

Why Are Some Nations More Supportive of the Rights of Their Citizens?

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Abstract

Government has the responsibility to protect political, civil, and human rights, and provide safety for its citizens. Therefore, it is beneficial to research why some nations seem to empower their citizens by guaranteeing their freedom to express themselves. It can be expected that, for a nation to develop politically, socially, and economically, a stable government must be in place and must be a trustworthy institution that its people can rely on.

This study applied an empirical, quantitative, comparative analysis of data to examine the factors that may influence a nation's quality of governance in the sense of its protection of political, civil, and human rights. A secondary analysis of the Global file, in LeRoy's 8th ed. MicroCase, was conducted. The most notable findings in the research were that social factors, such as Internet use and gender equality, were more closely correlated with governance quality than economic and political factors. A nation's quality of governance is likely to be superior when a trusting relationship exists between government and citizens. Citizens' greater access to resources such as the internet and education correlates to their government's willingness to allow them to exercise their political, civil, and human rights. A variable that does not correlate strongly to governance quality is the type of war a nation may have experienced.

Introduction

Civil liberties and political rights are known forms of basic human rights. These rights and privileges may seem a given to some; however, in many nations, citizens unfortunately lack personal freedoms and are not protected by their government. Civil liberties empower the governed to hold their government accountable for the safety of the general population, where the nation's citizens have the capability to freely express their opinions and participate in political activities, so long as they bring no harm to others (Bollen 1986, 568).

During and after years of world wars, civil wars, and the eras of slavery, many modern nations realized the importance of providing citizens with freedoms, protection, and safety from violence by encouraging law and order that does not impede their daily lives. Various movements and organizations within nations worked firmly toward building a safe environment for their citizens, mainly by providing written documentation of the rule of law. The United States of America acknowledged the necessity of human rights

with, principally, two documents, the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. The Second World War marked a major turning point in Britain when the British Left, in the 1930s and 1940s, focused on the importance of civil and political rights (Moores 2012, 172).

The author holds the view that a lack of civil liberties and political rights in a society can cause strain on a nation's development. Governments that do not provide care and protection for their citizens are likely to be corrupt or overpowering, conditions that can lead to chaos in a society and citizens' mistrust of those in power.

A corrupt government may lead to a weak justice system. A weak or unjust legal system may lead to acts of violence by its citizens, such as riots and killings. Moreover, a government that is not accountable to the citizens may ignore humanitarian needs. A lack of safety and protection for citizens may lead to criminal actions of citizens against one another. In many nations where the government does not promote a proper justice system, women and children are more likely to fall victim to human trafficking, kidnapping, sexual exploitation, child labor, and social discrimination and violation.

Existing research literature explores the factors that correlate with good governance, and provides specific data analysis on human rights across the world and how they differ in each location and political and social setting. Quantitative methods from the Global file of MicroCase (2013) will be used in this research.

Given the seriousness of civil liberties and political rights, this research project will explore the following question: "Why are some nations more supportive of the rights of their citizens?" Understanding the underlying factors of why some citizens suffer greatly in some parts of the world, while others elsewhere do not, may encourage a global trend toward making civil liberties and political rights a global requirement. The paper will be organized into the following sections: Literature Review, Methodology, Findings and Analysis, and Implications and Conclusions.

Literature Review

Human rights, such as civil liberties and political rights, are undoubtedly an important phenomenon to recognize in today's society. Some nations have greatly improved human rights for their citizens; however, some governments are restrictive of their citizens' political freedoms. Factors such as region, economy, religion, customs, and cultures may indicate why one nation is more or less successful than another in providing basic human rights. Exploring the factors underlying whether a nation has more or fewer civil liberties and political rights than another will ultimately assist in attempting to improve these rights in the nations that lack them.

Freedom, as suggested by Green (1888), should be considered "a power which each man exercises through the help or security given him by his fellow men, and which he in turns helps secure for them." Many United Nations member states signed on to the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights in the hope that international consensus on the treatment of citizens could be reached, as discussed by Keith (1999). Considerable research literature addresses the issues of what factors influence political rights and whether a stable government is the backbone for supporting human rights. Bollen (1986) suggests that, regardless of whether a nation is democratic or not, there is no correlation between a stable government and the presence of political rights and liberties.

