



| Research Article/ Araştırma Makalesi |

The Impact of Economic Indicators on Education Level of Women in Developing Countries

Gelişmekte Olan Ülkelerde Ekonomik Göstergelerin Kadınların Eğitim Düzeyi Üzerindeki Etkisi¹

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Keywords

1. Gender Equality
2. Education Level of Women
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Anahtar Kelimeler

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Abstract

Purpose: In the context of developing countries, it is to test the effect of economic factors such as per capita income, poverty level and income distribution unfairness on the education level of women.

Methodology: In the study; cross-section analysis was performed by establishing a multiple regression model within the context of 82 developing countries included in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 2019 Human Development Report. While the dependent variable in the model is the proportion of women population aged 25 and over with at least secondary education (%), the independent variables are composed of economic variables such as the multidimensional poverty index, the inequality in income (%) and the gross national income per capita. The data are taken from UNDP's Human Development Report 2019.

Findings: As expected as a result of the cross-section analysis, it was determined that as the income distribution unfairness and poverty increased, the proportion of women population aged 25 and over with at least secondary education (%) decreased, but as the level of gross national income per capita raised, the proportion of women population aged 25 and over with at least secondary education (%) also increased.

Highlights: In developing countries, if the income distribution injustice and poverty are effectively tackled, gender inequality in education can be reduced more easily.

Öz

Çalışmanın amacı: Gelişmekte olan ülkeler bağlamında, kişi başına gelir, yoksulluk düzeyi ve gelir dağılımı adaletsizliği gibi ekonomik faktörlerin kadınların eğitim düzeyine etkisini test etmektir.

Yöntem: Çalışmada Birleşmiş Milletler Kalkınma Programı (UNDP)'nin 2019 yılı İnsani Gelişme Raporunda yer alan 82 gelişmekte olan ülke kapsamında, çoklu regresyon modeli kurularak yatay kesit analizi yapılmıştır. Modelde bağımlı değişken, en az ortaöğretim eğitimi almış 25 yaş ve üstü kadınların oranı (%) iken, bağımsız değişkenler çok boyutlu yoksulluk endeksi, gelir eşitsizliği oranı (%) ve kişi başına düşen gayri safi milli gelir gibi ekonomik değişkenlerden oluşmaktadır. Veriler UNDP'nin 2019 yılı İnsani Gelişme Raporundan alınmıştır.

Bulgular: Yapılan yatay kesit analizi sonucunda beklendiği gibi, gelir dağılımı adaletsizliği ve yoksulluk arttıkça, en az ortaöğretim eğitimi almış 25 yaş ve üstü kadınların oranının azaldığı buna karşın, kişi başına düşen gayri safi milli gelir düzeyi yükseldikçe arttığı tespit edilmiştir.

Önemli Vurgular: Gelişmekte olan ülkelerde, gelir dağılımı adaletsizliği ve yoksullukla etkin mücadele edilirse, eğitim alanındaki cinsiyet eşitsizlikleri daha kolay azaltılabilecektir.

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INTRODUCTION

Till the nineteenth century, investments in human capital were not seen as an important tool for the welfare and wealth of people, and therefore for the economic development of countries. However, the emergence of new production techniques and the development of new goods and services have led to the need for more educated people. As a result of this, education has emerged as an important factor that increases the human capital level of the society and contributes to its socio-economic development. Despite the effect of education on economic growth, women's education level generally lags behind men due to gender inequalities (Ince, 2011:228-229). However, this situation is contrary to the provision in Article 26 of the universal declaration of human rights that "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages... higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit"..

With the industrialization process, both need for the labor force of economy and the desire and necessity of women to participate in the working life increased the number of working women. While women were employed in jobs that did not require much talent and skill earlier, they were later employed in jobs that require more qualified and training. Of course, this situation has increased the importance of education in women's employment (Özdemir, Noyan Yalman and Bayrakdar, 2012:115). In fact, women's education is the basis of development because women play an important role in the education of children. For this reason, educating women actually means educating future generations (Kayadibi, 2003).

