P-ISSN 1410–1831 | E-ISSN 2807–9647

Volume 30 Number 2, July 2025

JURNAL AKUNTANSI DAN KEUANGAN (JAK)

Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis Universitas Lampung, Indonesia

GOOD GOVERNMENT GOVERNANCE IN OVERCOMING POVERTY-FEMINIZATION

Syaharani Noer Fathia[1a], Rona Majidah[2b], Ayu Dwiny Octary[3c], Fatkhur Rohman[4d]

[1234]Accounting Department, Faculty of Economic and Business, Lampung, Indonesia

syaharani.noer@feb.unila.ac.id[a], rona.majidahfeb.unila.ac.id[b], ayu.dwiny@feb.unila.ac.id[c], fatkhurrohman@feb.unila.ac.id[d]

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 05 June 2025;
Accepted: 14 July 2025;
Publish: 30 July 2025;

Volume 30, Number 2
July 2025, pp. 140-150
http://doi.org/10.23960/jak.v30i2.4215

Corresponding author:
Syaharani Noer Fathia
Jalan Prof. Dr Jl. Prof. Dr. Ir. Sumantri Brojonegoro No.1, Kota Bandar Lampung, Lampung, Indonesia
Email: syaharani.noer@feb.unila.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the role of good government governance as a theoretical framework in overcoming Poverty-Feminization. This objective stems from the significant slowdown in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on gender equality, with a progress rate of only 61.5%, categorized as far or very off track as of 2023. The research gap in this study is the in-depth study of poverty, not just poverty as in previous studies in general, but also poverty that is feminized, or centred on and directed at women. Most previous studies tend to highlight poverty from a macroeconomic perspective, such as national income, unequal distribution of resources, or indicators of overall societal welfare without specifically considering gender dimensions. However, poverty has different characteristics when experienced by women, particularly in social, economic, and cultural contexts that place women in a more vulnerable structural position. This study employs a qualitative approach using the literature review method to identify and synthesize empirical findings. Based on a literature review of 16 articles which relevant to the issue risen, it was found that the implementation of good government governance encompassing public participation, accountability, and the rule of law can effectively contribute to reducing the rate of Poverty-Feminization in lower-middle income countries.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Good Government Governance, Poverty-Feminization, SDG-5

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran tata kelola pemerintahan yang baik sebagai kerangka teoritis dalam mengatasi feminisasi kemiskinan. Tujuan ini didasarkan pada perlambatan yang signifikan dalam pencapaian Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (SDG) 5 tentang kesetaraan gender, dengan tingkat kemajuan hanya 61,5%, yang dikategorikan sebagai jauh atau sangat jauh dari target pada tahun 2023. Kesenjangan penelitian dalam studi ini adalah studi mendalam tentang kemiskinan, bukan hanya kemiskinan secara umum seperti dalam studi sebelumnya, tetapi juga kemiskinan yang difeminisasi, atau berpusat pada dan ditujukan kepada perempuan. Sebagian besar studi sebelumnya cenderung menyoroti kemiskinan dari perspektif makroekonomi, seperti pendapatan nasional, distribusi sumber daya yang tidak merata, atau indikator kesejahteraan masyarakat secara keseluruhan tanpa mempertimbangkan dimensi gender secara spesifik. Namun, kemiskinan memiliki karakteristik yang berbeda ketika dialami oleh perempuan, terutama dalam konteks sosial, ekonomi, dan budaya yang menempatkan perempuan dalam posisi struktural yang lebih rentan. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode tinjauan literatur untuk mengidentifikasi dan mensintesis temuan empiris. Berdasarkan tinjauan literatur terhadap 16 artikel yang relevan dengan isu yang dibahas, ditemukan bahwa implementasi tata kelola pemerintahan yang baik yang mencakup partisipasi publik, akuntabilitas, dan supremasi hukum dapat secara efektif berkontribusi dalam mengurangi tingkat Kemiskinan yang Berorientasi pada Perempuan di negara-negara berpendapatan menengah ke bawah.

