

Gender Justice in Ethiopia: Governance Gaps and Policy Effectiveness

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Abstract

Gender justice is a key indicator of a nation's declared commitment to inclusive development. Building on this premise, the current study assesses the performance of gender justice policies in Ethiopia using a mixed-methods approach. Primary data were collected from 1,582 participants (90.92% response rate) using self-administered questionnaires as well as nine (9) interviews. Survey participants were chosen through simple random sampling, whereas interviewees were public officials chosen purposely. Furthermore, multi-year nationwide secondary data were obtained from federal institutions. The findings indicate that women's self-readiness and institutional support ($B = 6.69$), governing capacity ($B = 3.11$), policy quality ($B = 2.54$), transnational engagement ($B = 1.60$), and sociocultural norms ($B = 1.10$) have statistically significant positive effects on gender justice outcomes ($R^2 = 0.71$). These unstandardized coefficients represent the expected change in gender policy effectiveness for a one-unit increase in each predictor. Despite these contributions, the overall status of gender justice remains moderate and uneven across governance levels, with performance declining from federal to local levels. Persistent barriers—including inconsistent political commitment, institutional capacity gaps, and entrenched sociocultural norms such as glass ceilings and related structural constraints—continue to limit progress. The study concludes that while Ethiopia has made notable advances, outcomes fall short of policy ambitions. It recommends institutionalizing gender justice performance benchmarking, strengthening institutional capacity through enforceable implementation frameworks, converting political commitment

into measurable accountability, improving policy quality through mandatory feasibility assessments, investing in women's leadership incubation and empowerment, implementing comprehensive sociocultural transformation strategies, and strengthening transnational engagement while ensuring domestic ownership.

Keywords: Gender justice, Economic justice, Political justice, Sociocultural justice, Women's leadership, Glass ceiling, Glass wall, Glass escalator, Glass cliff

Introduction

As men and women together constitute nearly half of the global population, sustainable development and economic growth are fundamentally dependent on equitable opportunities and outcomes for both genders (Roy, Blomqvist & Clark, 2008). The rise of democracy, social justice movements, and particularly women's movements since the 1990s has placed gender rights and justice at the forefront of international policy debates (Mukhopadhyay & Singh, 2007). Global institutions, including the United Nations (2025) and the Asian Development Bank (2021), underscore that full participation of women and girls in decision-making and labor markets is central to achieving gender equality, enhancing gross domestic product, and fulfilling the 2030 Agenda. Yet, despite these commitments, gender inequality persists as a hierarchical disparity in access to resources, power, and social status, with women and girls continuing to face disproportionate risks of poverty, exclusion, and marginalization (OECD, 2019; Ridgeway, 2011; United Nations, 2024).

Gender disparities remain particularly pronounced in Africa, where women are underrepresented across political, economic, and social spheres, highlighting persistent structural barriers to inclusive development (African Development Bank Group & United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2024). Reducing these gaps is critical not only for promoting equality but also for sustaining broad-based economic growth and effective poverty reduction. While many governments have developed gender equality strategies and policy frameworks, their effectiveness has been constrained by limitations in governance, institutional capacity, accountability, and monitoring mechanisms (ADB, 2021). Addressing these challenges requires embedding equity as a core organizational value, ensuring that resources, opportunities, and support are allocated to achieve genuinely equal outcomes for all, recognizing the different starting points of individuals (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2023).

In Ethiopia, gender justice is recognized as a cross-cutting policy issue that must inform all stages of the policy cycle, from problem identification and agenda setting to formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Ensuring that

public institutions at federal, regional, and local levels consistently apply a gender lens is essential for translating policy commitments into measurable outcomes. Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of the status of gender justice policy performance, determinants shaping gender justice policy performance, as well as the obstacles limiting effective implementation, is crucial for strengthening, sustaining, and advancing gender justice within the country. This approach aligns national efforts with global commitments under Sustainable Development Goal 5, emphasizing the centrality of gender equity to broader development objectives (Kaltenborn, Krajewski, & Kuhn, 2020), Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU), regional initiative as the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the national home-grown policy.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Assess the overall status and performance of gender justice in Ethiopia across different levels of government.
- Examine the relationships between key determinants of gender justice, including women's self-readiness and institutional support, sociocultural factors, policy quality, governing quality and transnational factors.
- Analyze the combined and individual effects of these determinants on the effectiveness of gender justice policy implementation in Ethiopia.
- Compare gender justice outcomes across federal, regional, and local levels of governance and determine the statistical significance of observed differences.
- Identify major structural, institutional, and sociocultural challenges hindering the realization of gender justice and propose policy-relevant interventions.

Literature Review

Gender is widely understood not as a biological given but as a socially constructed system of meanings shaped by cultural norms and power relations (Nallari & Griffith, 2011). Yet, explanations of how these meanings crystallize into enduring inequalities differ in emphasis and level of analysis. Social role theory locates the source of inequality in the structural division of labor, where women are channeled into domestic and care-giving roles while men dominate high-status positions (Chafetz, 2006). By contrast, expectation states theory shifts attention to interactional dynamics, showing how gendered assumptions about competence systematically privilege men in leadership and decision-making contexts (Ridgeway, 2006). Together, these perspectives suggest that

gender inequality is reproduced both through institutional arrangements and through everyday interpersonal expectations.

Complementing these structural and interactional accounts, gender socialization and social learning theories explain how gendered behaviors are internalized early in life through observation, imitation, and reinforcement (Grusec & Hastings, 2015). However, these approaches have been critiqued for underplaying individual agency and the possibility of resistance to prescribed norms. Social bond theory adds another dimension by emphasizing how attachment to social groups and moral commitments encourages conformity to gendered expectations (Akers & Jensen, 2017), although it offers limited insight into how such norms are challenged or transformed. Across these perspectives, a common tension emerges between explanations of stability and accounts of change.

Building on these theoretical foundations, the concept of gender justice has emerged as both a normative goal and an analytical framework. It extends beyond formal equality to address the deeper institutional and structural conditions that produce unequal outcomes (Gheaus, 2012; Htun & Weldon, 2018). Importantly, gender justice is increasingly understood as both an outcome—such as equitable access to resources and decision-making—and a process involving accountability, responsiveness, and institutional transformation (Mukhopadhyay & Singh, 2007). This dual framing reflects an ongoing debate over whether policy efforts should prioritize redistributive results or focus on transforming the institutions that generate inequality. In practice, these dimensions are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

Empirical research further demonstrates that gender justice outcomes emerge from the interaction of multiple layers of influence, including institutional, individual, sociocultural, and transnational factors. At the institutional level, evidence shows that policy effectiveness depends not only on formal legal frameworks but also on implementation capacity, coordination, and accountability mechanisms (Brinkerhoff, 2010; Andrews et al., 2017). While some argue that strengthening formal institutions is sufficient, others emphasize that reforms often fall short without parallel changes in informal norms and power relations (OECD, 2019; Rao et al., 2016), revealing a persistent gap between policy design and lived outcomes.

