

THE EFFECT OF COUNTRIES' DEMOCRACY LEVELS ON THE GLOBAL GENDER GAP: A STUDY ON OECD COUNTRIES*

ÜLKELERİN DEMOKRASİ SEVİYELERİNİN KÜRESEL CİNSİYET UÇURUMA ETKİSİ: OECD ÜLKELERİ ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of countries' democracy levels on the global gender gap. In this context, the Democracy Index prepared by the Economist Intelligence Unit that assesses the quality of democracy in a country and the Global Gender Gap Index published by the World Economic Forum were used to study the given relation. Moreover, the Human Development Index and the Gross Domestic Product were added as independent variables in order to increase the explanatory power of the regression model that examines the effect of the Democracy Index on the Global Gender Gap Index. The sample of the study consists of the OECD countries and the panel data set obtained for these countries covering the years between 2006 and 2018 was tested by regression analysis. As a result, it is concluded that the Democracy Index affects the Global Gender Gap Index negatively while the Human Development Index and the Gross Domestic Product affect the Global Gender Gap Index positively.

Keywords: Global Gender Gap, Democracy, Human Development, Gross Domestic Product, OECD Countries.

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, ülkelerin demokrasi seviyesinin küresel cinsiyet uçurumuna etkisini incelemektir. Bu bağlamda söz konusu ilişkiyi incelemek için The Economist Intelligence Unit tarafından hazırlanan ve bir ülkedeki demokrasinin kalitesini ölçen The Democracy endeksi ile Dünya Ekonomik Forumu tarafından yayınlanan The Global Gender Gap endeksi kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca Demokrasi İndeksinin Global Gender Gap İndeksi üzerindeki etkisini inceleyen regresyon modeline modelin açıklama gücünü artırmak amacıyla Human Development Index ve Gross Domestic Product da bağımsız değişken olarak eklenerek test edilmiştir. Çalışmada örneklem olarak OECD ülkeleri ele alınmış ve bu ülkeler için 2006-2018 yılları arasında elde edilen panel veri seti regresyon analizi ile test edilmiştir. Yapılan testler sonucunda Demokrasi İndeksinin Global Gender Gap İndeksini negatif yönde etkilediği, buna karşın Human Development Index ve Gross Domestic Product'ın Global Gender Gap İndeksini pozitif yönde etkilediği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Küresel Cinsiyet Uçurumu, Demokrasi, İnsani Gelişme, Gayri Safi Milli Hasıla, OECD Ülkeleri

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of countries' democracy levels on the global gender gap. In this context, an evaluation was tried to be made with 3 different independent variables that may affect the countries' ranks on the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI). These variables are the Democracy Index (DI), Human Development Index (HDI), and Gross Domestic Product (GDP-per capita). The reason why the other two indexes were included in the study in addition to the Democracy Index is to increase the explanatory power of the model and to have a more detailed picture of the GGGI. Moreover, the acceptance of the argument that the gender inequality is not only an issue of equality but; more importantly, "a significant economic, commercial, and social issue that has a crucial effect on the development of nations" (Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi, 2005) is another reason why the Human Development Index and the Gross Domestic Product were included into the study.

In essence, the Global Gender Gap Index is quite useful to analyze, on the international level, the differences between men and women in the countries included in the Index (Giron and Correa, 2016: 471).

This context, the Global Gender Gap Report (2018)¹, carried out by the World Economic Forum and presents the results of the measurements on four areas as health, education, politics, and labor force participation, reveals the negativity of the general view of gender inequality. In the 2018 report, it is seen that there is improvement in the areas such eliminating the inequality in wages and political representation in 88 countries out of 149 where the research was conducted. However, in the report, it is stated that it will take more than 100 years to abolish global gender gap in all areas². Moreover, it is anticipated in the same report that Western Europe needs 61 years, South Asia needs 70 years, Latin America and the Caribbean needs 74 years, Sub-Saharan Africa needs 135 years, Eastern Europe and Middle Asia needs 124 years, Middle East and North Africa needs 153 years, Eastern Asia and the Pacific needs 171 years, and North America needs 165 years to close the gap.