Kata Kunci: *Kesetaraan Gender, Tata Kelola Pemerintahan yang Baik, Feminisasi Kemiskinan, SDG-5*

A. INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to address global challenges through 17 interconnected objectives, one of which is Goal 5 (SDG 5) gender equality. According to the Pryor (2016), the successful realization of SDG 5 has the potential to catalyse progress on at least three other goals, demonstrating its pivotal role in accelerating the achievement of related objectives toward a more inclusive and sustainable development framework. Conversely, any stagnation in achieving SDG 5 could significantly hinder the attainment of other key goals, particularly SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 8 (inclusive and sustainable economic growth), and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities).

Data reported in the SDGs Report Special Edition highlight growing concerns over the feasibility of achieving SDG 5 by 2030, with 61.5% of progress categorized as far or very off track and only 15.4% considered on track (Guterres, 2023). This indicates that the global trajectory toward gender equality is far from sufficient and may require extended timelines to meet the intended targets. Consequently, the poverty-feminization a phenomenon disproportionately affecting women remains a pressing issue, particularly in lower-middle-income countries. The poverty-feminization is a condition in which women become the most vulnerable group to experiencing structural poverty as a result of economic and political (Albelda, 2023; Bradshaw, Chant, & Linneker, 2019). According to data released by UnitedNations (2023) the average poverty rate for women across registered countries is 5–10% higher than that of men. Countries such as Indonesia, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Kenya, and Pakistan demonstrate the widest disparities, with poverty rates among women exceeding those of men by 10–20%.

In Indonesia, one of the primary drivers of Poverty-Feminization, as reported by the Central Bureau of Statistics is the low female labor force participation rate (TPAK), recorded at only 54.42%, significantly trailing behind the male rate of 83.38%. This substantial gap highlights women's limited access to economic opportunities (BPS, 2023). Gender inequality, which perpetuates the poverty-feminization, can be mitigated through gender equality grounded in the principles of good government governance. Previous studies did not explicitly show that poverty among women with aspen was due to poor good governance, so the poverty-feminization was centred on general reasons such as Mukhopadhyay (2014) emphasizes the importance of equitable public policies and institutional frameworks to empower women. Similarly, Butler, Tavits, and Hadzic (2023) highlight how biased policies exacerbate women's limited access across various sectors. Research by Ali, Ambiya, and Dash (2023) reveals a positive correlation between inclusive governance and good governance indices with the reduction of gender inequality in South Asian countries. Collectively, these studies underscore that a gender mainstreaming framework integrated with the principles of good government governance can effectively address Poverty-Feminization in lower-middle-income countries, thereby reducing gender disparities and accelerating the achievement of the SDGs toward sustainable global development.

By critically assessing good government governance principles namely public participation, accountability, and rule of law, this study aims to provide a conceptual foundation for policy interventions targeting Poverty-Feminization. Through a systemic review of 15 peer-reviewed studies relevant to the risen issue, it seeks to chart the mechanisms through which governance principles bolster gender-responsive policymaking. Such an analytical lens not only enriches the academic discourse but also offers actionable insights for practitioners and policymakers striving to translate SDG commitments into tangible, equitable outcomes for the most vulnerable women to overcoming the Poverty-Feminization.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in John Rawls's Theory of Social Justice, which emphasizes the equitable distribution of social and economic resources to maximize benefits for the most vulnerable groups. Rawls (1971) asserts that social and economic inequalities are unjustifiable if they disadvantage those who are less fortunate. The concept of gender mainstreaming, when embedded within the principles of good government governance, aligns seamlessly with this framework by positioning the state as a facilitator of public participation, accountability, and rule of law. Such governance ensures equitable access to resources, services, and decision-making processes for all citizens particularly women, who are disproportionately marginalized.