Within the African context, gender justice is similarly shaped by these intersecting forces. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, important gains have been made in expanding legal protections and increasing women's political representation; however, these advances have not consistently translated into substantive socioeconomic empowerment (Kolovich & Newiak, 2024; Onditi & Odera, 2017). This gap is driven by weak institutional capacity, limited enforcement mechanisms, and entrenched gender norms that constrain women's participation in both public and economic life. At the same time,

structural inequalities—such as unequal access to resources, unpaid care responsibilities, and occupational segregation—continue to limit the transformative potential of gender policies, even where representation has improved. Emerging dynamics such as digitalization and financial inclusion are reshaping gender relations in some contexts, yet their effects remain uneven and strongly mediated by broader socioeconomic conditions. Taken together, these patterns reinforce the view that gender justice is not simply a product of policy design, but an outcome of complex interactions between governance quality, social norms, and individual agency.

At the individual level, women's self-efficacy, leadership aspirations, and readiness for participation are frequently identified as important enablers of advancement (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Johnson et al., 2011). However, focusing exclusively on individual empowerment risks shifting responsibility onto women while obscuring structural barriers. Interventions such as mentorship and leadership development programs can strengthen individual capacity (Laursen & Austin, 2020), but their impact remains contingent on enabling institutional and sociocultural environments. Similarly, gender quotas have demonstrably increased women's representation (Dahlerup, 1988; Krook, 2009; Tripp, 2010), yet their influence on substantive decision-making power remains contested, highlighting the limits of formal mechanisms in the absence of bigger systemic change.

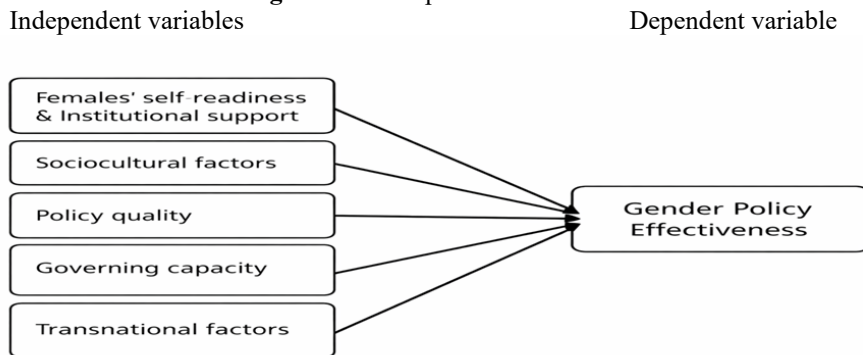
Sociocultural factors further complicate progress toward gender justice. Deeply embedded norms, stereotypes, and patriarchal values often persist beneath formal reforms, producing uneven and context-specific outcomes (Walby, 1990; Kandiyoti, 1988). This has generated debate over whether cultural transformation should precede institutional reform or follow it; however, evidence increasingly suggests a reciprocal relationship, in which institutional change can both challenge and reproduce existing norms.

Finally, transnational influences play a significant role in shaping domestic gender equality agendas. International legal frameworks, donor priorities, and global advocacy networks contribute to norm diffusion and policy adoption (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; True & Mintrom, 2001). While such influences have supported important gains in gender equality, concerns remain that externally driven reforms may lack local legitimacy or sustainability if insufficiently adapted to domestic contexts. This underscores the need to align global commitments with national priorities and locally grounded implementation strategies. Overall, the literature suggests that gender justice is best understood as a multi-dimensional and context-dependent phenomenon, shaped by the interaction of individual agency, institutional capacity, sociocultural structures, and transnational dynamics.

Despite the extensive theoretical and empirical scholarship on gender inequality and gender justice, several critical gaps remain. First, much of the

existing literature examines institutional, individual, or sociocultural determinants in isolation, with limited integrative analysis of how these dimensions interact to shape gender justice outcomes in specific governance contexts. Second, while policy frameworks and legal reforms are well documented, there is insufficient attention to governance gaps—particularly the disjuncture between formal commitments and actual implementation, accountability, and coordination mechanisms. Third, although transnational influences and normative frameworks are widely discussed, their translation into locally grounded and sustainable practices remains underexplored. As a result, the literature provides limited insight into the combined effect of structural constraints, individual agency, and institutional performance in producing or hindering gender justice. This study addresses these gaps by offering an integrated analysis of the determinants of gender justice, with a particular focus on governance challenges and implementation deficits, thereby contributing to a more context-sensitive and operational understanding of how gender justice can be realized in practice.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Source: Developed from review of literature (2025)

Research methodology

This study is anchored in a pragmatist–critical research paradigm, which combines empirical inquiry with critical reflection on structural inequalities. This orientation allows for both measurement of gender justice outcomes and interrogation of the underlying institutional and sociocultural constraints shaping them (Creswell, 2023; Johnson et al., 2007).

In relation to research design and approach, the study employed a convergent mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of gender justice. Mixed methods research allows for the combination of numerical measurement with contextual interpretation, thereby enhancing validity through triangulation (Creswell, 2023; Johnson et al., 2007). Guided by the

hypothetico-deductive approach, the study tested relationships between gender justice policy effectiveness and key determinants, while also describing patterns observed in the data.

The study's population included both state and non-state actors, comprising government institutions (legislative, executive, and judiciary branches), women's organizations, political parties, civil society organizations, and individuals without institutional affiliation, such as students, trainees, and ordinary citizens.

Regarding the sampling of target respondents, a combination of probability and non-probability sampling methods was employed. For probability sampling, stratified and multi-stage sampling were applied to public institutions. Following the mainstream classification of the branches of government (executive, legislative, and judiciary branches), the legislative and judiciary branches were directly considered, and respondents in those organizations were selected using simple random sampling from alphabetically ordered name lists as the sampling frame. With respect to public organizations accountable to the executive branch, inclusion criteria comprised institutional stability (i.e., no major changes in mandate and structure) over the last ten years, pro-poor institutions, institutions with accessible structures at all levels of government, institutions receiving relatively more public budget as an indication of significance, and institutions with a relatively greater number of employees. Accordingly, the Education sector, Health sector, Revenue sector, Labor and Skill sector, Civil Service sector, Water and Energy, Road and Logistics sectors, and Women & Children Affairs sector were selected. Finally, specific respondents were chosen using simple random sampling from alphabetically sorted employees in the respective institutions' human resources datasets. The names of selected employees, the questionnaire, and a support-seeking letter written by the Ethiopian Public Service University were sent to the respective institutions to obtain full support from those institutions in general and respondents in particular.

As to women's organizations (Women Association, Women League, and Women Federation), questionnaires along with a support-seeking letter were sent to these organizations. Acquiring their full consent and cooperation, the researcher administered a questionnaire to members of these organizations at the training venue, specifically, Addis Ababa, Adama, Bishoftu, and Batu cities. The fact that these trainees came from all corners of the country and all levels of administrative hierarchies implies representativeness of the study participants.