When it is considered that the importance and necessity of human rights are often emphasized and that the issue of gender equality has an increasing significance nowadays, it can be stated that this circumstance is not quite acceptable for the humanity. Moreover, the fact that the men have a more advantageous state compared to women has a global dimension once again revealed that it is necessary to examine the variables causing the global gender gap.

In this study, democracy is used as the basic variable to explain the reasons of the gap that we face in the global context because it is expected that women and men will have equal opportunities and possibilities within the same democratic system when it is accepted that democracy gives the person freedom of choice and the chance of shaping his/her life according to his/her goals and provides a wide freedom and opportunities space to control the factors that determine how and how far the person can satisfy his/her choices, pleasures, values, commitments, and beliefs (Dahl, 2001: 51-59). In this study, testing this anticipation consists of the basic research problem.

¹ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf

² According to the 2020 Global Gender Inequality Report, gender equality will be realized globally after 99.5 years under the current conditions. While the findings of 2019 mean that most of us will not experience complete gender equality in our lifetime, it can be stated that there is an improvement as 108 years stated in 2018 index decreased to 99.5 years. (http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf).

Possible explanations that are grounded on the relationship between democracy and gender equality are various. When the studies that emphasize the positive function of democracy that ensures gender equality (Paxton, 1997; Beer, 2009; Richard and Gelleny, 2007; Kurt Topuz, 2016; Brookings Working Paper, 2017) are considered, it is seen that the opinion that democracy creates a space for freedom and opportunities dominates the discussion. In these studies, there is an emphasis on the perception that democracy is not only a way of administration but a life style. Here, democracy is considered not as embracing a set of idealized values and principles but as a deeper and more meaningful philosophy (Apple and Beane, 2007).

In this context, it is emphasized in the aforementioned studies that democratic systems tend to empower gender equality by widening the social space for women activism, to advance women's contribution to the political processes through elections, and to decrease arbitrary deprivation of political representation by women. Therefore, it is accepted that countries with high levels of liberal democracy ensure gender equality more consistently than countries with weak democracies. However, there are studies that reverse the connection which considers gender equality as a driving force for democratization through increasing economic and political power. For example, Balaev 2014 claims that gender has a more explicit immediate and short-term effect on democracy than education does. Yoon 2001 asserts that democratization generally decreases the representation of women in the parliament and Fallon et al. 2012 state that democracy has too little effect on women's political representation and this actually prevents women from accessing political power.

Moreover, there are studies revealing that individuals who are different –not only specific to gender- in terms of their belief, ethnicity, and ideology are not treated equally in many developed democratic societies (Alesina etc., 2004; The World Bank, 2005; Filmer and Scott, 2008). Therefore, within the context of these studies, it is quite difficult to assert that equality that is one of the basic principles of democracy is exclusively executed –not only from the point of gender but also of other distinctive/biological characteristics of the individual- even in democratic societies.

At this point, the basic issue of this study is to analyze the effect of democracy on the global gender gap and to examine the conditions in the countries that are accepted as democratic according to the democracy index through variables of democracy.

2. Methodology

In this study, 36 OECD countries were selected as the sample. These countries are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and USA. The reason why OECD countries were selected as the sample in this study is that OECD is accepted as a reference institution especially for economic analyses and statistics and that organizations such as IMF and the World Bank take these studies as bases for their activities. In addition, these 36 countries are accepted as countries that have democratic structures and market economy as a common ground as industrialized and developing countries (<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/iktisadi-isbirligi-ve-gelisme-teskilati-oecd-tr.mfa>) – which is another reason why OECD countries were selected as the sample in this study.