The poverty-feminization extends beyond income metrics to encompass systemic exclusion, time poverty, and capability deficiencies. Structural drivers include persistent gender wage gaps, occupational segregation into low-paid informal and precarious employment, and the heavy burden of unpaid care work. Women globally account for around 60% of part-time workers and a similar share in informal labor markets, limiting their access to secure, adequately compensated employment. Poverty-Feminization contributes to adverse health outcomes, restricted educational opportunities for women, heightened vulnerability to violence and exploitation, and economic dependency that, in turn, perpetuate intergenerational poverty and hinder broader societal development. In sum, the literature portrays the poverty-feminization as a structural phenomenon deeply entwined with gender norms, labor market inequalities, unpaid care burdens, and inadequate policy safeguards. Effective responses demand not only gender-aware economic metrics but also robust institutional reforms, social safety nets, and legal protections that can dismantle systemic constraints and empower women—particularly in lower-middle-income contexts where the poverty-feminization is most entrenched.

In this regard, Good Government Governance serves as a critical foundation for overcoming these challenges. Principles such as public participation, accountability, and rule of law create an enabling environment for gender-responsive policies and equitable resource allocation. By fostering public participation, governments can ensure that women's voices are integrated into policy formulation and budgetary processes, thereby aligning development strategies with their specific needs. Accountability mechanisms, in turn, reduce the risks of policy capture and ensure that poverty alleviation programs are effectively implemented and monitored. Moreover, adherence to the rule of law strengthens women's access to justice and property rights, mitigating systemic barriers that perpetuate economic dependency.

Good Government Governance is considered strategic when the state openly enables public participation across all sectors, ensuring that every societal group can contribute meaningfully to policy processes. This inclusivity, coupled with strong government accountability, ensures that institutional actions are transparent and responsive. However, for such a framework to be effective, it must be underpinned by robust law enforcement to guarantee that implementation aligns with established policies and legal standards. Despite its potential, many lower-middle-income countries have yet to fully operationalize strategic governance principles, exacerbating gender inequality and the poverty-feminization. This persistent disparity manifests not only as women's disproportionate economic vulnerability but also as entrenched income inequality between men and women. As highlighted by Chant (2016) income disparities persist even when women carry workloads comparable to men, while Kabeer (2016) argues that patriarchal social structures often unchallenged by enforceable legal frameworks further entrench these inequities.

The strategic integration of good government governance anchored in public participation, accountability, and the rule of law is therefore critical to advancing inclusive, gender-responsive economic justice (WorldBank, 2021). Weaknesses in these governance pillars impede the reach and effectiveness of public policies, particularly those aimed at assisting impoverished women, thereby reinforcing cycles of Poverty-Feminization (Utami, Ibrahim, & Adnan, 2024). For instance, in Pakistan and Nigeria, limited female participation in public decision-making and the absence of adequate legal protections for women workers perpetuate structural vulnerabilities (Allauddin, Alizai, & Rind, 2020).

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using the literature review method to identify and synthesize empirical findings related to the application of good government governance principles in addressing the Poverty-Feminization and economic inequality in lower-middle income countries. The thematic analysis is selected as it allows the researcher to critically examine prior studies, identify patterns, gaps, and variations in existing research, and analyze the public participation, accountability, and rule of law as good government principles to overcoming Poverty-Feminization.

Data Collection Process

The articles analyzed in this study were obtained through a systematic literature search across leading academic databases, including Scopus, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar. The search was conducted using keywords such as "good government governance," "Poverty-Feminization," "public participation," "accountability," "rule of law, and "in lower-middle income countries." The search was limited to articles that has relevant issue risen published until 2024 highly cited foundational studies prior until 2024 also reviewed to provide a robust theoretical and conceptual framework for the analysis.

Data Selection Criteria

The article selection process was conducted using the following inclusion criteria:

a. Peer-reviewed journal articles published in reputable/non-reputable international or reputable national academic journals;
b. Articles focusing on the application of good government governance principles in overcoming poverty and taking issues in gender related issues that shows disadvantage as a woman;
c. Studies employing qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches to analyse governance and gender-related issues;
d. Articles providing in-depth analyses of institutional frameworks, policy implementations, or governance

models linked to gender equity and economic empowerment.

From an initial search yielding 68 articles, 16 articles were selected for further analysis based on their alignment with the inclusion criteria and their relevance to the integration of good government governance principles in overcoming the Poverty-Feminization.