Therefore, one of the main development goals determined both nationally and internationally is to reduce gender inequality in education and other areas (Kandemir and Kürkcü, 2016:74). Increasing the level of welfare due to the development of countries is possible by ensuring that all individuals in the society participate in every stage of production, regardless of gender. Sustainable development can only be achieved by reducing poverty by making women more productive. The importance given to women by countries is an important indicator of their level of development. Generally, the standard of living of men and of women are not equal. This low level of living of women also affects their social status negatively (Tutar and Yetişen, 2009:116-117). The level and type of gender discrimination against women varies according to the development levels of the countries. While gender discrimination in developed countries is mostly about working life, in developing countries, it manifests itself in more basic areas such as violence against women and inability to access education opportunities equally (Demirbilek, 2007:25). The low level of education of women negatively affects their participation in the workforce. However, education and educated workforce are important for economic development. When we look at the countries of the world, the importance given to the education of women in developing countries is relatively low (Tutar and Yetişen, 2009:128). This has led to the goal of eliminating gender inequality to be at the center of international development goals. For example, the third of the eight main objectives is determined in the Millennium Development Goals as "Promote gender equality and empower women", and one of the indicators of this purpose is "the gender ratio in primary, secondary and higher education" (DPT and BMMK, 2010:66). Similarly, the fifth of the 17 development goals among the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals is determined as "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", while the fourth one aims to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". In particular, it emphasized as the sub-target of this article that "gender inequalities in education should be ended until 2030" (UN, 2015).

Due to these global targets, countries implement policies to reduce gender inequality and various international indices are published to measure the success of these policies (Kandemir and Kürkcü, 2016:76-77). In these indices, the education dimension of gender inequality is considered as an important indicator. In this context, one of the most important international indicators that reveal the situation of countries regarding gender equality is the Gender Inequality Index included in the Human Development Reports published by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). This index measures inequality between women and men in terms of three dimensions such as health, empowerment and labor market. The empowerment dimension is measured by the percentage of seats each gender has in the parliament and the level of minimum secondary education (UNDP, 2019b). Another index is the Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum. This index shows gender inequality under four sub-indices such as economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment (World Economic Forum, 2020:8). As seen, the education level of women is an important determinant in the calculation of both indices. In addition to these, another index is EFA (Education for All) Development Index published by UNESCO. The index is calculated by taking the arithmetic mean of four components: primary adjusted net enrollment ratio, adult literacy rate for those 15 and above, the gender-specific EFA index (GEI), and the survival rate to grade 5. The gender-specific EFA index (GEI) is measured according to gross enrollment rates in primary and secondary education and adult literacy rate (UNESCO, 2012:306-307). Therefore, the education level of women is an important determinant in the calculation of the index.

In this context, this study, which deals with the economic determinants of the education level of women in developing countries that lag far behind in gender equality, is of great importance. In the study, the effect of economic factors such as per capita income, poverty level and income distribution unfairness on the education level of women in the context of developing countries was tested with a multiple linear regression model.

Education Dimension of Gender Inequality in the World

Gender inequalities endure around the world at the regional level. In 2000, the total number of children, adolescents and young people out of school was 378 million, 54% of which were women. As of 2016, thanks to improvements over time, the share of women in the global out-of-school population dropped to 50%. However, as seen in Table 1, these global improvements were not reflected in all regions at the same level, so they showed significant differences at regional and national levels. Sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, continued to be the region with the highest non-school rates for all age groups. This situation is also reflected in gender inequality. When evaluated at the regional level, for all school age groups, girls are more likely to be excluded from education than boys in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2018).

Table 1. Out-of-school children, adolescents and youth of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary age (by region)

Region	Out-of-school rate (%)				Out-of-school number (millions)		
	T	M	F	GPIA	T	M	F
Europe and Northern America	4.3	4.6	3.9	0.85	6.2	3.4	2.8
Latin America and the Caribbean	9.9	10.4	9.4	0.90	12.7	6.8	5.9
Central Asia	7.6	6.8	8.4	1.20	1.0	0.5	0.6
Southern Asia	22.4	21.9	22.8	1.04	95.8	49.2	46.5
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	9.0	9.7	8.2	0.84	31.0	17.6	13.4
Northern Africa and Western Asia	17.1	15.4	18.8	1.18	18.5	8.6	10.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	32.3	29.6	35.1	1.16	96.9	44.7	52.2
Oceania	11.5	12.1	10.8	0.90	0.9	0.5	0.4
World	17.8	17.2	18.5	1.07	263.0	131.3	131.7

Note: GPIA = adjusted gender parity index (female/male out-of-school rate), F:Female, M:Male, T:Total (Both Sexes)

Source: UNESCO, 2018:5.