Coding and data sources of the variables used in the study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Variables and Data Sources

| Codes | Variables | Data Resource |
|--------------|---|------------------------------------|
| GGGI | Global Gender Gap Index (Overall) | World Economic Forum |
| DI | Democracy Index | Economist Intelligence Unit |
| HDI | Human Development Index | United Nations Development Program |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product (Per head, current prices, current PPPs) | OECD |

The Global Gender Gap Index examines the gap between men and women under four basic categories: (1) economic participation and opportunity, (2) educational attainment, (3) political empowerment, and (4) health and survival (Hausmann et al., 2007). In this context, it can be claimed that the Global Gender Gap Index can be accepted as a suitable measure that reveals national gender-based inequalities under the economic, political, education, and health categories (Hausmann et al., 2007).

Under the category of contribution to economy and opportunities, the indicators included are: the ratio of female participation to the labor force compared to the ratio of male participation, wage equality among men and women who have similar jobs, ratio of women's income compared to men's income, ratio of the number of female lawmakers and senior executives compared to the number of male ones, and ratio of the number of female professional and technical employees compared to the number of male ones.

Under the category of participation to education, the indicators included are: the female literacy rate compared to the male literacy rate, the net female schooling rate compared to the net male schooling rate at primary school level, the net female schooling rate compared to the net male schooling rate at secondary school level, and the net female schooling rate compared to the net male schooling rate in higher education.

Under the health and survival category, the indicators included are: gender ratio at birth and the ratio of expected healthy life value for women compared to the ratio of expected healthy life value for men.

Under the category of political empowerment, the indicators included are: the ratio of the number of seats held by female deputies in the parliament compared to the number of seats held by male deputies, the ratio of the number of women at the ministerial level compared to the number of men, and the ratio of the number of years (last 50 years) that women were either head of the state or the government compared to the number of years that men were.

Methodologically, GGGI seems to be a credible measure as it was designed to evaluate the gender-based gaps across the world to access resources rather than to assess real/absolute levels of current resources. Moreover, it is a suitable analysis tool especially because it is not grounded on the structures that are subjective, specific to a country, and culture-based notions such as "women's liberation". Another advantage of the GGI is that it ranks the countries according to their proximity to gender equality, not their empowerment of women. Finally, it is important to emphasize that the relative weight of the variables (economic, educational, political, and survival) are taken into consideration when the GGGI is calculated. It can be claimed that the GGGI is a suitable measure to evaluate gender inequality across the world when all its methodological and

operational strengths are considered³ (Yeganeh and May, 2011).

The Economic Intelligence Unit's democracy index is based on five categories: (1) electoral process and pluralism, (2) civil liberties, (3) the functioning of government, (4) political participation, and (5) political culture. Based on its scores on a range of indicators within these categories, each country is then itself classified as one of four types of regime: "full democracy", "flawed democracy", "hybrid regime", and "authoritarian regime" (Kekic, 2007).

In the countries which fall under the "full democracy" category, the principle of separation of power is in effect and effective, press and judicial system are independent, and basic rights and liberties are secured. In these countries, there is a political culture which enables democracy to develop. It is not possible to talk about a political culture that enables democracy to advance in the countries which fall under the flawed democracy category in contrast to the countries which fall under the full democracy category. For that reason, it can be said that there are some administrative issues and a low-level political participation in flawed democracies. However, in the countries which fall under the flawed democracy category, free and fair elections that are basic elements of a democracy and repeated at certain times are held where the opposition has a chance of coming into power. Violations of freedom of press can be witnessed; although, basic rights and liberties are secured. In the countries which fall under the hybrid regime category, significant disorganizations that obstruct the execution of a free and fair election can be seen most of the time. Opposition parties may be suppressed by the government. It can be claimed that there are significant weaknesses in the political participation, functioning of government, and political culture in these countries. Press and the judicial system may sometimes be suppressed or directed. In addition, civil society is also weak in these countries. Finally, it can be claimed that political pluralism is seriously restricted and even non-existent in the countries that fall under the authoritarian regime category. It is quite hard to claim that the elections are fair and free in these countries if there are actually elections held. It is also not possible to talk about a political culture that enables democracy to develop and it can be asserted that there is public apathy towards the restriction or abolishment of basic rights and liberties. Opportunities to oppose do not exist or restricted seriously. Press generally belongs to the state and is controlled by the groups in power. Judiciary system is not independent (Kurt Topuz, 2016).