Research Variables and Measurement Indicators

This study analyzes two main variables, namely:

Table 1. Research Variables and Measurement Indicators

No	Variable	Indicator	Source
1	Good Government Governance	1) Public Participation 2) Accountability 3) Rule of Law	(Adamu, 2023; Altaf, 2019; Bandola-Gill, 2021; Barajas-Sandoval, Botero-Pinzón, Botero, Pinzón-Rondón, & Ruiz-Sternberg, 2023; Chant, 2016; Coccia, 2021; Dar & Shairgojri, 2022; Jindra & Vaz, 2019; Kabeer, 2003; Kaushik, 2022; Klasen, Le, Pieters, & Santos Silva, 2021; Mulugeta, 2021; Riman, Lebo, Ude, & Akpan, 2023; Utami et al., 2024)
2	Poverty-Feminization	1) Income Inequality by Gender 2) Labor Force Participation Rate	

Variables and Indicators Description

1. Good Government Governance

Good governance is frequently associated with effective leadership. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the essential dimensions of good governance include fairness, transparency, accountability, and responsibility. Kurtz and Schrank (2007) in their work Growth and Governance: Models, Measures, and Mechanisms, highlight the relationship between governance quality, the performance of government institutions, and economic development. Their findings indicate that weak governance practices, particularly when dominated by ineffective actions of state officials, tend to generate perception bias and create uncertainty in shaping economic policies. In the context of good governance, the term 'government' does not simply refer to the state or its administrative apparatus. Rather, it denotes a broader system encompassing authority, regulation, and decision-making processes involving multiple stakeholders. Unlike the more limited interpretation of government as a political entity or ruling institution, in the context of good governance, the term expands to include the interaction between the state, civil society, and the private sector in managing public affairs.

Therefore, understanding government within the framework of good governance involves recognizing the mechanisms through which policies are developed, resources are distributed, and accountability is ensured. It highlights not only the roles of elected officials and bureaucrats, but also the systems and structures ensure transparency, public participation, and the rule of law guide the state and citizen interactions. While traditionally government is seen as a top-down authority, in the context of good government governance, it represents a shared responsibility between the state and citizens. Public participation, accountability, and the rule of law are thus essential components of how 'government' functions within a governance system. Good Government Governance is not merely treated as an administrative concept but as a normative framework that determines how public institutions manage resources and respond to citizens' needs. It is operationalized through some dimensions yet in this study three core dimensions needed namely: public participation, accountability, and the rule of law.

a) Public Participation

Good Government Governance emphasizes the active participation of its public in both policy-making and governance processes. Rather than treating the public as passive recipients of state initiatives, this approach acknowledges them as legitimate stakeholders whose input is essential in shaping collective decisions. Through genuine engagement, individuals and communities can express their needs, preferences, and expectations, ensuring government actions reflect not only administrative goals but also the realities of everyday life. As a result, policies developed under participatory governance are more inclusive, responsive, and equitable, as they are rooted in the aspirations and interests of the wider population. This approach also fosters trust between citizens and the state, as transparency and dialogue bridge the gap between rulers and the governed, ultimately reinforcing the legitimacy and sustainability of governance structures (Sari, 2023).

b) Accountability

Accountability requires government officials and state institutions to take full responsibility for their decisions, actions, and the consequences that follow. Accountability extends beyond merely providing explanations;

it demands transparency in the allocation and use of public resources, integrity in the implementation of programs, and honesty in reporting the outcomes of policies. In practice, this means that government agencies must be able to justify how budgets are spent, demonstrate that programs are executed efficiently and fairly, and show evidence of whether policy goals have been achieved. Effective accountability mechanisms not only safeguard against misuse of power and corruption but also foster greater public trust by assuring citizens that their collective interests are being protected. Moreover, accountability serves as a corrective tool, allowing shortcomings in governance to be identified and addressed, thereby strengthening the overall effectiveness and legitimacy of public institutions (Gregory, 2012; Kgobe & Mamokhere, 2021; Sari, 2023).

c) Rule of Law

The rule of law means that everything the government and its agencies do must follow fair and consistent laws that apply to everyone. It means laws should be real and actually followed to make sure everyone is treated equally, that human rights are protected, and that people can trust the system. Under this idea, no one is above the law, not even government workers, which stops people from using power unfairly. A solid rule of law helps keep society stable by making sure the legal system is clear and reliable in all areas of life. It also builds trust in public institutions by making sure justice is fair and available to everyone, especially women and those who are often left out. Following the rule of law also helps the country grow in a healthy way, by making sure people can own property, keep promises, and are protected from unfair treatment and cheating. In the bigger picture of good government, the rule of law is not just something the law requires and it's also a tool for making society fair and fixing unfair situations, such inequality (Coccia, 2021; Farah, Elias, Aguilera, & Abi Saad, 2021).