Much of the literature on the human rights topic focuses on the status of refugees and why their lack of rights in one region forces them to flee to another. To further investigate such hypotheses, three schools of thought will be explored in this section: political influences, economic influences, and historical influences.

Political Influences

Political influences include a nation's political system and the differences among the nations that share a common political system, such as democracy. The differences may include the presence or absence of a multiparty system, the degree of voter participation, and the overall differences between regions, such as how Western democratic societies compare to democratic societies elsewhere. Political influences may also refer to the laws that inhibit or allow certain behaviors.

Henderson (1991, 123) hypothesizes that, the more democratic a state is, the less repressive it will be, as a democracy is more responsive and handles conflict with compromise. If equal care is being provided to the population at hand, meaning the government is responsive to its people's needs, conflict is less likely to arise because the citizens are satisfied with the security provided them.

The idea of being free while being governed is complex, as Miller (2006, 19) argues: "to be genuinely free, a person must live under social and political arrangements that she has helped to make." Arendt (1960) argues that totalitarian states do not recognize civil liberties, while Miller (2006) suggests that a republican state contributes "to the protection of liberal freedom as the absence of constraint."

Economic Influences

Economic influences may include the overall economy of a nation or lack of a stable economy, as well as the general economic foundation in place. According to Cohen (1979, 163), every individual who lives in a capitalist economy has some sort of freedom as "everyone owns something, be it only his own labor power, and each is free to sell what he owns, and to buy whatever the sale of what he owns enables him to buy." If resources are scarce and insufficient for the population in need, the government may take repressive action in an attempt to maintain overall control. Henderson (1991, 126) hypothesizes that "the higher the level of economic development, the less likely the government will be to use repression."

Unfortunately, in less economically developed countries, many are victimized by human trafficking and forced labor. Andrees and Belser (2009, 2) divide forced labor in the private economy into two separate categories: "first, the forced and bonded labor related to poverty and discrimination toward minority groups; second, the global problem of transnational human trafficking, which features migrant workers coerced into labor exploitation or mainly young women deceived into forced prostitution." Victims in both these categories are stripped of their human rights and freedoms. People may be tricked into exploitative working environments because they are poor and desperate for employment that would enable them to provide for their families. At times, the government may be unaware of the illegal activity. If a government is corrupt or lacks strong law enforcement, it may be aware but choose not to take the necessary precautions to stop the abuses.

On the other hand, wealthier or more developed countries, with stable economies and high GNP per capita, may establish and preserve greater human rights. However, Poe and Tate (1994, 858) emphasize that economic growth should not be confused with economic development. Economic growth may imply positive economic conditions for the population; nonetheless, if the growth is rapid, the regime may take more active measures to stay in control. As Mitchell and McCormick (1988, 479) phrase it, “the very poor and the very rich countries would be less likely to have substantial levels of human rights violations, while those who are in the process of modernization would be more likely to exhibit such a pattern.”

Historical Influences

Tragic historical events such as world wars, conflicts, and slavery may be underlying reasons that push a nation toward or away from civil liberties and political rights. Some nations may be influenced by such unfortunate happenings to make a change in their government and improve the lives of their citizens. However, for other nations, their government, economy, and infrastructure are left completely devastated. Such devastation has led many populations to become refugees or be displaced (Van Arsdale 2006).

Both civil and international wars disrupt the populations, economies, and overall development of the nations involved. Poe and Tate (1994, 858) argue that, after wars, some nations transform into military regimes, which are likely to be more repressive since “military juntas are based on force, and force is the key to coercion.”

Nations involved in international wars have suffered in one way or another. In order to avoid such tragedies, nations take extra precautions to change how human rights are distributed among a population. International wars may “compel regimes to resort to political repression as a tool to maintain domestic order during a state of emergency,” argues Gurr (1986) (and see Keith 1999, 109).