The Human Development Index is the summarized measurement of the mean success on the basic human development dimensions: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable, and having a decent standard of living. The Human Development Index is the geometric mean of indexes normalized for each of these three dimensions. The health dimension of the Human Development Index is evaluated by the life expectancy using the values 20 years as minimum and 85 years as maximum. The education component of the Human Development Index is measured by taking the mean of how many years adults who are 25 years old went to school and how many years children are expected to go to school. The dimension of life standard is measured by the gross national product per capita. The minimum income is \$100 (purchasing power parity) and the maximum income is \$75000 (purchasing power parity). \$100 that is the determined value of minimum gross national income per capita is justified by significant amount

³ The main reason behind the criticisms against the Global Gender Gap Report prepared by the World Economic Forum is ranking the gender gap by ignoring the development levels of the countries and focusing only on the ratio of men and women. Other issues raising criticism are using one-way ranking in the comparative comparison method used in the Report, including data of previous years, and including the countries that have missing data (Yıldız, 2015).

of subsistence and nonmarket production in the economies that is not reflected in the official data. The Human Development Index uses income logarithm in order to show the increasing gross national product and decreasing importance of income. The scores of the three Human Development indicators are clustered into one compound index by using geometric average (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>).

The Global Domestic Product is the traditional unit of measurement used to calculate the economic development and increasing human welfare (Despotis, 2005: 385). The Gross Domestic Product is the added value produced within a country's borders during a period (National Bank of Republic of Turkey-Glossary of Terms). In other words, it is the value when the total input used for producing the goods and services is extracted from the total value of all the goods and services created within a certain period of time as a result of the domestic activities of the resident production units in an economy (TUIK, 2012).

In this study, five different regression models were established in order to examine the effects of independent variables on the GGGI. Abovementioned models are as follows:

$$GGGI_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 DI_{i,t} + e \quad (1.1)$$

$$GGGI_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 DI_{i,t} + \beta_2 \ln GDP_{i,t} + e \quad (1.2)$$

$$GGGI_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 DI_{i,t} + \beta_2 HDI_{i,t} + e \quad (1.3)$$

$$GGGI_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 DI_{i,t} + \beta_2 HDI_{i,t} + \beta_3 \ln GDP_{i,t} + e \quad (1.4)$$

$$GGGI_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 HDI_{i,t} + \beta_2 \ln GDP_{i,t} + e \quad (1.5)$$

In the models above, GGGI refers to the Global Gender Gap Index; DI to the Democracy Index; HDI to the Human Development Index; GDP to the Gross Domestic Product (Per head, current prices, current PPPs); \ln refers to logarithmic transformation; β_0 to constant; β_1 , β_2 and β_3 coefficient of independent variables, and e refers to the error term.

Data obtained for 36 OECD countries in total covering the years between 2006 and 2018 were tabled and 468 observations were gained. Then, panel unit root tests were run. The models established to examine the effects of the DI, HDI, and GDP on the GGGI were tested by regression analysis. Which regression analysis result run as pooled, fixed, and random effects for each of the models needs to be interpreted was decided by Hausman, Chow (F), and Breush Pagan LM tests.

3. Findings⁴

The mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values of the variables in the regression models are given first in the findings section.

The number of observations of the dependent variable GGGI and the independent variables GDP, DI, and HDI data used in the study, mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum values are given in Table 3 below.