2. Poverty-Feminization

The concept of the *poverty-feminization* first emerged in the late 1970s in the United States, when researchers observed the growing prevalence of female-headed households and their disproportionately high poverty rates (Pearce, 1978). This shifts highlighted gender as a critical determinant of poverty, alongside traditional factors such as class and race. Studies have shown that female-headed households often reflect intergenerational cycles of poverty, particularly among women who experienced early childbearing or discontinued their education, limiting their access to stable employment opportunities. As a result, such households are structurally disadvantaged in the labor market, with fewer income earners and reduced capacity to accumulate resources, making them more vulnerable to persistent poverty. Moreover, the classification of female headship into *de jure* (women managing households entirely alone, often as widows, divorcees, or separated) and *de facto* (where male partners are present but unable or unwilling to contribute economically) further illustrates the diversity of challenges faced by these households. In many developing countries, the majority of female-headed households belong to the *de jure* category, underscoring the compounded economic burden borne by women who must sustain their families with minimal institutional or financial support (Kaushik, 2022) (Perera & Sewwandi, 2025).

a) Income Inequality by gender

The poverty-feminization is closely tied to gender-based income inequality, which highlights differences in wages, access to economic opportunities, and involvement in stable employment. Women, particularly in lower-middle-income countries, often earn considerably less than men for comparable roles, a gap perpetuated by occupational segregation that channels women into informal, low-wage, or care-based sectors. This ongoing income disparity hinders women's ability to build wealth, invest in education or healthcare, and attain economic independence, thereby perpetuating cycles of poverty across generations. Female-headed households are especially vulnerable, as they often rely on a single, lower income sources and lack of adequate social protection expose them to economic shocks. When governance systems fail to mandate equal pay, prevent discrimination, and ensure inclusive participation, wage inequality becomes entrenched, marginalizing women and deepening national inequalities. Consequently, gendered income inequality not only intensifies the poverty-feminization but also hinders inclusive economic growth, emphasizing the vital role of effective governance in reducing wage gaps and fostering more equitable opportunities for women (Kabeer, 2021; Nyangchak, 2025)

b) Labor Force Participation Rate

Gender disparities in labor force participation rates, limited engagement as a woman in the labor market significantly reduces their access to income and economic security. In many lower-middle-income countries, women's labor force participation remains substantially lower than men's due to structural barriers such as unequal access to education and skills training, cultural norms that prioritize domestic responsibilities, and inadequate childcare or maternity protection policies. This exclusion from formal employment channels forces many women into informal or vulnerable work, which is characterized by low wages, limited benefits, and an absence of legal protection. As a result, women not only contribute less to household income but also face reduced opportunities for career advancement, pension security, and long-term financial stability, reinforcing cycles of poverty across generations. Moreover, governance failures in ensuring equal opportunities, enforcing labor rights, and dismantling discriminatory practices further institutionalize these participation gaps. Consequently, low female labor force participation perpetuates poverty-feminization while also stalling inclusive economic growth, making gender-responsive governance essential to expanding women's participation in productive sectors (Kabeer, 2021; Mukhopadhyay, 2014).