On the other hand, non-state-affiliated respondents such as CSOs and active students were accessed in person at selected academic and training institutions, including Ethiopian Public Service University, Oromia State

University, and African Excellence Leadership Academy, to fill out the questionnaire. For alumni of those institutions (e.g., former students and trainees), their email addresses, mobile phone numbers, and Telegram accounts registered at those institutions were used to access them.

In addition, non-probability sampling—particularly purposive sampling—was employed to select key informants. This mixed approach was adopted to leverage the complementary strengths of both methods, enhance validity, and reduce bias. It also ensured adequate representation while enabling access to information-rich participants, such as gender policy leaders (George P., 2026; Wiśniowski et al., 2020; Creswell, 2023). Accordingly, one senior official from the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and corresponding bureau officials from Addis Ababa, Oromia, Amhara, Harari, Somali, Tigray, Gambella, and Dire Dawa were purposively selected. In total, eight interviews were conducted using a structured interview checklist aligned with the study variables.

To determine the sample size, the study employed a combination of Cochran's (1977) and Yamane's (1967) formulas based on the nature of the target respondents.

Table 1: Sample size determination

No.	Category of Respondents	Population Size	Formula Used	Sample Size
1	Legislative	400	Yamane (1967)	200
2	Judiciary	4,800	Yamane (1967)	370
3	Executive	2,500,000	Yamane (1967)	400
4	Women’s Organizations	Unknown	Cochran (1977)	385
5	Non-state Actors	Unknown	Cochran (1977)	385
Total				1,740

Source: Own computation (2025)

Table 1 presents the sample size determination across different respondent categories using established statistical formulas. The use of Yamane’s formula for known populations and Cochran’s formula for unknown populations ensures methodological rigor and appropriateness. The distribution reflects an effort to balance representativeness across institutional and non-institutional actors, thereby enhancing the generalizability and analytical depth of the study.

Table 2: Variables of the study

No.	Variable	Type	Number of Items	Cronbach’s alpha values	Scale consistency
1	Females’ Self-readiness & Institutional Support	Independent	41	0.97	Excellent
2	Sociocultural Factors	Independent	6	0.91	Excellent
3	Policy Quality	Independent	6	0.88	Good
4	Governing Capacity	Independent	3	0.71	Acceptable
5	Transnational Factors	Independent	4	0.88	Good

No.	Variable	Type	Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha values	Scale consistency
6	Gender Justice Policy Effectiveness	Dependent	41	0.98	Excellent
	Overall reliability		101	0.98	Excellent

Source: Researcher (2025)

Table 2 presents the key variables included in the study and their corresponding measurement scales. These are females' self-readiness (i.e., self-efficacy, leadership aspiration, awareness of rights, readiness to participate in decision-making, etc.) and institutional support, Sociocultural factors, Policy quality, Governing quality, Transnational factors, and Gender justice policy effectiveness) enhances both the depth and precision of measurement, thereby strengthening the study's analytical capacity to examine the determinants of gender justice.

The questionnaire items measuring the determinants of gender justice (independent variables) and the effectiveness of gender justice policy (dependent variable) were constructed using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from very low (1) to very high (7). The use of a seven-point scale is methodologically justified, as it provides greater sensitivity and discriminatory power compared to shorter scales, allowing respondents to express more nuanced perceptions and attitudes (Finstad, 2010; Joshi et al., 2015). Empirical research further suggests that seven-point Likert scales enhance reliability and more closely approximate interval-level measurement, thereby improving the robustness of parametric statistical analyses such as correlation and regression (Hair et al., 2019). Additionally, such scales reduce measurement error by offering a balanced range of response options, which is particularly important for complex constructs like gender justice involving varying degrees of perception, experience, and institutional performance.

To ensure analytical rigor, individual items under each construct were aggregated to form composite indices. This was achieved by computing the mean scores of all items corresponding to each variable after confirming internal consistency through reliability testing (Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.70). According to George and Mallery (2003), a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.90 and above is considered excellent reliability; values between 0.80 and 0.89 are regarded as good, those between 0.70 and 0.79 as acceptable, those between 0.60 and 0.69 as questionable and therefore in need of support from additional measures, those between 0.50 and 0.59 as poor and requiring revision of the instrument, and values below 0.50 as unacceptable.

The composite scale approach allows multiple indicators to capture the multidimensional nature of constructs such as gender justice policy effectiveness, sociocultural constraints, and institutional capacity, thereby enhancing construct validity and reducing random measurement error. In

addition, a pilot test was conducted to refine the instruments, while expert reviews were utilized to ensure content validity and conceptual clarity. Only items meeting these reliability and validity criteria were retained for the final analysis, thereby enhancing the robustness and credibility of the findings. Consequently, the resulting indices provide a more stable and comprehensive representation of each variable, enabling more accurate estimation of relationships within the regression model.

Concerning the approach of data analysis, the study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (regression, correlation, and repeated ANOVA to compare the three levels of government). The results of the analysis were then interpreted according to the predetermined standards of robustness and credibility of the results.

Table 3: Mean range & its interpretations

Mean Range	Performance Level	Attitude Interpretation	Challenge Level
1.00–1.80	Very low	Very low support	Very low challenge
1.81–2.60	Low	Low Support	Low challenge
2.61–3.40	Low to moderate	Low to moderate support	Low to moderate challenge
3.41–4.20	Moderate	Moderate support	Moderate Challenge
4.21–5.00	Moderate to high	Moderate to high support	Moderate to high challenge
5.01–5.80	High	High support	High challenge
5.81–7.00	Very high	Very high support	Very high challenge

Source: Extracted from review of literature (2025)

Table 3 provides the interpretive framework used to categorize mean scores. This scale enhances the clarity and consistency of data interpretation by translating numerical values into meaningful qualitative categories. It allows for systematic comparison across variables and ensures that findings are communicated in a way that is both analytically rigorous and easily understandable.

Model specification

$$Y = B_0 + (B_1 \times \text{FRIS}) + (B_2 \times \text{SCF}) + (B_3 \times \text{PQ}) + (B_4 \times \text{GCF}) + (B_5 \times \text{TNF})$$

Y = Gender Justice Policy Effectiveness

B₀= Constant; B₁, B₂, B₃, B₄, B₅ are coefficients of independent variables

FRIS= Females' Self-readiness & Institutional Support

SCF=Socio-Cultural Factor

PQ=Policy Quality

GCF=Governing Capacity Factor; TNF=Transnational Factors

Qualitative data were analyzed through a multi-stage thematic analysis process, involving open coding, iterative refinement, categorization aligned with key study variables, and interpretive synthesis. This enabled the identification of recurring themes such as governance gaps, sociocultural barriers, and institutional constraints. The findings were systematically triangulated with quantitative results by comparing statistical patterns with participants' narratives, thereby enhancing validity and uncovering underlying causal mechanisms influencing gender justice outcomes.

Methodological Limitations

Certain practical constraints were encountered during the fieldwork process, particularly regarding respondent accessibility and variations in participant availability, which may have influenced aspects of data collection.

In addition, the study drew participants from multiple administrative levels, regional governments, and institutional contexts, thereby enhancing the diversity and breadth of perspectives captured in the analysis. While the findings provide important insights into gender justice policy implementation across these contexts, variations that may exist in other settings and population groups were not considered in interpreting and generalizing the results at the national level.