Historical repression may influence modern repression in some nations. As mentioned earlier, totalitarian states devalue civil liberties while republican states protect them. Lopez and Stohl (1992, 218) suggest that “human rights repression may have an ‘afterlife,’ which affects the behavior of people long after the observable use of coercion by state agents has ended.”

Methodology

Several hypotheses exist as to which factors and variables underlie the phenomenon that some nations care more about their citizens’ rights, such as the type of government, type of political system, civilian participation in politics, and political stability (Bollen 1986, 570). To answer the research question “Why are some nations more supportive of the rights of their citizens?,” various independent variables have been chosen. The research question at hand focuses on the comparisons between nations around the world; therefore, this study will utilize the Global file from the MicroCase Software (LeRoy 2013). The type of data for this file is aggregate public records, and the test for statistical significance used is probability (prob).

Concepts and Variables

The dependent variable chosen for this research is variable number 296, VOICE-A:04, with a ratio level of measurement. This measures the quality of governance in a nation for the year 2004, with respect to political, civil, and human rights. The responses range between 0 and 100, with zero meaning extremely poor governance and 100 being very good governance.

The independent variables are chosen based on hypotheses of what could influence a country's ability to provide or choose to protect individual civil liberties and political rights. All the variables were also chosen from the MicroCase Global file and will be identified and defined in the following paragraphs.

Social

1. (344) MULTI-CULT: This ratio variable examines the "odds that any 2 persons will differ in their race, religion, ethnicity (tribe), or language group" (MicroCase 2014). The responses range between 0 and 91.
2. (379) NET USERS: This is a ratio variable stating net users per 100 people in a country. The responses range between 0 and 65.
3. (371) GENDER EQ: This ratio variable states a country's level of gender equality. The responses range between 0.28 and 0.95.
4. (368) EDUC INDEX: This ratio variable is a combined measure of a country's education levels, factoring in adult literacy rate and primary, secondary, and tertiary (college/university) enrollment in the year 2001. The responses range between 0.15 and 0.99.

Economic

5. (133) ECON DEVEL: This is an ordinal variable measuring the level of economic development in a country in the year 1998. The responses are divided into three categories: (1) Least Developed, (2) Developing, and (3) Industrial.

Political

6. (341) WAR: This is a nominal variable that examines the types of armed conflict in a nation in the year 2003. The responses are divided into five categories: (1) None, (2) Interstate, (3) Regional and/or General Civil War, (4) War of Independence, and (5) Multiple types.

Hypotheses

Social

Hypothesis 1: There is a negative relationship between multi-culturalism and governance quality defined as protection of political, civil, and human rights.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between number of internet users per 100 people and governance quality.

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between gender equality and governance quality.

Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relationship between education index and governance quality.

Economic

Hypothesis 5: Countries with higher economic development tend to have better governance quality than countries with less economic development.

Political

Hypothesis 6: Countries not experiencing war tend to have better governance quality than countries experiencing war.

Research Method

This research will be based on the secondary analysis of data from the MicroCase GLOBAL file, collaborating with the textbook *Methods in Political Science: An Introduction to Using MicroCase*, 8th edition (LeRoy 2013). The file contains 180 cases of countries and 483 variables. This research is an empirical, quantitative, and comparative study.

There are two different presentation techniques and measures of association used between dependent and independent variables depending on their type of measurement. Hypotheses 5, 6, and 8 will use the analysis of variance (ANOVA) presentation technique with the eta-squared measure of association because the independent variables are either nominal or ordinal, while the dependent variable is ratio. The rest of the variables will use the scatterplot presentation technique and Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) level of measurement as both variables are ratio. The strength of the relationships between variables will also be measured by the level of statistical significance, in this case probability, known as "prob." The probability set point is 0.05. If the probability is less than 0.05, there is a statistically significant correlation between variables; however, a probability more than 0.05 implies no significant correlation between the variables.

The measures of association used in this research are eta-squared and Pearson's correlation coefficient (r). The determination of strength for the eta-squared measurement is as follows:

If eta-squared is under 0.1, the relationship is very weak or too weak.