Analysis Technique

After the relevant articles were screened, the analytical technique applied was thematic analysis. This method enabled the researcher to identify and categorize recurring themes related to the two main variables: Good Government Governance (with indicators of public participation, accountability, and rule of law) and Poverty-Feminization (with indicators of income inequality by gender and labor force participation rate). The analysis was conducted by mapping the findings from previous studies to these variables and indicators in order to capture the extent to which Good Government Governance principles are associated with the persistence or mitigation of Poverty-Feminization in lower-middle-income countries. Thematic coding was used to synthesize patterns, highlight consistencies and divergences across studies, and provide an integrated understanding of the relationship between Good Government Governance principles and the poverty-feminization**.**

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Public Participation and Poverty-Feminization

Public participation is a crucial part of good government governance. It allows people, especially those more vulnerable like women, to have a voice in decision-making and equal power with men. Many are skeptical that poverty stems from women being naturally weaker and inferior to men. When we consider the issue of women being poorer than men, public participation from women itself is crucial. Public participation helps address two major issues skepticism about poverty-feminization: the unfair income gap between men and women, and the fact that fewer women are employed. However, some lower-middle-income countries, such as those in Africa, have been able to counter these concerns with facts. A clear example is Rwanda, even though it is only recently considered a low-middle-income country, it has done very well in including women in public life. Rwanda set a rule that at least 30% of the seats in its parliament must be held by women and the results shows led to over 60% of the parliament being women(UN Woman, 2021) This aligns with a 2021 World Bank report, which showed Rwanda experiencing a decline in poverty rates, from 11.2% in 2020, 10.97% in 2021, and 10.49% in 2022.

This decline is a result of the expanded opportunities for women to serve in the Rwandan parliament WorldBank (2025) In Kenya, having more women that working in government sector has led to policies that help women workers, like programs to support childcare for those working in informal jobs, so that its influence has succeeded in encouraging around 71% of women of productive age to be economically active to participate in decent work in Kenya (Machio et al., 2024). Support from women for women who have the opportunities and power to work in government has led to a decline in Kenya's poverty rate. This is evidenced by the decline in the poverty rate from 11.22% in 2020 to 10.97% in 2021 (WorldBank, 2025). Although the percentage of poverty reduction in the two example countries is around 1%, if it is continued and opportunities are given more, it can be believed that women themselves can help fight poverty. African countries, often considered underdeveloped, have been able to reduce poverty through women, even though many previously believed they lacked the power to combat poverty. This can be emulated by other countries in the middle-lower income region, especially Asia. Public participation is not only about democracy, but also a useful tool for combating rising poverty among women. Rwanda and Kenya demonstrate that the more women involved in decision-making and given equal opportunities with men, the more they can become champions in overcoming poverty in their countries also overcoming the skepticism of poverty-feminization.

Table 2. Comparative Tables on Public Participation and Poverty-Feminization

Country	Key Governance Measurement	Women's Involvement in Participation	Key Outcome	Impact on Poverty-Feminization
Rwanda	Parliamentary gender quota (≥30% women seats; actual >60%)	61% of parliament members are wome	Poverty rate decreased from 11.2% (2020) → 10.49% (2022)	Women's participation in governance enhanced gender-responsive policies, supporting national poverty reduction
Kenya	Women's participation in public sector and local government	71% female labor force participation rate	Poverty rate dropped from 11.22% (2020) → 10.97% (2021)	Public participation created more inclusive labor policies, enabling women's economic engagement and gradual poverty reduction

Accountability and Poverty-Feminization

Accountability in government means that public leaders and state institutions are held accountable for their decisions and how they use money and resources. This includes how they achieve gender equality across all sectors. When it comes to the increasing number of women living in poverty, accountability ensures that government promises to support equality between men and women are translated into concrete and effective action. Given the prevalence of issues that contribute to poverty in a country, the government must ensure that women receive fair wages and equal employment opportunities with men. Gender equality progress in Vietnam has been rapid since 2020, with the poverty rate declining by 0.3% from 2020 to (WorldBank, 2025). In 2021, Vietnam's female labor force participation rate reached 69.64% (TradingEconomics, 2025). This relatively high participation rate is due to the government's dedicated accountability efforts to support women, particularly in rural areas. For example, women have been provided with agricultural training and access to small loans to help them start businesses. This accountability establishes a system to reduce the existing gap. This contrasts sharply with Nigeria, where the government's lack of accountability for gender equality has resulted in women earning 20-30% less than men despite equal workloads.