⁴ Only findings of the study are presented in this section, discussion of the findings is given in the conclusion section.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the variables used in the study

| Variable | Obs | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min | Max |
|----------|-----|----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| GGI | 432 | .7282248 | .0558176 | .5768 | .881 |
| GDP | 468 | 38121.09 | 15413.24 | 13515.68 | 110906.4 |
| DI | 468 | 81.98312 | 9.459293 | 43.7 | 99.3 |
| HDI | 432 | .878125 | .0471092 | .701 | .953 |

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the variables used in the study

| Variables | Model (1.1)a | Model (1.2)a | Model (1.3)a | Model (1.4)a | Model (1.5)b |
|----------------|--|--|---|--|---|
| Constant-c | 96.110 (21.48)*** | -4.163 (-0,51) | -.041 (-0.92) | -1.162 (-1.77) | -.195 (-2,89) |
| DI | -0.283 (-5,21)*** | -0.112 (-2.52)** | -8.041 (-0.77) | -.067 (-1.24) | - |
| HDI | - | - | .959 (13,67)*** | .588 (3.83)*** | .661 (5.06)*** |
| LnGDP | - | 8.242 (13.78)*** | - | .041 (2.72)*** | .032 (2.40)** |
| F value | F(1,395) = 27.11 Prob > F = 0.000 | F(3 394) = 14.92 Prob > F = 0.000 | F(2,358) = 110.11 Prob > F = 0.000 | F(3,357) = 77.18 Prob > F = 0.000 | Wald chi2(2) = 246.51 Prob > chi2=0.00 |
| R ² | 0.064 | 0.110 | 0.38 | 0.393 | 0.390 |
| N | 432 | 360 | 396 | 360 | 396 |

a. To evaluate the results of the **fixed effects** was decided according to the results of the Hausman test and Chow (F) test performed.

b. To evaluate the results of the **random effects** was decided according to the results of the Hausman test and Breush Pagan LM test performed

** significant coefficient at 5% significance level according to the t test

*** significant coefficient at 1% significance level according to the t test

In Model 1.1, obtained R² value is 0.064 and F(1,395) value is 27.11 (p<0,01). It is seen in this model that the independent variable DI ($\beta_1 = -0.283$; p<0,01) has a negative and meaningful coefficient on the 1% significance level according to the t test.

In Model 1.2, obtained R² value is 0.110 and F(3, 394) value is 14.92 (p<0,01). It is seen in this model that the independent variable DI ($\beta_1 = -0.112$; p<0,05) has a negative and that the LnGDP ($\beta_2 = 8.242$; p<0,01) variables have a positive statistically significant coefficients.

In Model 1.3, obtained R² value is 0.38 and F(2, 358) value is 110.11 (p<0,01). It is seen in this model that the independent variable DI ($\beta_1 = -8.041$; p>0.05) has a negative but meaningless coefficient on the 5% significance level according to the t test and that the variable HDI ($\beta_2 = .959$; p<0,01) has a positive and meaningful coefficient at the 1% significance level according to the t test.

In Model 1.4, obtained R^2 value is 0.393 and F (3, 357) value is 77.18 ($p < 0,01$). It is seen in this model that the independent variable DI ($\beta_1 = -.067$; $p > 0,05$) has a negative but meaningless coefficient at the 5% significance level according to the t test while the HDI ($\beta_2 = 0.588$; $p < 0,01$) and LnGDP ($\beta_3 = 0.041$; $p < 0,01$) variables have positive and meaningful coefficients at the 1% significance level according to the t test.

In the model where the variable DI is not included (Model 1.5), obtained R^2 value is 0.39 and F (Wald chi2) value is 256.51 ($p < 0,01$). It is seen in this model that the independent variables HDI ($\beta_1 = 0.661$; $p < 0,01$) and LnGDP ($\beta_2 = 0.032$; $p < 0,05$) have positive and statistically significant coefficients.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, 5 different models for 36 OECD countries covering the years between 2006 and 2018 were established and tested by panel regression analysis. In two of the four models where the Democracy Index (DI) was the independent variable, it is seen that the Democracy Index (DI) affects the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) statistically significantly and negatively. Therefore, it needs to be stated within the context of the sample in question that countries' ranks in the GGGI have kept improving (rising); even though, their rank in the Democracy Index has decreased. In contrast, the effects of the other independent variables in the models, which are HDI and GDP, were positive and statistically meaningful.

