothesis suggesting the absence of unit roots in the variables across various levels. Notably, while certain variables appear stationary when assessed using the CADF method at the level, the application of CIPS demonstrates their non-stationarity. Consequently, we can infer that these variables do not exhibit level stationarity. In the above table ***, **, * indicates 10%, 5% and 1% level of significance.

5.5: Breusch and pagan LM TEST for random effects or OLS

B&P LM test results are presented in Table 5.6. P-value=0.0000 in both models indicating the presence of panel effects (fixed or random). To determine the fixed or random effect model, the Hausman test is applied.

5.6: Hausman Test

Results of Hausman test are presented in table 5.6:

Table 5.5 Breusch and Pagan LM test, Hausman Test

	Chi^2	***P*-value**
Breusch Pagan LM test	3208.75	0.000
Hausman test	42.12	*0.0000*

If the probability value is less than 1%, 5% and 10%, the fixed effect model is more appropriate. In the model p-value is less than 1%, indicating that fixed effect model is more suitable than random effect model.

5.7: Test for Serial Correlation

The Wooldridge test for serial correlation is used in the study. Results are presented as under:

5.8: Wooldridge Test for Autocorrelation In Panel Data

H0: no first-order autocorrelation

Test for serial correlation presented in table 5.8. Results indicating p-value was less than 0.01 and 0.05, so H0 hypothesis was rejected. It was concluded that there was serial correlation among residuals.

5.9: Test for Heteroskedasticity

Table 5.7 Serial Correlation and Modified Wald Test for Heteroskedasticity

Wald Heteroskedasticity Test		**Serial Correlation Test**	
Chi^2	***P*-value**	**F (1,38)**	***P*-value**
5160.78	*0.0000*	*284.951*	*0.000*

Table 5.8 showed the results of heteroskedasticity. Modified Wald test is used for Heteroskedasticity. The P-value is less than 0.01 and 0.05 showing that the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was inferred that residuals were not homoscedastic.

5.10: Estimation Results of Fixed Effect Model and Fixed Effect Model with Driscoll Kraay Standard Errors

As there was the problem of serial correlation and heteroskedasticity in the data, the Driscoll-Kraay standard errors for coefficients computed via fixed effects regression were more appropriate to use (Driscoll and Kraay 1998). The Driscoll and Kraay estimator should be more efficient than pooled OLS and fixed-effects regression. DK standard errors manage both cross-sectional dependence (correlation between errors of different cross-sections) and temporal dependence (correlation between errors of the same cross-section over time). Results of fixed effect model and random effect model are presented in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8 Estimation Results of Fixed Effect and Random Effect Model

Variables	Fixed Effect Model		Random Effect Model	
	Coefficients	*P*-Value	Coefficients	*P*-value
GOVI	-1.7576	0.000	-.9748	0.034
LFF	-.4449	0.000	-.2326	0.000
GCF	-.1425	0.000	-.1588	0.000
GDPPCGR	-.2494	0.000	-.2601	0.000
Constant	68.0409	0.000	59.2675	0.000
R^2=0.24 F-staistics= 23.68 Prob (F statistics)			R^2=0.23 Wald chi square= 161.56 Prob value=0.000	

In the above table results of fixed effect and random effect model were reported. Governance index (GOVI) negatively relate with dependent variable gender inequality index (GII). GOVI reduces GII by 1.75% and 0.97% respectively in both models. Control variable LFF and GDPPCGR also have negative effects on GII. Results of the Hausman test (reported in table 5.7) indicated that fixed effect model is more appropriate to use. And due to the presence of heteroskedasticity, cross sectional dependence and serial correlation, Driscol Kraay standard error approach is applied.

Table 5.9 Estimation Results of Fixed Effect with Driscoll Kraay Standard Error

Period: 2004-2024, number of cross sections: 39, number of observations: 618

Variables	Coefficients	Driscol Kraay Standard Errors	t- statistics	*P*-value
GOVI	-1.7576	0.6624	-2.65	0.000
LFF	-.4449	.1445	-3.08	0.000
GCF	-.1425	.0685	-2.08	0.000
GDPPCGR	-.2494	.1111	-2.24	0.000
Constant	68.0409	6.5792	10.34	0.000
R^2=0.24 F-staistics= 252.99 Prob (F statistics) = 0.0000				

Table 5.9 shows the estimation results of fixed effect model with Driscoll and Kraay standard error. Gender inequality index (GII), dependent variable,

The governance index (GOVI) also has a negative and significant relation with GII. One percent increase in governance index reduces GII by 1.75 %. The effective government institutions, transparent policies, and rule of law play a crucial role in creating conditions that promote gender equality. Good governance fosters a stable and conducive environment for women's entrepreneurship and participation in the formal labor force, leading to greater economic independence. It has also seen that in some countries where government is more stable, there is less gender inequality and women are more empowered (Dumbraveanu et al., 2015; Ferguson & Alarcón, 2015; Kabir et al., 2018; Lenao & Basupi, 2016; Post et al., 2019).

6. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1: Summary of Findings

The study was aimed at exploring how women can be empowered through governance. The comparative analysis of the data obtained in various developing economies resulted in one important finding: the index of gender inequality has a negative correlation with the governance. The empirical data highlights the critical role, which governance can play in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. Effective governance practices are characterised by transparency, accountability and gender responsive policy frameworks, and are necessary in order to eliminate gender gaps and ensure women are involved in decision-making processes and in the life of the state. The inverse relationship between the gender inequality index and governance observed is that it was a strong, inclusive, and gender-sensitive governance that developed a more equal society where women have more access to economic, medical, and educational opportunities. In addition, the inclusion of women in political and administrative offices is essential in the creation of policies that would solve their particular needs and problems.

6.2 Policy Recommendations

In developing economies where gender inequality and women's empowerment are major concerns, the following policy proposals aim to advance gender equality and empower women via governance:

a) Government should institutionalize gender quotas, affirmative action frameworks and mechanisms to ensure meaningful and sustained representation of female candidates at all levels of political decision making.

b) Comprehensive training and capacity building programs should be systematically integrated into professional development of all public officials, legislators and policy makers.

c) State must expand and reinforce legal frameworks to safeguard women rights particularly relating to inheritance and property, as well as protections against gender-based violence.

d) Public service delivery mechanism should specifically cater the need of women and prioritize the women perspective in all necessary services including healthcare and education in both rural and urban settings .

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