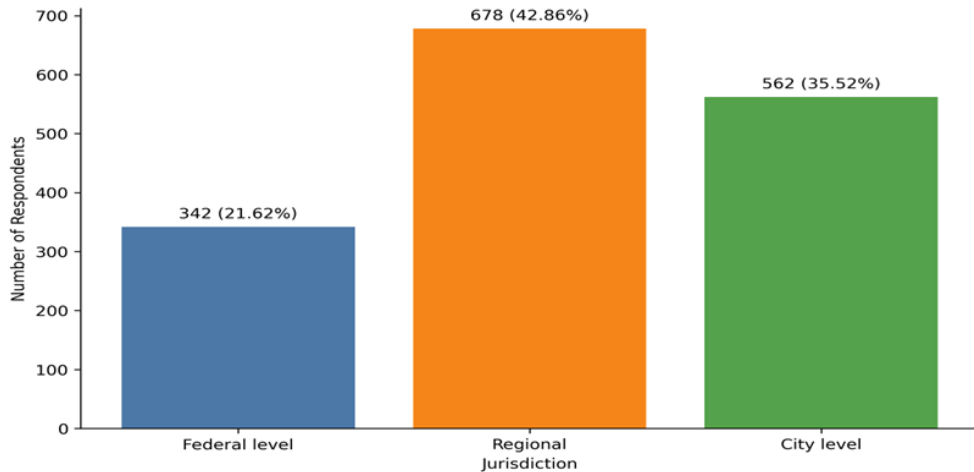
Furthermore, the fact that the study predominantly utilized self-reported data, which may be influenced by response bias and variations in individual perception differences towards the same performance, might have influenced the findings.

Nevertheless, several measures were undertaken to enhance the rigor and credibility of the findings. Specifically, the study employed methodological triangulation and a mixed-methods design, enabling cross-validation of evidence across quantitative and qualitative data sources, such as primary and secondary data. Reliability and validity checks were also conducted to strengthen measurement consistency and analytical robustness. Consequently, despite these limitations, the study provides valuable empirical insights into the dynamics influencing gender justice policy implementation.

Results and discussions

A total of 1,582 valid responses were obtained, representing a response rate of 90.92%. This exceptionally high rate not only exceeds commonly accepted thresholds for survey research but also significantly enhances the statistical reliability and representativeness of the findings. As noted by Miller and Yang (2008, p. 231), such a robust response rate strengthens the validity of inferences drawn and reduces the risk of non-response bias, thereby providing a solid empirical foundation for credible and generalizable conclusions.

Figure 2: Distribution of respondents across levels of government



Source: own survey (2025)

The figure presents the distribution of respondents across federal, regional, and city-level jurisdictions, with the highest proportion drawn from the regional level (42.86%), followed by the city level (35.52%), and the federal level (21.62%). This distribution reflects a deliberate effort to engage policy actors operating at multiple tiers of government in order to generate a comprehensive, multi-level understanding of gender justice in Ethiopia. In particular, the relatively higher representation of regional and city-level respondents strengthens the analysis by capturing ground-level experiences, institutional realities, and implementation challenges. This emphasis moves the study beyond abstract or purely normative federal policy perspectives, enabling a more practical identification of determinants, bottlenecks, and contextual constraints affecting gender equality outcomes across different administrative levels.

Table 4 : Distributions of respondents by institutional category

No.	Respondent Category	Planned Sample	Actual Response	Response Rate (%)
1	Legislative Branch	200	180	90.00
2	Judiciary Branch	370	360	97.30
3	Executive Branch	400	371	92.75
4	Women’s Organizations	385	316	82.08
5	Non-Institutional Actors	385	355	92.21
	Aggregate	1,740	1,582	90.92

Source: Survey data (2025)

As presented in the table, the study obtained a high level of participant engagement across all respondent categories. Specifically, 180 valid responses (90.0%) were secured from the legislative branch, 360 responses (97.3%) from the judiciary branch, 371 responses (92.75%) from the executive branch, 316 responses (82.08%) from women’s organizations, and 355 responses (92.21%)

from non-institutional actors, relative to the planned sample sizes for each category. Data were collected from these respondents using simple random sampling as promised in the methodology section. In addition to this, nine (9) successful interviews were conducted using a structured checklist as planned (100%) with officials of the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and aligned bureaus of city administration and regional governments. Collectively, these yielded a robust and sufficiently representative primary dataset for subsequent empirical analysis.

In addition, the study incorporated secondary data on national policy performance obtained from key governmental institutions with administrative structures extending from the federal to grassroots levels, including executive-sector institutions (such as the ministries of education, health, labor and skills, banking institutions, and civil service sectors), as well as the judiciary and legislative branches. The inclusion of these institutionally and geographically extensive data sources further enhanced the nationwide representativeness and comprehensiveness of the study participants and findings.

Descriptive analysis

Status of gender justice

The study showed that about 90.14% of respondents reported the existence of a gender gap, whereas 1,167 (73.77%) of respondents rated the extent of the gender gap from moderate to extremely significant, of which 64.85% reported that such a gap exists everywhere at home, in public and private organizations, in politics, and in society, etc.

Table 5: Status of gender justice

No.	Dimension of Gender Justice	Mean Score	Interpretation
1	Economic Justice	3.32	Low to moderate
2	Political Justice	3.39	Low to moderate
3	Organizational Representation	3.65	Moderate
4	Sociocultural Justice	3.33	Low to moderate

Source: Computed from survey data (2025)

In light of this table, the nation-wide gender justice performance is measured in terms of the extent of economic justice among males and females as business owners, industry employment, high-income-earning private sector leadership, ownership of productive assets, enjoying equal inheritance right, access to credit opportunities, sharing of the country's income, equal access to economy-related valuable information and economic independence) was from low to moderate (mean=3.32). As far as secondary data from the Ministry of Labor and Skills was concerned, the employment opportunities created by the government in recent years were for 3,851,778 males and 2,567,852 females in 2023. In the same manner, 3,924,221 males and 2,616,147 females get employment opportunities created by the government in the year 2024.

Furthermore, 4,057,841 males and 2,705,227 females got employment opportunities in the year 2025. Accordingly, the proportion of males and females who got employment opportunities created by the government during the last three years was 60% and 40%. In relation to employment opportunities created by industries, reports from the same ministry revealed 426,458 (60%) males and 284,306(40%) females were employed in the industry in the year 2023, followed by 607,475 (60%) males and 404,984 (40%) females in 2024. In the year 2025, as well, 445,000 (60%) males and 296,667 (40%) females were employed in the industry, implying that males benefited more than females from job opportunities created both by the government and industries. The other indicator employed by the study to evaluate the extent of economic justice was deposit and credit accounts held by males and females from bank industry in the country. In this regard, the credit information obtained from Commercial Bank of Ethiopia as of March 31, 2025, revealed that 98,085 (66.68%) of the total credit account holders were male and 49,020 (33.32%) were female. This implies that the proportion of male and female credit account holders in the public bank was 2/3rd and 1/3rd, respectively. In the same period, the proportion of male and female credit account holders in private banks on average was 77.18 % and 22.82%, respectively. The deposit information from the public bank and private banks during the same period was respectively 60.61% and 66.56% for males, while it was respectively 39.39% and 33.34% for females. In general, the deposit and loan information of both public and private banks elucidate that there was a wide difference between males and females in saving and borrowing, with males being more beneficiaries as it exists during the research period.