If eta-squared is between 0.10 and 0.19, the relationship is weak.

If eta-squared is between 0.20 and 0.29, the relationship is moderate.

If eta-squared is 0.30 and above, the relationship is strong.

The determination of strength for Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) is as follows:

If r is under 0.25, the relationship is too weak to be useful.

If r is between 0.25 and 0.34, the relationship is weak.

If r is between 0.35 and 0.39, the relationship is moderate.

If r is 0.40 and above, the relationship is strong.

The next section, Findings and Analysis, will further explain the factors that may or may not influence a nation's governance quality in regard to political rights and civil liberties.

Findings and Analysis

The hypotheses presented in the previous section are tested using data from the Global case in the MicroCase (2013) software and the scatterplot and ANOVA presentation techniques. Each hypothesis will be examined by means of detailed analysis of the measures of association, Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) and eta-squared. The independent variables, mentioned in the previous section, will be tested against the dependent variable, variable number 296, VOICE-A:04, measuring each nation's quality of governance with respect to political, civil, and human rights in the year 2014. The statistical data will provide support or no support for each hypothesis.

Social Variables

Governance Quality by Multiculturalism

The first hypothesis proposes a negative relationship between multiculturalism in a nation—the likelihood of two people differing in the race, religion, ethnicity (tribe), or language group—and a nation's governance quality. Figure 1's scatterplot shows the correlation between the independent variable, multiculturalism, and the dependent variable, governance quality. The dependent variable is shown on the y-axis; the independent variable is shown on the x-axis.

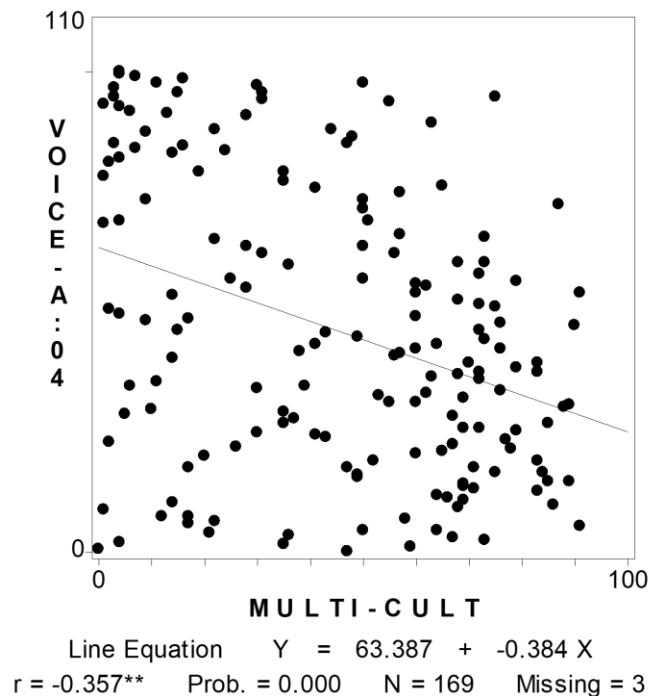


Figure 1: The Relationship Between Multiculturalism and Governance Quality

The data points are spread out, and the regression line shows a negative relationship between the two variables.

To examine the level of statistical significance, the probability value was measured and found to equal 0.000, which means that the relationship between multiculturalism and governance quality is statistically significant. Additionally, Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) is -0.357, indicating a negative, moderate relationship between the two variables.

Multi-culturalism may not strongly affect governance quality, perhaps because multiculturalism tends to be a modern development while some nations have long-established governance institutions not influenced by multiculturalism. Canada, for example, ranked high on both multiculturalism and governance quality. More typically, Norway has very little multiculturalism but high governance quality, that is, ample civil freedoms and rights. The Democratic Republic of Congo has a high range of multiculturalism but very low governance quality. Some governments of multicultural nations may in fact restrict civil liberties as it may be easier to restrict a diverse range of people than adapt to all different societies.