In low-income countries, it is seen that the rate of those who are out of school is higher due to the fact that the vicious circle of poverty cannot be broken, which is expressed as "Poor → Inadequate education → Low productivity → Low income level → Poverty" (Berber, 2015: 297).

As seen in Table 2, as the income level of countries worldwide decreases, the proportion of both the out-of-school population and the proportion of women among those who are out of school are gradually increasing. While the proportion of those out of school in low-income countries at all school levels is about 33%, it is only about 4% in high-income countries. In parallel with this situation, the proportion of women who are out of school both in the low and low-middle income groups in the world is relatively higher than men. While the rate of women who are out of school at all school levels worldwide is approximately 18.5%, the rate of men is approximately 17.2%. Similarly, the proportion of women who are out of school is 35.8% and 22.6%, respectively, in low- and lower-middle-income countries, while the proportion of men is about 29.9% and 21.3%. When adjusted gender parity index (female / male out-of-school ratio) - (GPIA) values are examined; the fact that this rate is generally above 1 in low and middle income countries indicates that the level of exclusion of women in these countries is higher than that of men.

Table 2. Out-of-school children, adolescents and youth of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary age (by income)

Region	Out-of-school rate (%)				Out-of-school number (millions)		
	T	M	F	GPIA	T	M	F
Low-income countries	32,8	29,9	35,8	1,16	65,7	30,2	35,5
Lower-middle-income countries	21,9	21,3	22,6	1,06	154,9	77,9	77,0
Upper-middle-income countries	8,9	9,3	8,4	0,91	36,4	19,9	16,5
High-income countries	3,8	4,1	3,4	0,83	6,0	3,4	2,6
World	17,8	17,2	18,5	1,07	263,0	131,3	131,7

Note: GPIA = adjusted gender parity index (female/male out-of-school rate), F:Female, M:Male, T:Total (Both Sexes)

Source: UNESCO, 2018:11.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the most important cultural characteristics of underdeveloped countries is the low level of education. In underdeveloped countries where traditions are dominant over the cultural structure, women are generally pushed to the second plan in the society, so the education level of women falls behind men (Taban and Kar, 2016:30-32). Girls' education levels are much lower than boys in many underdeveloped Asian and African countries, which have cultural values fed by religions and traditions because boys are more important than girls in these countries. The reason for this situation is the acceptance that boys have a greater potential to bring income to the household and they are seen as permanent members of the household (Açıkğöz, 2010:53-54).

Economic status is one of the sources of emerging inequality in education. Poverty creates wide education gaps for countries that do not have a universal education system (Filmer, 2008:102-103). The relationship between education and poverty is twofold: While education is an important tool in combating poverty on the one hand, poverty is the main obstacle in front of education on the other hand.

According to the liberal ideology, public education should be free and compulsory around the world. But this is not always a very realistic thinking because school supplies such as books and uniforms required for school are not free of charge in most countries, they are an important expenditure item for the poor (Stromquist, 2001:41).

The underdevelopment issue has led to the widespread use of the vicious circle model. Today, the best known vicious circle model is Nurkse's vicious circle of poverty. This cycle emphasizes that "underdeveloped countries are poor because they are poor" (Han and Kaya, 2008:32; Taban and Kar, 2016:48-49). The vicious circle of education, on the other hand, continues with the return of the process starting with low income, ie poverty, to insufficient education expenditure and vocational training, low productivity and ultimately to low income (poverty) (Han and Kaya, 2008:32). Women in under developed countries experience this vicious circle the most. The way to break the vicious circle is an education system based on equality of opportunity, financed by the public, including women. But still, in underdeveloped regions and countries, economic factors such as poverty appear as the main factor preventing girls' education.

Glick and Sahn (2000) stated in their study on Guinea that the increase in household income has a greater effect on the schooling of girls than boys. In their study, Smits and Huisman (2012) stated that factors such as household wealth and father's occupation are the main determinants of educational participation in six Arab Countries. Stromquist (2001:45), in his study for Latin America emphasized that gender-based division of labor is of fundamental importance for poor families and especially families living in rural areas, that girls in these regions carry out most of the housework and families think that school life will exclude girls from their duties related to these basic housework. Khan and Ali (2003) found that the effect of household income on the enrollment of children in rural Pakistan is higher for girls than boys. Sánchez and Sbrana (2009) found that when the per capita income is higher in Yemen, girls are more likely to receive basic education than boys. Low education levels in developing countries are often associated with high levels of child labor. Families with school-age children cannot afford the income that their children can't bring home when their children attend school and therefore behave reluctantly in this regard. In their study on rural areas of Pakistan, Jacoby and Mansuri (2014) stated that there was an 8% increase in the rate of girls who started school between 2001-2004 and that more than half of this rate could be explained by the significant increase in household income.