The other indicator of gender justice was political justice. In this regard, the nation-wide gender justice performance is measured in terms of political justice (e.g., practically exercising equal voting rights, exercising political candidacy, getting seats in the legislature, political decision-making at all levels of government and key policy sectors) was also reported as slightly low (mean=3.39). The study considered the fairness of participation in the election as voters and candidates, participation in political parties as party members, and participation as political leaders. In this regard, the secondary data from the National Election Board showed the proportion of males and females registered to vote in the 4th national election was 16,674,280 (52.22%) and 15,252,240 (47.78%), respectively, whereas 15, 617, 453 (52.35%) of males and 14,214,737 (47.65%) of females presented for the election. In the 5th national election, 19,076,625 (51.77%) of males and 17,774,836 (48.23%) of females registered to vote, whereas 17,797,313 (51.81%) of males and 16,554,131 (48.19%) of females used their cards to elect their government. In the same manner, 18,485,176 (51%) of males and 17,760,268 (49%) of females registered to vote, whereas 16,774,391 (52%) of males and

15,484,054 (48%) of females presented to vote on election day of the 6th national election. In this regard, male and female participation in the election as voters showed consistent similarity in the recent three rounds of elections, and the gap was closer.

Furthermore, the secondary data received from HoPR (2024) revealed that the proportion of parliamentarians during the 1st round election was (male=97.44%; female = 2.56%), 2nd round election (male=92.32%; female= 7.68%), 3rd round election (male = 78.61%; female = 21.39%), 4th round (male=72.21%; female =27.79%), 5th round (male =61.06%; female =38.94%) and 6th round (male = 58.17%; female = 41.83%). This implies that the gap between male and female as parliamentarians was continuously decreasing as one moved from the first election through the sixth round of elections, and met the minimum 30% critical mass requirement stated by the UN.

In addition, secondary data regarding participation in party membership as of the end of 2025 showed 10,409,230 (63.52%) males and 5,978,772 (36.48%) females, implying that the critical mass 30% was reached despite a huge gap in realizing equal political engagement as party members. As far as justice as political leadership was concerned, there were 76,085 (84.34%) males and 14,129 (15.66%) females throughout the country during the study period in public institutions from macro to micro level. Thus, it can be deduced that the gap between males and females in political party leadership positions was significantly less than the minimum required critical mass (i.e., 30%) by half. However, secondary data on the federal-level leadership participation received from the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (2025) elucidates that the proportion of males and females in leadership positions at the federal level, on average, was 63.11% males and 36.89% females, showing better representation at the federal level than at the lower level. Comparison of women at leadership positions in key policy sectors at the federal level (mean= 3.60), regional level (mean= 3.39), and local level (mean=3.20), implying that it is moderate at the federal level and slightly low at the regional and local levels, though the regional level performance is more than the local level.

Table 6: Overall political justice across levels of government

No	Government Level	Mean	Interpretation
1	Federal	3.50	Moderate
2	Regional	3.15	Low to moderate
3	Local	2.97	Low to moderate

ANOVA Summary

Source	df	F	p	Partial η^2
Government Commitment Level	2, 3162	155.03	< .001	.09

Source: Computed from own survey data

As shown in the table, the level of political justice varies across tiers of government. The federal level demonstrates comparatively stronger performance (mean = 3.50), followed by the regional level (mean = 3.15), while the local level records the lowest performance (mean = 2.97). This gradient indicates a declining pattern of gender-inclusive political engagement from the federal to the local level, suggesting uneven institutional capacity and commitment across governance tiers.

Overall, the findings reveal that political justice in terms of male and female participation is neither uniform nor consistently institutionalized, with notable gaps persisting at all levels of government. This pattern is further corroborated by qualitative evidence. As one respondent from Oromia, aged 20–30, observed, “*Women’s representation becomes increasingly constrained as we move from the federal level to city administrations, regional states, and ultimately to district levels.*” The good thing was that preparation was being made in identifying the future leadership pool, comprising 26,657 (69.21%) males and 11,857 (30.79%) females, showing a promising effort towards gradually filling the current gap even nationwide (Prosperity party, 2025). Acknowledging progress at all levels in the country, officials who participated in the interview unanimously responded that strong commitment supported by practical action exists higher level of government as compared to lower administrative hierarchies.

The repeated measures ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference in commitment levels among federal, regional, and local governments, $F(2, 3162) = 155.03, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .09$. The partial eta squared value indicates a moderate effect size, suggesting that differences in government level accounted for approximately 9% of the variance in perceptions of commitment toward ensuring gender justice.

The other dimension of gender justice was organizational representation justice among males and females nationwide which was measured in terms of level of access to different levels of education, access to STEM education, engage as teachers and school principals, engage as nurses, medical doctor and health sector leaders, engage as judges and judicial leadership, level of participation as public servants in core processes and supportive processes and extent of positive changes in public organizations in realizing gender justice. In this regard, respondents evaluated it as moderate performance (mean=3.65). In light of secondary data obtained from MoE (2024), top leaders (principals, vice principals, and supervisors) of primary and middle schools totaled 37,473, comprised of 33,301 (88.87%) males and 4,172 (11.13%) females, whereas the composition of the top leaders at secondary schools showed 7452 (92.15%) males and 635 (7.85%) females, totaling 8,087. Next to this, the leadership composition of HEIs showed 252 (90.65%) males and 26 (9.35%) females, totaling 278 persons. The aggregate

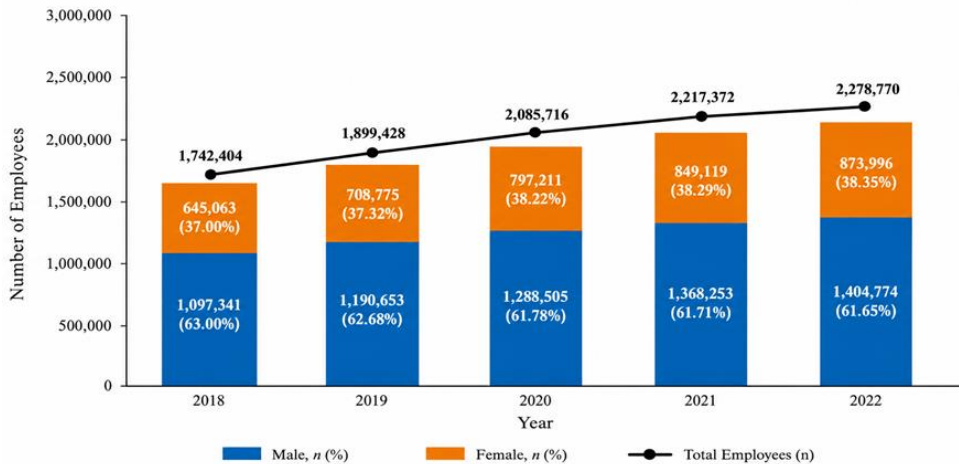
leadership of education institutions at the national level was 45,838 individuals, disaggregated as 41,005 (89.46%) males and 4,833 (10.54%) females. This information elucidates that women's participation in the leadership of educational institutions at all levels was the lowest and very far below the minimum critical mass requirement (30%).