The data points are scattered widely. However, the regression line indicates a moderate negative relationship between the two variables, and supports the stated hypothesis. Therefore, multiculturalism in a country is unlikely to correlate to good governance in the sense of generous political, civil, and human rights.

Governance Quality by Net Users

The second hypothesis proposes a positive correlation between the number of net users per 100 people and governance quality with respect to civil liberties and rights. Figure 2 shows the relationship between the two variables, with net users placed on the x-axis and governance quality on the y-axis. Most data points are grouped together on the lower portion of the graph. In the top half of the graph, the data points are more spread out and show some anomalies.

The highest data point for both net users per 100 people and governance quality is Iceland, whereas the lowest data point for both net users per 100 people and governance quality is Myanmar. However, some countries lie outside the norm. For example, Barbados has few net users per 100 people, but placed high on governance quality as defined by political, civil, and human rights. Moreover, Singapore has a relatively high number of net users per 100 people but is below the average in governance quality.

The probability value equals 0.000, demonstrating a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. Moreover, Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) is 0.725, signifying a strong, positive relationship between net users and governance quality.

In countries where the internet is more accessible, the citizens are likely to have more personal freedoms because they have the liberty to formulate opinions based on what they may read and research on the internet. However, in the example of Barbados, perhaps access to the internet is impossible in some areas or just not culturally valued, and therefore internet use does not have an impact on the quality of government.

This hypothesis raises the question of the causality between the two variables. It can be argued that a government allows more freedoms because more inhabitants are net users or that more people use the net because they enjoy more overall freedom and rights. Greater citizen access to the internet means greater freedom to access information and to

formulate and express opinions. Additionally, when citizens have more internet access, they keep government responsive to issues they are vocal about.

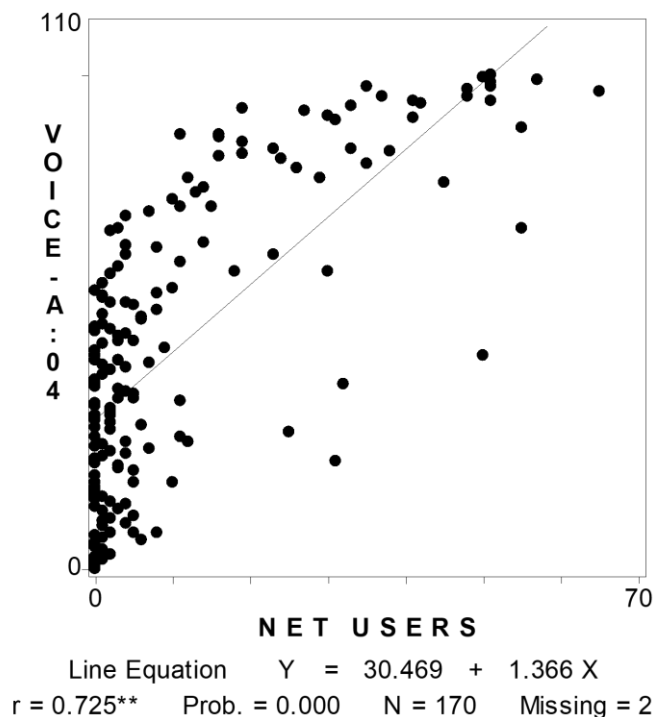


Figure 2: The Relationship Between Net Users and Governance Quality

In conclusion, the data points, regression line, and measure of association all support the hypothesis that countries with more net users per 100 people will have better governance quality, i.e., better protection for civil, political, and human rights.

Governance Quality by Gender Equality

The third hypothesis suggests a positive relationship between gender equality and governance quality. The independent variable, gender equality, is seen on the x-axis, and the dependent variable, governance quality, is seen on the y-axis. The scatterplot in Figure 3 shows the correlation between the two variables. No data points appear at or near zero for gender equality, which is a positive distinction; however, this pattern could be due to the fact that 29 data points are missing. A number of countries are clustered together, scoring the highest on both gender equality and governance quality. These countries include Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, New Zealand, and the Netherlands. However, Turkmenistan placed quite high on gender equality but placed near zero on governance quality.

Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) yields 0.669. Given that a result at or above 0.40 indicates a strong relationship, gender equality has a strong, positive relationship with governance quality.

Gender equality ensures that both males and females have equal access to education, employment, and high-status positions. Therefore, countries with higher levels of gender equality are likely to have better governance quality in the sense of political, civil, and human rights.

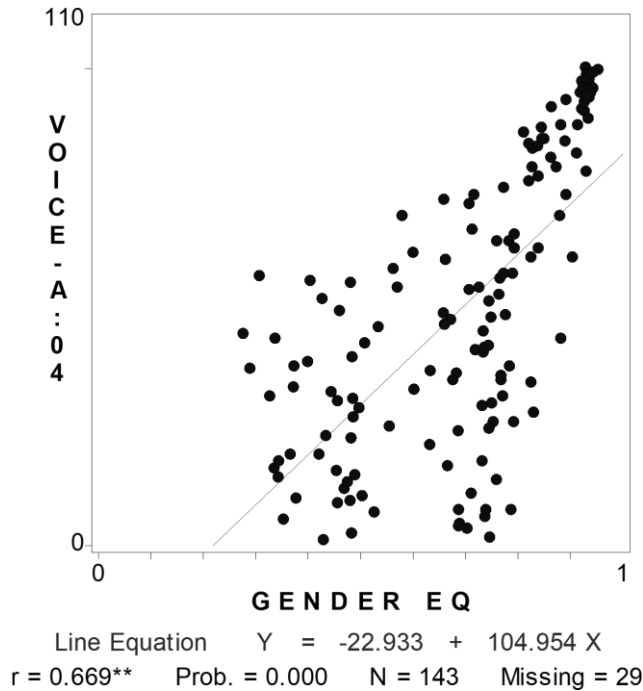


Figure 3: The Relationship Between Gender Equality and Governance Quality

Governance Quality by Education Index

The fourth hypothesis regarding social variables indicates a positive relationship between education index and governance quality. In the scatterplot in Figure 4, most data points are scattered across the middle and the right side of the graph. A few anomalies appear on the left side.

No data points appear anywhere near zero on the education index, meaning that all nations included in the research, except for the 12 missing cases, have an average to high rate of adult literacy as well as high primary, secondary, and tertiary enrollment ratios. A number of countries are grouped together, placing high on the two scales of education index and governance quality. The countries in this group—Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway, Finland, and the Netherlands—coincide closely with those grouped high on the gender equality variable. Once again, Turkmenistan is the main anomaly, placing high on the education index but near zero on governance quality. Moreover, Niger, quite low on the education index scale, placed just below average for governance quality.

Pearson’s correlation coefficient (r) equaled 0.550, which points to a strong positive relationship between education index and governance quality.

The positive linear regression line, strong measure of association, and level of statistical significance suggest that countries with a higher education index—as determined by adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary, and tertiary school enrollment ratio—will have better governance quality, that is greater protection for individual rights. Access to education is considered a human right; therefore, governments that preserve such rights are more likely to honor political rights and other civil liberties. Education provides individuals a path to higher social status and thereby benefits the economy. A well-educated population will likely invest more in their country’s government, through voting, protesting, and active involvement in politics and governance.