METHOD

In this study aiming to reveal the importance of the economic determinants of women's education level in developing countries, a cross-section analysis was performed by establishing a multiple regression model within the scope of 82 developing countries (see Annex Table 6). In the multiple regression model, the dependent variable is the proportion of women aged 25 and over with at least secondary education (%), and the economic determinants considered as independent variables are the multidimensional poverty index, income inequality rate (%) and per capita gross national income. The variables were taken from the 2019 Human Development Report of UNDP and the analyzes were made with the help of the SPSS package program.

The variables used in the model are as follows;

EDUCATION: Population with at least some secondary education, female (% ages 25 and older)

POVERTY: Multidimensional Poverty Index

INEQUALITYINCOME: Inequality in income (%)³

GNIPERCAPITA: Gross national income (GNI) per capita (2011 PPP \$)

In order to avoid a multicollinearity problem while establishing the model, firstly, the correlation coefficients between the variables were examined and the existence of a multicollinearity problem was tried to be determined. The fact that the simple correlation coefficient between two independent variables is quite significant can lead to a multicollinearity problem (Albayrak, 2005:109). As seen in Table 3, a high inverse correlation (-0.740) has been determined between the multidimensional poverty index and the gross national income per capita, so these two variables are separately included in the model. It is expected that poverty will increase as the per capita income in a country decreases. Therefore, it is also suitable for the theory to put these two opposite variables into the model separately.

Table 3. Pearson correlation analysis

		EDUCATION	POVERTY	INEQUALITYINCOME	GNIPERCAPITA
EDUCATION	Pearson Correlation	1	-,777***	-,208	,610***
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,061	,000
	N	82	82	82	82
POVERTY	Pearson Correlation	-,777***	1	,103	-,740***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,359	,000
	N	82	82	82	82
INEQUALITYINCOME	Pearson Correlation	-,208	,103	1	-,073
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,061	,359		,513
	N	82	82	82	82
GNIPERCAPITA	Pearson Correlation	,610***	-,740***	-,073	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,513	
	N	82	82	82	82

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

³It was estimated using the Atkinson inequality index with the help of data obtained from household surveys (UNDP, 2019a:311).

Models:**Model 1- EDUCATION= B₀ + B₁ INEQUALITYINCOME+ B₂ POVERTY****Model 2- EDUCATION= B₀ + B₁ INEQUALITYINCOME+ B₂ GNIPERCAPITA****FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the cross section analysis of the first and second models are given in table 4 and table 5.

Table 4. Linear regression analysis of the first model

Variables	Coefficients		Significant	Tolerans	VIF
	B (Unstandardized Coefficients)	Beta (Standardized Coefficients)			
(Constant) (B ₀)	72,018***		0,000		
INEQUALITYINCOME	-0,336*	-0,130*	0,067	0,989	1,011
POVERTY	-131,806***	-0,763***	0,000	0,989	1,011
R ²	0,620				
Adjusted R ²	0,610				
Anova-Sig.	0,000		D-W:2,000		
EDUCATION = 72,018-0,336 INEQUALITYINCOME -131,806 POVERTY					
*Significant at 10% level, **Significant at 5% level, *** Significant at 1% level.					

Table 5. Linear regression analysis of the second model

Variables	Coefficients		Significant	Tolerans	VIF
	B (Unstandardized Coefficients)	Beta (Standardized Coefficients)			
(Constant) (B ₀)	32,837***		0,000		
INEQUALITYINCOME	-0,426*	-0,164*	0,064	0,995	1,005
GNIPERCAPITA	0,003***	0,598***	0,000	0,995	1,005
R ²	0,399				
Adjusted R ²	0,384				
Anova-Sig.	0,000		D-W:1,980		
EDUCATION = 32,837-0,426 INEQUALITYINCOME +0,003 GNIPERCAPITA					
*Significant at 10% level, **Significant at 5% level, *** Significant at 1% level.					

As can be seen in Tables 4 and 5, VIF values for all variables are less than 10 (Albayrak, 2005) and tolerance values are greater than critical values (1- R²) (For table 4, 1-0,620=0,380, for the table 5,1-0,399=0,601), there is no multicollinearity problem in models (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2017:275).