Concerning the fairness of representation in HEIs board, data collected from MoE (2024) showed 40 (85.11%) of the university board leaders (chairman or chairwoman) were males, and 7(14.89%) were females. Furthermore, the board members of universities comprise 223 (87.45%) males and 32 (12.55%) females. In general, the governance board of universities consists of 263 (87.09%) males and 39 (12.91%) females. Therefore, the proportion of females in the board leadership position, as well as the entire board membership, was extremely low.

In the same manner, secondary data collected from MoH (2024) revealed that the size of medical doctors in the country was 7,249 (70.56%) males and 3,025 (29.44%) females, totaling 10,274 professionals, implying that more than two-thirds of the medical doctors are males. However, the gap is decreasing for the nursing profession nationwide, which comprises 50,844 (54.19%) males and 42,981 (45.81%) females. Considering three professional areas such as hospital administration professionals, health service management professionals, and public health officers that are related to leadership and management of health institutions, there were 14,793 (68.43%) males and 6824 (31.57%) females, totaling to 21, 617 implying that the 30% critical mass was met, though more work is yet to be done.

Concerning the proportion of male and female judges and Assistant Judges (Federal Supreme Court, 2025) collectively in all the federal courts, secondary data revealed 416 (65.41%) males and 220 (34.59%) females. In the same manner, federal-level judicial leadership amounts to 916 appointees, of which 572 (62.45%) were males, and 344 (37.55%) were females, showing that the gender gap was huge, though a critical mass was reached. Taking the entire public service institutions in the country into perspective, the following data provides trends in gender composition across years.

Figure 3: Gender compositions of public institutions



Source: FCSC (2022)

According to secondary data collected from the Federal Civil Service Commission on the size and composition of the public service in 2018, there were 1,097,341 (63%) males and 645,063 (37%) females. In 2019, there were 1,899,428 employees, comprising 1,190,653 (62.68%) males and 708,775 (37.32%) females nationwide. Furthermore, the number of public servants increased to 2,085,716 in 2020, consisting of 1,288,505 (61.78%) males and 797,211 (38.22%) females. In the following year, the number of public servants became 2,217,372, of which 1,368,253 (61.71%) were males, and 849,119 (38.29%) were females. In the same scenario, the total number of public servants in 2022 was 2,278,770, consisting of 1,404,774 (61.65%) males and 873,996 (38.35%) females, elucidating a significant gap despite meeting critical mass.

Generally, data pertaining to human resources composition in public organizations indicate sustained and robust workforce expansion, though this growth is accompanied by a persistent gender imbalance, with males consistently comprising a clear majority of the human resources. At the same time, the evidence shows a gradual but consistent increase in female participation, both in proportional and absolute terms. This signals that existing inclusion efforts—or broader socioeconomic dynamics—are yielding progress, though at a modest pace.

Last but not least, gender justice in the country was also measured in terms of sociocultural justice, focusing on the extent of sharing household responsibilities equally by males and females, a decrease in gender-based violence, and exercising equal autonomy among males and females. In relation to this, participants reported a slightly low performance (mean =3.33), which also shows a huge gap, demanding a sustained effort.

Attitude toward women's empowerment

In addition to the status of gender justice performance, the current study attempted to assess respondents' attitude towards women's empowerment and their confidence in women to deliver on the mission given to them. The mean rating is displayed as follows.

Table 7: Attitude towards women's empowerment

No	Indicator	Mean Score
1	Approval of political careers for women	3.58
2	Approval of full-time work for women	3.98
3	Effectiveness of women's political leadership	3.96
4	Family harmony with women in politics	3.83
5	Women's political participation as a reputation builder	3.71
6	Women's economic independence	3.83
7	Equal decision-making at home	3.81
8	Undesirability of gender role socialization	3.43
9	Women's success in any position	3.57
10	Women's role in reducing corruption	4.53

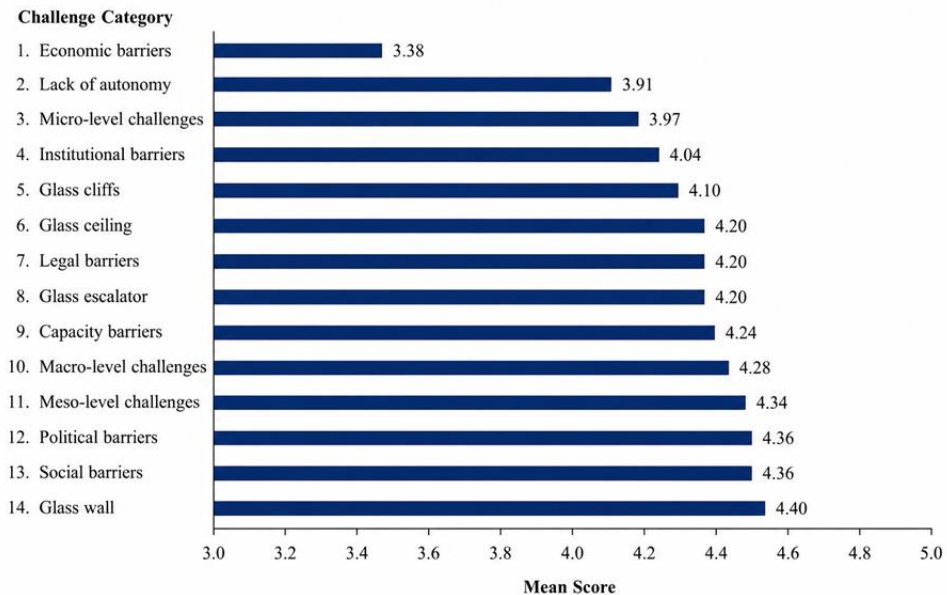
Source: Own survey (2025)

According to this graph, a mean of respondents attitude towards gender justice showed that respondents' approval or support of political careers for women (mean= 3.58), approval of full-time work for women (mean=3.98), approval of the effectiveness of women's political leadership (mean=3.96), unshakable or harmonious family relationships due to women's participation in politics (mean=3.83), women's political participation as a reputation builder (mean=3.71), approval of women's economic independence (mean= 3.83), approval of equal decision-making autonomy at home for males and females (mean=3.81), undesirability of gender role socialization (mean=3.43), and success of women in any position they can be assigned (mean=3.57) all between 3.41 and 4.20 implying moderate attitude. On the other hand, the contribution of women's engagement in politics for lessening corruption and conspiracy has secured a high approval rate of 4.53, implying that women earned trust in fighting corruption.