As of September 2024, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported that Nigerian women account for 70 percent of Nigeria's poorest population, with women earning 45 percent less than men. Women's lower earnings contribute to higher poverty rates among female-headed households, limiting economic mobility (Ezeh, 2025). Although several laws and policies have been established, their impact remains limited due to weak enforcement and inadequate monitoring mechanisms. It is therefore crucial for the government to strengthen implementation and ensure strict adherence to these legal frameworks. Effective enforcement could help eliminate persistent biases in wage distribution. One practical measure would be the publication of regular audit reports by both government agencies and private institutions on the gender pay gap. In addition, imposing stricter sanctions for violations and reinforcing labor inspection systems would contribute significantly to narrowing wage disparities between men and women. The contrasting forms of accountability through policies within each country's government demonstrates that good government governance centered on accountability is crucial for reducing poverty, especially among women. Poverty among women is not a natural occurrence but rather a product of the existing system, and only that system can eliminate poverty-feminization.

Table 3. Comparative Tables on Accountability and Poverty-Feminization

Country	Key Governance Measurement	Women's Involvement in Accountability Mechanisms	Key Outcome	Impact on Poverty-Feminization
Vietnam	Gender accountability through rural women's empowerment programs	Agricultural training, microcredit access, and gender-sensitive policy implementation; Female labor force participation: 69.64%	Female labor force participation: 69.64% (2021); Poverty rate decreased by 0.3%	Strengthened women's economic participation and autonomy, reducing vulnerability of rural women and narrowing income inequality between genders
Nigeria	Weak accountability in gender wage policies	Limited enforcement and poor wage monitoring; Women earn 20–30% less than men	70% of the poorest population are women; wage disparity of 45%	Worsened feminization of poverty due to systemic wage discrimination, lack of protection for female workers, and minimal institutional accountability

Rule of Law and Poverty-Feminization

The Rule of Law means that society adheres to equal, fair, clear, and enforceable rules. Given that women are more likely to live in poverty than men, law enforcement is crucial for ensuring women's long-term well-being. Having equal rights with men is one way to achieve this. Laws enacted by the government reflect good government governance if they are enforceable and difficult to circumvent. If laws are not properly enforced, women can lose their rights that support their livelihoods and face unfair treatment everywhere. Philippines is a country striving to improve law enforcement to ensure greater equality for women. In 2009, they passed the Magna Carta for Women, a landmark law guaranteeing equal rights in school, employment, and property ownership. This law has helped protect working women, providing them with maternity leave and preventing unfair treatment in the workplace. According to the Global Gender Gap WEF (2025) the Philippines ranks 16th globally in gender equality, demonstrated by its achievement of 99.9% parity in education for women. Clear enforcement of laws promoting gender equality, particularly for women, has been shown to reduce the poverty rate in the Philippines by 5% by 2023 (WorldBank, 2025).

Furthermore, after the 2011 revolution, Egypt committed to complying with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Research by Afriandi, Putri, and Harza (2022) indicates that Egypt complied with CEDAW from 2011 to 2021, as evidenced by national policies, government collaboration with international organizations, national strategies, and government programs related to women's equality and protection. This compliance was further bolstered by the establishment of the Strategy for Egyptian Women in 2030. The Egyptian government has taken various steps to implement gender equality in the country. One such step is the issuance of Law No. 30 of 2018 mandates the National Council for Women (NCW) as one of the institutions responsible for implementing women's empowerment programs and proposing responsive policies to facilitate women's empowerment. This law enforcement, among other things, demonstrates an increase in gender parity across various sectors. Although this increase remains small, Egypt is trending upward, as evidenced by an increase in its gender gap ranking from 134th to 129th in 2020 to 2021 (the closer the number is to 1, the smaller the gap) (Afriandi et al., 2022). In line with this, the poverty rate also decreased by 0.6%. Although this figure is small, efforts to enforce the law through good government governance indicate positive change (WorldBank, 2025). Both countries demonstrate that strong law enforcement is crucial for reducing inequality and helping more women gain opportunities to support themselves and have a future. Therefore, the rule of law is crucial in overcoming poverty-feminization that detrimental to women.