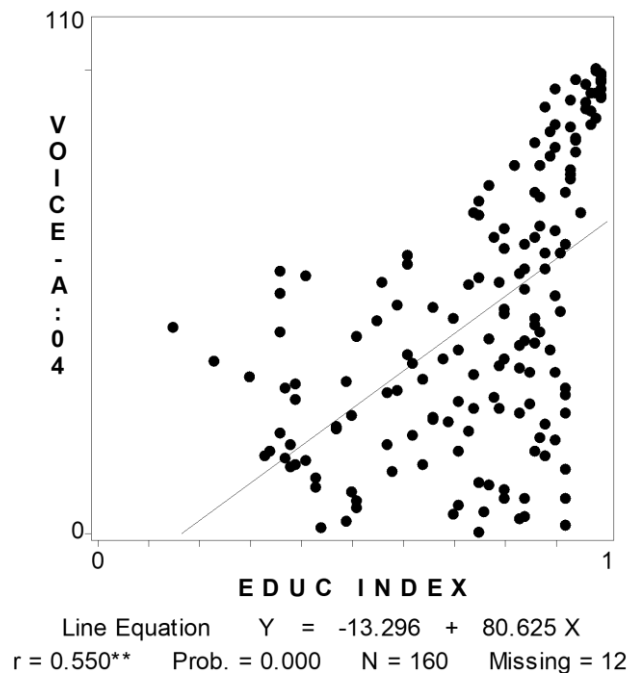


Figure 4: The Relationship Between Education Index and Governance Quality

Economic Variables

Governance Quality by Economic Development

The hypothesis for the economic variable in this research states that countries with higher economic development tend to have better governance quality with respect to political, civil, and human rights than countries with lower economic development. For this hypothesis, the ANOVA display method presents the different categories of the independent variable in Figure 5: least developed, developing, and industrial. The results show that least developed countries usually have lower governance quality, whereas industrial countries place higher on governance quality. The results for developing

Political Variables

Governance Quality by War

The hypothesis proposes that countries not experiencing war tend to have better governance quality than countries experiencing war. For this hypothesis, the ANOVA display method presents in Figure 6 the different categories of the independent variable, war: none, interstate, civil war, independence, and multi-type. Most of the data points appear in the category of “none” and are equally scattered along the y-axis from low governance quality to high governance quality.

Nations that were not experiencing war but do not have good governance quality include North Korea, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, and Vietnam. Nations that were not experiencing war and had high governance quality include Denmark, Sweden, New Zealand, Australia, and the Netherlands. Syria is a nation that has gone through an interstate war and maintained a low governance quality. On the other hand, Norway kept a high governance quality despite the experience of an interstate war. The nation with lowest governance quality in the civil war category is Myanmar, and that with highest governance quality is Spain. Only three data points fall in the category of war of independence: Eritrea has the lowest quality of governance; Morocco has an below average quality of governance; and Slovenia has a high quality of governance. Lastly, in the multi-type war category, Iraq placed lowest on governance quality and the United Kingdom placed the highest.

The probability result equals 0.000, meaning the relationship between war and governance quality is statistically significant. Moreover, the eta-squared value is 0.172, signifying a weak relationship between the two variables.

War is costly. Therefore, nations with little to no experience with war may be more economically stable, providing a healthy economy to their citizens and protecting political, civil, and human rights. Many nations that experience war, especially if they are less

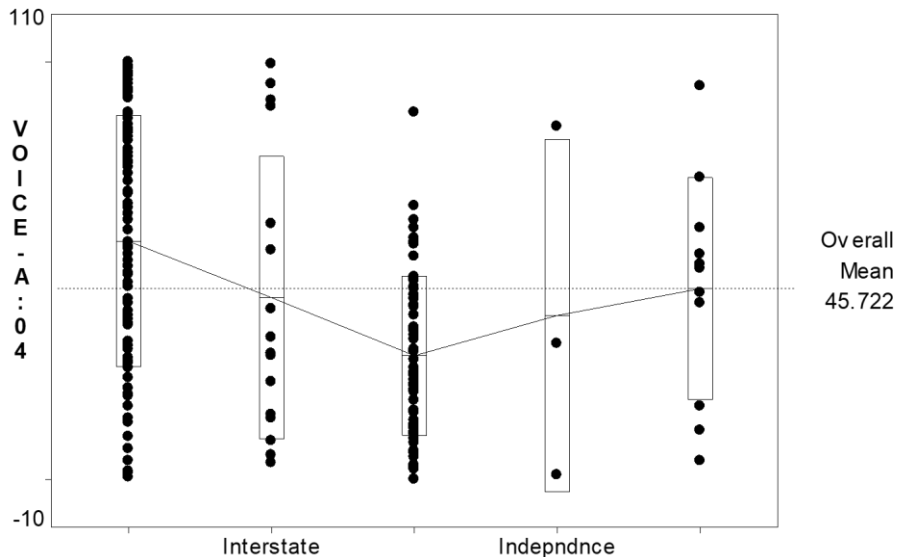


Figure 6: The Relationship Between War and Governance Quality

developed to begin with, are heavily burdened with rebuilding and perhaps reparations once the conflict has ended. Difficulty in restoring basic necessities for citizens contributes to low quality of governance in the sense of poor protection of civil liberties.