On the other hand, the undesirability of gender roles socialization (mean =3.43), trust in women to be successful in any position they are assigned (mean= 3.57), and approval of women for a political career (mean= 3.58) are the lowest of all, reflecting respondents' lack of strong trust in women's capacity and respondents' loyalty to deep-rooted sociocultural beliefs.

Perceived system-wide challenges to women's empowerment

Figure 4: System-wide challenges & their status



Note. Grand mean = 4.21.

Source: Own survey (2025)

As illustrated in the figure, economic barriers (mean = 3.38) were perceived as a relatively low-level constraint on the realization of gender justice. In contrast, factors such as limited autonomy of women's organizations (mean = 3.91), micro-level challenges (mean = 3.97), institutional barriers (mean = 4.04), and structural impediments—including the glass cliff (mean = 4.01), glass ceiling (mean = 4.20), legal barriers (mean = 4.20), and glass escalator (mean = 4.20)—were assessed as moderate challenges.

More pronounced constraints were observed in relation to capacity limitations (mean = 4.24), macro-level challenges (mean = 4.28), meso-level challenges (mean = 4.34), and both political and social barriers (mean = 4.36 each), with the glass wall emerging as the most significant barrier (mean = 4.40).

The distribution of mean scores clearly demonstrates that barriers are systemic, hierarchical, and mutually reinforcing, with the most severe constraints concentrated in structural and socio-political domains rather than purely economic ones. The prominence of *glass wall*, political, and social barriers indicates that exclusion is maintained through institutional practices, power relations, and embedded norms, not simply resource limitations. With an overall high grand mean (4.21), the evidence signals that challenges are not

fragmented but cumulative, requiring a shift from isolated interventions to comprehensive, multi-level policy reform. Effective action must therefore prioritize dismantling structural inequalities, strengthening institutional accountability, and transforming socio-cultural dynamics to achieve meaningful and sustained equity. This quantitative evidence is reinforced by qualitative insights. As one male respondent aged 31–40 working in a federal institution also agree with quantitative analysis, *“Despite strong policy commitments and observable progress, uneven implementation across levels of governance, coupled with persistent sociocultural barriers, continues to undermine the consistency and sustainability of gender mainstreaming efforts.”*

Inferential analysis

The study employed inferential statistics to determine the effect of the independent variable (self-readiness and institutional support, socio-cultural factors, governing capacity, policy quality, and transnational factors) on the effectiveness of gender justice (i.e., dependent variable), applying multiple linear regression. To this end, the Model fitness analysis was made as follows:

Table 8: Model Summary (ANOVA)

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.	Durbin–Watson
Regression Model	.843	.711	.710	438.30	<.001	2.29

Source: Computed from own survey data (2025)

According to this ANOVA analysis, the adjusted R² was 0.71 with (F= 438.3; P < 0.05), implying that 71.10% of variance in the dependent variable is explained collectively by the five predictors included in the regression model, namely, females’ self-readiness and institutional support, sociocultural factors, policy quality, governing capacity, and transnational factors. Therefore, the model fits the data as it has a high explanatory power. The large F-statistic (438.30) and p-value (sig. <0.001) also show that overall, the regression model is statistically significant. In addition, the Durbin–Watson statistic (2.29) indicated no serious autocorrelation problem in the regression residuals, as the value falls within the commonly accepted range of 1.5–2.5.

To facilitate interpretation, all predictor variables were constructed as composite indices by averaging the respective Likert-scale items measured on a seven-point scale (1 = very low to 7 = very high). The dependent variable, gender justice policy effectiveness, was similarly operationalized as a composite index derived from 41 items. For regression analysis, the index scores were transformed into aggregate scale scores, which explains the relatively larger magnitude of the regression constant and unstandardized coefficients.

In a nutshell, the independent variables all in one significantly predict the dependent variable. Hence, the detailed effect of each predictor variable on the dependent variable is presented below.

Table 9: Regression outputs

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p	95% CI for B	VIF
Constant	141.62	0.70	—	201.36	< .001**	[140.92, 143.00]	—
Females' Self-Readiness & Institutional Support	6.69	0.29	.626	23.16	< .001**	[6.37, 7.25]	2.69
Sociocultural Factors	1.10	0.48	.108	2.29	.022*	[0.62, 2.04]	1.99
Policy Quality	2.54	0.65	.251	3.93	< .001**	[1.89, 3.81]	2.19
Governing Capacity	3.11	0.96	.298	3.25	< .001**	[2.15, 4.98]	2.36
Transnational Factors	1.60	0.52	.159	3.09	.002**	[1.08, 2.62]	1.45

Note. B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient; CI = confidence interval; VIF = variance inflation factor.

Source: Computed from own survey data (2025)

As indicated in the table, a unit increase in women's self-readiness and institutional support results in 6.69 unit increase in the effectiveness of gender justice policy. In a similar vein, a unit increase in sociocultural factors improves the effectiveness of the gender justice policy by 1.1 units. Likewise, a unit increase in policy quality drives effectiveness of gender justice policy effectiveness by 2.54 units. Finally, a unit increase in governing capacity and transnational factors improves the effectiveness of the gender justice policy by approximately 3.11 units and 1.60 units, respectively.

The model also indicates that all predictors exert a positive and statistically significant influence on the effectiveness of gender justice policy implementation. However, their relative magnitudes and explanatory roles differ substantially, revealing important insights into the dynamics of gender justice. Among the predictors, women's self-readiness combined with institutional support emerges as the most influential factor ($\beta = 0.626$, $p < .001$), suggesting a substantively large effect size relative to other variables. This finding underscores that gender justice outcomes are not driven by institutional arrangements alone, nor by individual empowerment in isolation, but rather by their synergistic interaction. In other words, empowering women without supportive institutions yields limited results, just as strong institutions cannot be fully effective in the absence of capable and confident female actors. This interaction helps explain why this combined variable dominates the model.

Governing capacity ($\beta = 0.298$, $p < .001$) and policy quality ($\beta = 0.251$, $p < .001$) also demonstrate comparatively strong effects, indicating that institutional effectiveness remains a critical pillar of gender justice. However, their relatively smaller coefficients compared to the combined agency–

institution variable suggest that formal structures alone are insufficient unless complemented by active participation and readiness at the individual level.

By contrast, sociocultural factors ($\beta = 0.108$, $p = 0.022$) and transnational influences ($\beta = 0.159$, $p = 0.002$) exhibit more modest, though still statistically significant effects. This pattern suggests that while sociocultural transformation and global engagement contribute to gender justice, their impact is indirect and mediated through institutional and individual-level mechanisms. Deeply embedded norms, for instance, may shape behavior over the long term but are less immediately responsive to policy interventions.

Importantly, while the regression results demonstrate strong associations between the five predictors and gender justice outcomes, they should be interpreted with caution in terms of causality. The cross-sectional nature of the data limits definitive causal claims; rather, the findings indicate robust relationships consistent with theoretical expectations.