Table 4. Comparative Tables on Rule of Law and Poverty-Feminization

Country	Key Governance Measurement	Women's Involvement in Accountability Mechanisms	Key Outcome	Impact on Poverty-Feminization
Philippines	Enforcement of gender equality through Magna Carta for Women (2009) ensuring fair treatment in education, employment, and property rights	High representation of women in legal and policy sectors; active advocacy networks supporting women's legal rights	Achieved 99.9% gender parity in education; Poverty rate decreased by 5% by 2023	Strong legal protection enhanced women's access to work and education, improving household income stability and reducing female poverty vulnerability
Egypt	Commitment to CEDAW and implementation of Strategy for Egyptian Women 2030; Law No. 30 of 2018 established NCW's authority in women's empowerment	Increasing number of women in legal advisory and policy institutions under NCW supervision	Gender gap ranking improved from 134th to 129th (2020–2021); Poverty rate declined by 0.6%	Gradual improvement in women's legal empowerment; small yet positive reduction in feminized poverty through stronger enforcement and institutional inclusion

Based on the analysis of the three main dimensions of good government governance, namely public participation, accountability, and rule of law against poverty-feminization - it can be concluded that all three have complementary contributions in reducing poverty-feminization in lower-middle-income countries. The following is a summary table:

Table 5. Summary of Research Findings

Good Government Governance Principles	Overall Impact on Poverty-Feminization			Signification
	Mechanism Affecting Women	Effect on Income Inequality	Effect on Labor Participation	
Public Participation	Increases women's representation and policy influence	Reduces gender bias in wage-setting and social programs	Expands access to formal employment	Positive: Inclusive decision-making by women reduces poverty gap
Accountability	Ensures fair implementation and monitoring of gender policies	Decreases wage disparity and promotes income justice	Strengthens gender-targeted employment initiatives	Positive when accountability is strong
Rule of Law	Protects women's legal and economic rights	Equalizes access to resources and opportunities	Encourages long-term female workforce inclusion	Positive: enhances equality and economic security for women

E. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

This study shows that the poverty-feminization in lower-middle-income countries is a structural phenomenon rooted in gender inequality in economic access and social participation. Income inequality between men and women and low female labor force participation rates are two key indicators that demonstrate how women experience economic vulnerability more disproportionately. The application of good government governance principles has proven to play a strategic role in addressing this issue as the following:

1. Public participation ensures that women's voices are channeled into the decision-making process, making policies more responsive to their needs.
2. Accountability ensures that government policies and programs are effectively implemented to support the reduction of gender disparities.
3. The rule of law is a crucial foundation for protecting women's rights, ensuring equal access to resources, and enforcing legal protection in the workplace.

From a practical standpoint, the findings emphasize that the effective implementation of good governance principles can serve as a transformative policy approach for reducing gender inequality and promoting economic inclusion. Strengthening public participation ensures that women's perspectives are integrated into decision-making, resulting in policies that genuinely reflect their socioeconomic realities. Enhanced accountability mechanisms guarantee that gender-responsive programs are not only designed but also properly executed and evaluated, ensuring tangible outcomes in narrowing income and employment gaps. Moreover, a strong rule of law framework is essential to safeguard women's rights particularly in areas of wage equality, property ownership, and workplace protection thus creating an enabling environment for equitable economic participation. Therefore, it can be concluded that the integration of good government governance principles is a key foundation for reducing the poverty-feminization. Increased public participation, accountability, and rule of law can strengthen women's position in the economy, reduce gender inequality, and encourage the achievement of more inclusive and sustainable development.

Implication

Theoretically, this study contributes to the expansion of governance and gender studies by framing the poverty-feminization as an institutional issue rather than merely an economic one. While prior research has often examined poverty through macroeconomic indicators such as income disparity and employment rates, this study emphasizes that these inequalities are sustained by weak governance systems and inadequate gender mainstreaming in public institutions for both genders. Practically, this study provides valuable insights for policymakers, public institutions, and development agencies working in lower-middle-income countries. The findings demonstrate that implementing Good Government Governance can serve as an effective strategy to mitigate poverty-feminization and promote gender-inclusive economic growth especially in women from middle-income country.

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