When Tables 4 and 5 are examined, it is seen that as the income distribution unfairness and poverty increase, the proportion of women aged 25 and over who have at least secondary education decreases, whereas it increases as the level of per capita gross national income increases. In this context, if the income distribution unfairness and poverty are effectively tackled in developing countries, gender inequalities in education can be reduced more easily.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The education levels of women falling behind men in developing countries make it necessary for policy makers to pay more attention to this issue. Many factors such as the cultural structure of the society, traditions and economic conditions are among the reasons underlying the lag behind women in the field of education in underdeveloped countries. Considering that different cultures and lifestyles approach each other over time in the globalizing world process, economic factors remain one of the most important obstacles to gender inequality in education. As a result of the regression analysis conducted in this study, it was determined that the income distribution unfairness and poverty prevented women from participating in the education process, and the per capita income increase had a positive effect. This is in line with the results of national and international analyzes in the literature (Dollar & Gatti, 1999; Glick & Sahn, 2000; Khan & Ali, 2003; Sánchez & Sbrana, 2009 etc.), emphasizing that low income and poverty negatively affect women's education level and thus gender equality.

As a result of the analysis, it can be thought that economic factors explain the participation of women in the education process at least secondary education level by approximately 62% for Model 1 and approximately 40% for Model 2, while the rest depends on other factors such as cultural structure and traditions. For this reason, in order to increase the education level of women, poverty and income distribution unfairness should be tackled more effectively, education processes should be free of charge and in line with equal opportunities.

In addition, as mentioned in the literature (Stromquist, 2001; Smits & Huisman, 2012; Glick & Sahn, 2000 etc.), girls in poor regions undertake most of the housework (such as little child care, clean drinking water, cleaning). For this reason, in order to increase the school attendance rate of girls, the state should provide free nursery support for young children in poor regions, as well as infrastructure services such as garbage collection and clean water supply.

Also studies on the subject show that the education level of the parents, especially the education level of the mother, positively contributed to the education of girls (Smits & Huisman, 2012; Khan & Ali, 2003; Glick & Sahn, 2000; Sánchez & Sbrana, 2009). Therefore, following rigorous policies for the education of a certain generation and being successful in this will make important contributions to the achievement of gender equality for the next generations, especially in the field of education. Undoubtedly, In this way, underdeveloped countries will be able to break the vicious circle of poverty more easily.

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Statements of publication ethics

I hereby declare that the study has not unethical issues and that research and publication ethics have been observed carefully.

Researchers' contribution rate

This research was conducted with a single author. I declare that all actions taken during the research process belong to me.

Ethics Committee Approval Information

Secondary data of UNDP were used in the study. Ethics committee approval is not required for this study.

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Table 6. Developing countries			
No	Country	No	Country
1	Albania	42	Liberia
2	Algeria	43	Malawi
3	Angola	44	Maldives
4	Armenia	45	Mali
5	Bangladesh	46	Mauritania
6	Benin	47	Mexico
7	Bhutan	48	Moldova (Republic of)
8	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	49	Mongolia
9	Bosnia and Herzegovina	50	Montenegro
10	Brazil	51	Morocco
11	Burkina Faso	52	Mozambique
12	Burundi	53	Myanmar
13	Cameroon	54	Namibia
14	Central African Republic	55	Nepal
15	Chad	56	Nicaragua
16	China	57	Niger
17	Colombia	58	North Macedonia
18	Congo	59	Pakistan
19	Congo (Democratic Republic of the)	60	Palestine, State of
20	Côte d'Ivoire	61	Paraguay
21	Dominican Republic	62	Peru
22	Ecuador	63	Philippines
23	Egypt	64	Rwanda
24	El Salvador	65	Saint Lucia
25	Eswatini (Kingdom of)	66	Sao Tome and Principe
26	Ethiopia	67	Senegal
27	Gabon	68	Serbia
28	Gambia	69	Sierra Leone
29	Ghana	70	South Africa
30	Guatemala	71	Sudan
31	Haiti	72	Tajikistan
32	Honduras	73	Tanzania (United Republic of)
33	India	74	Thailand
34	Indonesia	75	Togo
35	Iraq	76	Tunisia
36	Jordan	77	Uganda
37	Kazakhstan	78	Ukraine
38	Kenya	79	Viet Nam
39	Kyrgyzstan	80	Yemen
40	Lao People's Democratic Republic	81	Zambia
41	Lesotho	82	Zimbabwe