Overall, the results support a multi-dimensional and interactional understanding of gender justice, where outcomes are shaped by the interplay between individual agency, institutional capacity, sociocultural context, and transnational influences. This reinforces the argument that effective gender justice policies must adopt an integrated approach that simultaneously addresses these interdependent dimensions.

The results further demonstrated that no significant multicollinearity problem existed among the predictor variables, namely self-readiness and institutional support (VIF=2.69), sociocultural factors (VIF=1.99), policy quality (VIF=2.19), governing capacity (VIF=2.36), and transnational factors (VIF=1.45) as all of the Variance Inflation Factors were substantially below the commonly accepted cutoff value of 5. These findings indicate that the independent variables were sufficiently independent and did not exhibit problematic intercorrelations that could undermine the stability and interpretability of the regression estimates.

Summary of key findings

The findings indicate that Ethiopia has made notable but uneven progress in advancing gender justice. While policy frameworks and institutional commitments are well established, their translation into practice remains limited, resulting in persistent gender disparities across economic, political, institutional, and sociocultural domains.

Performance varies across dimensions. Organizational representation shows moderate improvement, while economic, political, and sociocultural justice remain at slightly low levels. Political representation is stronger at the federal level but declines significantly at regional and local levels, indicating uneven institutional capacity and implementation gaps.

The study further reveals that women's self-readiness and institutional support constitute the most influential determinants of gender justice, followed by governing capacity and policy quality. Sociocultural and transnational factors, although significant, exert comparatively weaker and more indirect effects.

Despite gradual shifts in attitudes, deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, structural inequalities, and institutional constraints continue to limit women's full participation and empowerment. Systemic barriers—such as glass ceilings, weak enforcement mechanisms, and limited access to leadership opportunities—remain pervasive.

Overall, the results confirm that gender justice in Ethiopia is progressing but remains moderate, uneven, and structurally constrained.

Conclusions

This study advances five key conclusions.

First, gender justice in Ethiopia is mainly characterized by a persistent implementation gap. While constitutional and policy commitments are strong, their realization remains limited, highlighting a disconnect between formal intentions and practical outcomes.

Second, gender justice outcomes are best explained through a multi-dimensional and interactional framework. Among the determinants, the combined effect of women's self-readiness and institutional support emerges as the most influential, underscoring that sustainable progress requires the alignment of individual agency with enabling institutional structures.

Third, governance factors—particularly governing capacity and policy quality—play a decisive but insufficient role. Effective institutions are necessary, but they cannot independently overcome deeply embedded sociocultural constraints.

Fourth, gender justice exhibits significant intergovernmental disparities, with performance declining from federal to local levels. This finding points to structural asymmetries in capacity, political commitment, and accountability across tiers of governance.

Fifth, the findings suggest that sociocultural norms and attitudes may continue to influence opportunities and outcomes related to gender justice. Although the results indicate signs of gradual progress, changes in sociocultural practices and beliefs appear to evolve more slowly than institutional reforms.

The overall insight is that the findings contribute to the ongoing “governance versus culture” debate by demonstrating that gender justice cannot be achieved through institutional reforms alone, nor through cultural change in isolation. Rather, it is the dynamic interaction between governance capacity, policy quality, individual agency, and sociocultural transformation

that determines outcomes. In this regard, gender justice should be understood not as a linear policy achievement, but as a complex, multi-level process requiring synchronized change across structural, institutional, and normative domains.

While this study is situated within the Ethiopian context, its findings reflect broader patterns observed across Sub-Saharan Africa. Empirical evidence indicates that many African countries have recorded notable gains in women's descriptive representation; however, these advances have not consistently translated into substantive empowerment or meaningful socio-economic equality (Yacob-Haliso & Falola, 2021). In a manner similar to Ethiopia, formal institutional commitments often coexist with limited implementation capacity and enduring sociocultural constraints that hinder effective gender transformation. Structural barriers such as the glass ceiling, glass cliff effects, and occupational segregation are therefore not uniquely Ethiopian phenomena but rather part of a wider regional challenge in converting political "critical mass" into tangible gender justice outcomes (Onditi & Odera, 2017). Against this backdrop, the present study contributes not only to national policy discourse but also to the broader field of African gender studies by demonstrating how governance capacity, institutional effectiveness, and sociocultural dynamics interact to shape gender justice outcomes across comparable political and developmental contexts.

Recommendations

The evidence suggests that advancing gender justice requires both immediate institutional reforms and sustained structural transformation. Accordingly, the recommendations are organized into short-term and long-term priorities to reflect differences in feasibility, time horizon, and transformative potential.

Short-Term / Technical Priorities (Immediate Impact: 1–3 years): These interventions are high-feasibility, institution-driven, and capable of producing quick, measurable improvements, particularly at regional and local levels where gaps are most pronounced.

1. Institutionalize gender justice performance benchmarking: It requires establishing mandatory benchmarking systems across all levels of government to address intergovernmental disparities. Regional and local administrations should be required to meet nationally defined standards, supported by periodic evaluation and transparent reporting.
2. Strengthen institutional capacity through enforceable implementation frameworks: this implies translating policy commitments into action by adopting legally binding implementation guidelines, with clear accountability structures, coordination mechanisms, and monitoring systems.

3. Convert political commitment into measurable accountability: This needs to be integrated into performance evaluation systems for senior officials. Link leadership appraisal, promotion, and resource allocation to demonstrated progress in gender outcomes.
4. Improve policy quality through mandatory feasibility assessments: This calls for introducing ex-ante policy screening to assess institutional capacity, resource availability, coordination requirements, and enforcement mechanisms before policy adoption. Medium- to Long-Term / Structural Priorities (Transformational Impact: 3–10 years): These interventions address deep-rooted structural and sociocultural constraints, which are slower to change but essential for sustainable gender justice.
5. Invest in women’s leadership incubation and empowerment: It focuses on developing targeted programs for mid-career women to strengthen self-efficacy, leadership skills, negotiation capacity, and strategic influence, enabling progression into decision-making roles.
6. Implement comprehensive sociocultural transformation strategies: It calls for mainstream gender justice across education and community systems, and working closely with religious institutions. Furthermore, it requires promoting sustained public awareness campaigns to challenge entrenched patriarchal norms and reshape societal attitudes.
7. Strengthen transnational engagement with domestic ownership: It triggers leveraging international frameworks, partnerships, and best practices while ensuring alignment with national priorities, local ownership, and institutional accountability.

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Declaration for Human Participants

This study was undertaken in full compliance with internationally recognized ethical standards governing research involving human participants. Core ethical principles—including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and protection from potential harm—were carefully upheld throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, formal academic authorization and a supportive letter were secured from the Department of Policy Study of Ethiopian Public Service University; referenced DPS/600 dated 07 February, 2025.

To ensure transparency and informed participation, the introductory section of the questionnaire clearly explained the objectives of the study, the intended use of the data, and the confidentiality safeguards applied to participants' responses. Likewise, informed consent for interviews was obtained verbally, and participation was based entirely on the free will and voluntary agreement of the officials involved. To further protect participants' privacy, no personal identifiers were collected or recorded, and all information gathered was used exclusively for academic and research purposes.

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