It should be stated at this point that why the relation between the Democracy Index and the Global Gender Gap Index turned out to be negative in the tests run for the OECD countries is an issue that should be discussed. Here, it needs to be taken into consideration that there are various reasons why the relation between democracy and gender gap turned out to be negative.

First of all, it is seen that the GGGI values kept increasing while the Democracy Index values significantly decreased within the time limit of the study in some of the OECD countries included in the study which are Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands*, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden*, Turkey and USA. It is determined that although there was a significant decrease in the Democracy Index, the GGGI values kept increasing due to the effects of other factors. It shows that the DI was insufficient to affect the GGGI positively in this sense. Therefore, it can be considered that the GGGI in these countries may have improved generally depending upon many factors.

It needs to be asserted first that making a general evaluation to reveal why the Democracy Index in these countries decreased is a low possibility. The democracy level of each country and the decrease in this context should be individually addressed and examined. Each category in the Democracy Index –electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture- should be discussed specifically for each country within this context. This discussion, without doubt, should be handled by blending each country's peculiar socio-economic, cultural, political, and etc. features with the political, socio-political, and economic atmosphere of its region. Therefore, the need for such a study can be accepted as a result of this study.

Moreover, the GGGI has 4 and the DI has 5 sub-dimensions. It should be taken into consideration that each of these sub-dimensions has a potential to affect each other differently. More clearly, it can be claimed that the categories of electoral process and pluralism, the

functioning of government, political participation, and political culture in the Democracy Index can be closely related to the category of political empowerment in the Global Gender Gap Index.⁵ Because the category of political empowerment includes the indicators that are: the ratio of the number of seats held by female deputies in the parliament compared to the number of seats held by male deputies, the ratio of the number of women at the ministerial level compared to the number of men, and the ratio of the number of years (last 50 years) that women were either head of the state or the government compared to the number of years that men were and these indicators are closely related to the categories in the Democracy Index except the category of civil rights.⁶ However, to analyze this situation better; in other words, to closely see the relation between democracy and gender gap, another study should be conducted that will focus on each sub-dimension of each index.

In addition to all of these technical results obtained from the study, it is necessary at this point to say a few words on democracy and the effect of democracy on gender equality.

“The case where women are condemned to stay passive in a democracy”, stated and defined as the problem of democracy in Anne Phillips’ book titled “Engendering Democracy” (1991), is a case that needs to be dealt with at this point. According to Phillips, what condemns women to stay passive in democracy is the patriarchal viewpoint that is fed by the distinction between public and private, differentiates women and men spatially, and brings about different responsibilities. Therefore, patriarchal culture and viewpoint is a significant argument to explain why women are more disadvantaged than men and confronts us that it is necessary to evaluate the issue of gender equality in democratic countries by patriarchal culture codes. Moreover, it needs to be emphasized here that patriarchal/male-dominant viewpoint is a global culture code/element that should be taken as a reference for the issue of gender equality and to understand women’s social statuses. According to Phillips, either liberal or republican, the basis of the perceptions of democracy that mark this century is male. The concepts of “human” and “individual” that are presented as if they were gender-neutral refer to men both in theory and practice. Again according to Phillips, all the discussion on democracy has continued for centuries as if women

5 <https://www.yabiladi.com/img/content/EIU-Democracy-Index-2015.pdf>

6 Questions asked to measure civil liberties: *Is there a free electronic media?

*Is there a free print media? *Is there freedom of expression and protest (bar only generally accepted restrictions, such as banning advocacy of violence)?

*Is media coverage robust?

*Is there open and free discussion of public issues, with a reasonable diversity of opinions?

*Are there political restrictions on access to the Internet?

*Are citizens free to form professional organizations and trade unions?

