



A Research Protocol to Investigate the Gendered Dimensions of Clinical Practice and Healthcare Access in Gabon,

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Published: 03 July 2009 | **Received:** 19 February 2009 | **Accepted:** 07 May 2009

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.18531378](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18531378)

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Abstract

Gender significantly influences health outcomes, but its specific impact on clinical practice and healthcare access in Gabon is not well understood. An analysis of how gender norms shape patient experiences, clinical decisions, and navigation of the health system in this context is needed. This protocol describes a study to investigate the gendered dimensions of medicine in Gabon. Its primary objectives are to: 1) analyse gender disparities in access to reproductive and general healthcare; 2) explore the influence of gender on clinician-patient interactions; and 3) examine how gender roles affect health-seeking behaviours and treatment adherence. A mixed-methods design will be used. It will comprise a systematic literature review and primary data collection. The primary phase will involve cross-sectional surveys with patients and healthcare providers, followed by in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders. Quantitative data will be analysed for statistical associations, and qualitative data will undergo thematic analysis. As this is a protocol, no empirical findings are presented. Preliminary literature scoping suggests a dominant theme is the under-reporting of gender-based barriers in maternal health, with indications of gendered differences in the use of preventative services. The study is expected to generate a nuanced evidence base on gender and healthcare in Gabon, addressing a critical knowledge gap to inform more gender-responsive health policy and clinical practice. Anticipated recommendations will target health policy reform, clinical guideline development, and the design of gender-sensitive health promotion programmes. Specific strategies for improving equitable access and patient-centred care will be proposed. Gender, Healthcare Access, Clinical Practice, Gabon, Sub-Saharan Africa, Health Equity, Mixed Methods This protocol provides a

structured methodological framework for investigating gender in medicine within a Central African setting, aiming to strengthen locally relevant research capacity and evidence.

Keywords: *Gender, Healthcare Access, Sub-Saharan Africa, Clinical Practice, Sex Differences, Health Equity, Qualitative Research*

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