Summary

Table 1 displays all independent the variables and their measures of association with governance quality, in terms of Pearson’s correlation coefficient (r) or eta-squared.

Table 1: Summary of Measures of Association

Social Variables	Measures of Association
Multi-Culturalism	$r = -0.357$
Net Users	$r = 0.725$
Gender Equality	$r = 0.669$
Education Index	$r = 0.550$
Economic Variables	
Economic Development	eta-squared = 0.316
Political Variables	
War	eta-squared = 0.172

The category of variables that had the highest correlation with quality of government, in terms of political, civil, and human rights, are three of the social variables: net users, gender equality, and education index.

The social variables may have the most impact because they influence the government to satisfy its citizens. Additionally, people may believe that their opinions and beliefs are worthy of consideration, and therefore more actively participate in the politics of the country in order to make changes.

Of the social variables, net users had the strongest correlation to governance quality, with 0.725 on Pearson’s correlation coefficient (r) scale. Greater internet access suggests that citizens not only have the freedom to gather information, but also have the freedom to formulate and express their opinions. Additionally, with greater internet access, citizens may be able to hold their government responsible on various domestic or international issues that may impact the nation and its people.

The independent variable of war had the lowest correlation with governance quality. War itself does not impact the quality of government in a nation; however, the burden of recovery following war may impede economic development and damage the government’s relationship with its citizens.

Implications and Conclusion

This research paper sought to answer the question “Why are some nations more supportive of the rights of their citizens?” by exploring various factors that may influence a nation’s quality of government in terms of political, civil, and human rights. All the hypotheses were tested using aggregate data from the MicroCase 2013 Global file. The

independent variables in this research fell into three categories: social, economic, and political.

Not one country, region, or continent is the same. Each nation differs in various aspects, such as religion, culture, available resources, type of government, laws, and access to health care and education. The variables in the social category seem to have the most influence on governance quality, as the measures of association are all relatively strong. Nations with more access to information and education, and with greater gender equality will have a better quality of governance with respect to protection of civil rights and liberties of their citizens. Out of all the categories, the variable that had the strongest correlation to good governance is net users per 100 people. With the widespread growth and use of modern communication technology over the years, access to the internet has begun to take on the status of a basic human right. When governments allow freedoms to their citizens, a trusting relationship is more likely to form between the government and the governed.

The variable that seemed to have the least effect on governance quality is war, in the economic category. The relationship between war and governance quality was a weak one, with the measure of association, eta-squared, equaling 0.172. Although many nations did in fact demonstrate higher governance quality with no experience of wars, the nations of Norway, Spain, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom, to name a few, scored high on governance quality, despite having experienced interstate, civil, independence, or multi-type war.

The research suggests that political, social, and historical influences affect a nation's quality of governance in the sense of its protection of political, civil, and human rights. Wealthier countries may have better governance quality because citizens have more access to empowering resources and conditions such as education, internet access, health care, employment, and gender equality. An open government accepts the participation of its citizens and is more likely to create a good relationship between the government and the citizens.

Further research may include more current data, as well as comparison of the available data to past results. By comparing current data to past data, researchers can identify a progression, regression, or stagnation of governance quality in a nation. Then, political, social, and historical variables and their changes over time can be explored as factors connected to the quality of governance. Other variables to examine are religion, corruption, and income, to name a few.

Although some nations may have similar backgrounds, they may differ in their government's protection of political, civil, and human rights. Deeper research can reveal additional factors that correlate strongly to governance quality. Further research in this area will improve comprehension of all possible factors that may influence the quality of governance in a nation and the rights secured to its citizens.

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