*Do institutions provide citizens with the opportunity to petition government to redress grievances?

*The use of torture by the state.

*The degree to which the judiciary is independent of government influence.

*The degree of religious tolerance and freedom of religious expression.

*The degree to which citizens are treated equally under the law.

*Do citizens enjoy basic security?

*Extent to which private property rights are protected and private business is free from undue government influence.

*Extent to which citizens enjoy personal freedoms. Consider gender equality, right to travel, choice of work and study.

*Popular perceptions on protection of human rights; proportion of the population that think that basic human rights are well-protected.

*There is no significant discrimination on the basis of people’s race, color or religious beliefs.

*Extent to which the government invokes new risks and threats as an excuse for curbing civil liberties.

According to Pateman (1989), democratic theory believed in women’s natural subordination so blindly that it has not questioned for a very long time why an individual accepts a relationship where s/he has to submit to someone’s domination and pressure.

did not exist –with one exception- or, like for Rousseau, women were mentioned only to teach their place. Thus, gender inequality is something that is engraved onto the basis of both classical and modern thought. According to Phillips, it is quite concerning that women are ignored when called for freedom, equality, and human rights (“rights of man”) and even excluded from the theory at an age that looks more just; even though, they are recognized in official petitions.

Thus, in this context, politics should be conceptualized in a way that gender does not stay as a blind spot and democracy should be reconsidered by including both genders. A new discussion platform should be created again on democracy and gender equality by reshaping old concepts.

At this point, if we set aside theoretical evaluations on democracy and gender equality and refocus on the technical results of the study, we can continue the discussion with the analysis of the relationship between GGGI and GDP and HDI. It can be claimed here that the subcategories used to measure the global gender gap, especially economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, and health and survival, are affected positively by human welfare and economic development as stated by GDP and by human development as emphasized by HDI than by countries’ democracy levels.

The indicators of “the ratio of female participation to the labor force compared to the ratio of male participation”, “wage equality among men and women who have similar jobs”, “the ratio of women’s income compared to men’s income”, “the ratio of the number of female lawmakers and senior executives compared to the number of male ones”, and “the ratio of the number of female professional and technical employees compared to the number of male ones” can be related to the economic development and increase in welfare in a country. In other words, GDP that is the traditional unit of measure used to determine the economic development and increasing welfare in a country (Despotis, 2005: 385) and the increase in the GDP can be effective to close the gap between men and women in the categories of economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, and health and survival.

Moreover, it can be claimed that the indicators of “the female literacy rate compared to the male literacy rate”, “the net female schooling rate compared to the net male schooling rate at primary and secondary school levels and in higher education” and of “the ratio of expected healthy life value for women compared to the ratio of expected healthy life value for men” are closely related to human development. Thus, it can be asserted as a result of this study that country’s improvement in the Human Development Index and its GDP value are more effective to close the existing gender gap.

It needs to be stated in this context that “human development”, in simplest terms, refers to the number of the options one can do/be (Hicks, 1997: 1285) and it expresses the need that one should take an active role in improving and enhancing technology, cultural values, and participation in social life (Preston, 2001). In other words, human development can be defined as the process of increasing the number of choices of people. Here, the primary options are having a long and healthy life, being educated, and having a decent life standard. In addition, political freedom, human rights, and self-respect are among the aforementioned options (UNDP, 1990: 10). Thus, placing the human development to the core in a country without discriminating between men and women may provide women with the same opportunities and possibilities with men by increasing the prioritized options above and; therefore, close the gap between genders within this context.

Finally, it needs to be emphasized as a final word that the results of this study includes the OECD countries and are based on the data covering 12 years for each country. Hence, it should be considered that the results may turn out to be different if different countries and data based on extended time period are included. Moreover, the relation between the Democracy Index and the Global Gender Gap Index can be examined by cross-sectional analysis for each country and seen if there are any differences.

Ethics Statement

No human studies are presented in this manuscript.

Author Contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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