



University of Tehran Press

## Woman in Development and Politics

### The Role of Political Freedoms in Gender Inequalities: Global Evidence

Mehdi Hajamini<sup>1</sup>✉ | Ameneh Zare<sup>2</sup> | Abolfazl Dehghani<sup>3</sup> |  
Masoud Nikooghadam<sup>4</sup>

1. Corresponding Author, Associate Professor in Economics, Department of Economics, Yazd University, Yazd, Iran. Email: [hajamini.mehdi@yazd.ac.ir](mailto:hajamini.mehdi@yazd.ac.ir)
2. Master's Degree in Economics, Department of Economics, [Yazd University](http://Yazd University), Yazd, Iran. Email: [ameneh1zare@gmail.com](mailto:ameneh1zare@gmail.com)
3. PhD Candidate of Economics, Department of Economics, Yazd University, Yazd, Iran. Email: [abolfazl.dehghanica@gmail.com](mailto:abolfazl.dehghanica@gmail.com)
4. Assistant professor of Economics, University of Bojnord, Bojnord, Iran. Email: [nikooghadam@ub.ac.ir](mailto:nikooghadam@ub.ac.ir)

#### Article Info

##### Article type:

Research Article

##### Article history:

Received 26 May 2024

Received in revised form 04

August 2024

Accepted 24 August 2024

Published online 06 October  
2024

#### ABSTRACT

##### Introduction

In today's world, the socio-economic statuses of women and men have evolved; however, the effects of masculine ideologies are still evident, underdeveloped and developing countries. The impact of gender on human existence is a topic of much debate. A critical inquiry is whether the laws and, as a result, the societies have been established as a framework for the advantage of men, given that the majority of politicians throughout history have been male. Are economic and political structures a perpetuation of the same patriarchal view?

Many believe that the existence of opportunities inequality is historically and institutionally related to the role of governments as a shield that protects the men. Hence women and males have not been afforded the same "opportunity" and "freedom of choice." In other words, there is a general agreement that the opportunity and freedom of choice for men and women have been distinct, irrespective of whether the masculine perspective influenced the political-economic structures. Therefore, it is impossible to assert that the experience of custom and habit that has been institutionalized throughout history is a natural routine, even if it were possible to ensure or demonstrate that the result of equal opportunity for women would be identical to its current state.

##### Methodology

Due to this, the present paper has investigated the influence of political structure and power on gender inequalities, utilizing over 2500 observations from 94 countries between 1970 and 2020. Hofstede's six cultural dimensions, as well as political rights and civil liberties indicators, have been employed to achieve this objective. The political freedom index was compiled by Freedom House, which includes two sub-indices: political rights and civil liberties. Hofstede's index comprises six critical dimensions including long term orientation (vs. short term orientation), individualism (vs. collectivism), uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity (vs. femininity), and indulgence (vs. restraint). The gender development index is determined by the ratio of the human development index of women to that of males. Therefore, this index is indicative of the status of women in the three sub-indices of health, education, and per capita income in comparison to that of males. Another indicator is gender inequality, which shows the status of women in terms of reproductive health (maternal mortality and adolescent fertility), empowerment (parliamentary representation and education attainment) and the labor market (labor force participation).

To analyze this large sample of data, two methods of analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Random Forest are used. In this manner, the question is explored as to whether the factor of political freedom contributed to the explanation of gender inequality. In other words, is the variation in the level of political freedom responsible for the variation in the gender inequality indices?

##### Results

The variance analysis indicates that the development of gender and gender inequality in

##### Keywords:

*Political Freedom,*

*Gender Inequality,*

*Gender Development,*

*Hofstede's Cultural*

*Dimensions.*

---

countries is significantly influenced by two dimensions of democratic political structure: political rights and civil liberties. The democratic system is a prerequisite, not a sufficient one, for the equitable distribution of economic and social opportunities between women and men. The countries that were in the greatest position in terms of political and cultural factors (Iceland, Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland, Finland, and Norway) exhibited the lowest gender inequality. However, India and Bangladesh, which faced significant gender inequality, were not the most severe in terms of civil liberties and political rights. Additionally, there were a few countries (Vietnam, Russia, Belarus, and Russia) that exhibited low levels of civil and political freedoms and low levels of gender inequality.

Hence, it is possible to assert that the most severe inequality did not occur in a democratic political system, while the least severe inequality was most likely to occur in democratic systems. In addition, the primary distinction between countries that are not free and those that are partly free is distinguished by the presence of free countries. Then it is impossible to make a substantial contribution to the improvement of the situation through arbitrary choices or discretion. Policymakers in developing and underdeveloped countries are not faced with a policy trade-off between gender freedom and development, but rather an all-or-nothing choice.

The random forest results also verified that an emphasis on civil liberties and political rights is necessary to experience a society with minimal gender discrimination, among the investigated characteristics. Hofstede's cultural dimensions, including indulgence and power distance, played a more consistent role; however, uncertainty avoidance was the least significant factor in the existing set. It is important to note that the results regarding the role and significance of cultural dimensions are highly susceptible to fluctuations in the sample or gender index. Consequently, it is imperative that society and policymakers refrain from succumbing to the cultural justification of gender discrimination.

### Conclusion

Based on the aforementioned findings, the political reform in developing and underdeveloped countries is consistent with the reduction of gender inequalities and the attempt to eradicate discrimination in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Policy trade-off between gender freedom and development is not presented to policymakers in developing and underdeveloped countries; rather, they are presented with an all-or-nothing decision. In other words, it is impossible to anticipate a substantial reduction in gender inequalities in a non-free political system, just as a separate activity in the field of women's equitable benefit is not necessary as a mandate in a free political system.

The pursuit of a free political system through the reduction of gender inequality and the enhancement of human development are not mutually exclusive. It is important to acknowledge that the act of eliminating discrimination and reducing gender inequalities is valuable in and of itself. Freedom is the most valuable objective subsequent to survival, and it is one of the fundamental concerns of development. In addition, the elimination of discrimination is advantageous from an instrumental standpoint. The society has benefited from the other half of its talents as a result of the increased opportunities for women to utilize their capabilities outside of the family. Ultimately, the political system's collective function of reducing gender inequalities is to respect the identity of women, as a sense of identity is a source of strength and trust.

It is inevitable that democracy will be in congruence with endeavors to eradicate gender discrimination. The two issues are inextricably linked, and the establishment of a free political system will provide the requisite foundation for the improvement of human development and the reduction of gender inequality. Therefore, it is anticipated that intellectual pursuits, civil and political endeavors, and feminist literature will rely on this shared attribute rather than emphasizing and delineating leftist perspectives and literature. The reduction of discriminations and related policies in terms of tools, identity, political power, and freedom in life decisions will be an automatic consequence of the pursuit of various dimensions of political freedom.

---

**Cite this article:** Hajamini, M., Zare, A., Dehghani, A., & Nikooghadam, M. (2024). The role of political freedoms in gender inequalities: Global evidence. *Woman in Development and Politics*, 22(3), 619-652. DOI:



<https://doi.org/10.22059/jwdp.2024.376579.1008449>

© The Author(s).

**Publisher:** University of Tehran Press.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jwdp.2024.376579.1008449>

---