

Analyzing the Relationship between People's Opinions on Freedom of Expression with a
Country's Development
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Abstract

People hold different opinions on freedom of expression worldwide and their opinions can affect the development of their country. The relationship between these two factors has been analyzed by few studies. In this study, multiple regression was used to investigate the effects of two different independent variables, freedom of speech and freedom of religion, on one dependent variable, mortality rate of children out of 1,000. People's opinions on freedom of speech and religion were the factors used to measure freedom of expression, while mortality rate of children out of 1,000 was used to measure development. After a multiple regression test, the results showed that the Freedom of Speech and Religion model accounted for only 7.4% of the variation in, and there was no significant relationship between freedom of speech and development. The assumed relationship that freedom of expression affects the development of a country is therefore, invalid. Although there was no significant relationship between the two variables, the relationship is still an important one to analyze, due to the fact that there could have been many confounding variables that could have affected its significance.

Introduction

Different factors account for the development of a country. Such factors include the growth of the economy, dispersion of public health and education services throughout the country, and, possibly, a country's political relations with the rest of the world. Various aspects such as the number of emigrants of a country, rates of poverty or homelessness and unemployment can be used to analyze the development of a country. Multiple studies have been conducted on the development of the country but few studies determined the effect of people's opinion on freedom of expression on development of the nation, which this study attempted.

In some countries, there are people who believe that people should not have the right to freedom of speech and practice their own religion. Some people assume that less developed countries would have more of a need for freedom of speech, due to the oppression and harsh circumstances they face. However, previous studies show that when a country has more freedom of speech, they are more developed, as their opinion on freedom of expression allowed them to progress in the modern day world. Therefore, people's opinions on freedom of expression can affect a number of things, including development, which can be measured by the "health" of a nation. One factor that can measure health within a country is the mortality rate of children under the age of five out of 1,000 (World Bank, 2015). Mortality rate was chosen as a dependent variable because when there is a higher rate of deaths of children under the age of five in a country, we assumed that the country would be relatively undeveloped.

Literature Review

Previous studies have explored a country's development and what factors affect it. In recent discussions of development, a controversial aspect has been globalization, and its effect

on the widening income inequality in China. Zhang and Zhang (2003) found that increased globalization cause the regional inequality in China to increase. On the other hand, some argue that globalization allows economic trade to flourish within countries. Neither of these arguments, however, considers the alternative view that people within these countries have different points of views on basic ideals in society, which could be a major factor in affecting the development. Bassanini and Scarpetta (2001) explored the causes of economic growth by many factors. Although factors such as trade exposure and population growth can affect a country's economic growth up to a point, the overall conclusion can be expanded to include important variables, such as people's opinions on their own government, and the overall health of the people was not included, which could impact the development of a nation heavily. Wike and Simmons (2015) explored freedom of speech within different countries, and compared the acceptance of different forms of freedom of speech within these countries. It found that Western countries were the biggest supporters of freedom of speech and religion, while European nations were more likely to want gender equality in areas such as work and government. Although this study was effective in measuring opinions on different types of speech within countries, it did not explore the effects that freedom of speech had on other aspects of the country, such as social and medical development.

Ginarte and Park (1997) explored patent rights in relation to the economic growth of the country. The study found that in countries with well developed economies, security protection was greater. However, this study only takes into account economic factors, and no other important factors, such as human rights and health within the country. Lastly, a fifth study told us a great deal about the effect of geographical features on a country's development (Make

wealth history, 2007). The article mentioned how LDCs or less developed countries are “suffering” or remain poor in wealth because of aspects such as location, climate, and resources of the country. In spite of the fact that these aspects affect the development of a country, it only measures the physical factors and does not take into account the people’s beliefs on basic human rights, such as freedom of expression. Guseva, et al. (2008) explored press freedom and development and found that freedom of the press has a positive influence on poverty, governance or violence/conflict issues. Also, Guseva, et al. (2008) reported that a freer press can contribute to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, which overall, allows for the attainment of a more acceptable level of development. The hypothesis analyzed in this study can be agreed upon but one might question if freedom of expression also positively affects the development of a country as freer press did. Although the study did measure the relationship on freedom and development, it did not measure the opinions of people, and how different forms of expression would measure a country’s development, which this study attempted to do.

Methods

Data was gathered for our two independent variables and dependent variable. Simmon and Wike (2015) explored the data used for both independent variables in this study. There were two separate data sets that measured Freedom of Expression and the data sets that were used measured opinions of freedom of speech and religion in 38 different countries. The first data set, which measured Freedom of Speech, measured the number of people out of 100 who believed or did not believe that citizens of their country were entitled to freedom of speech in that they were able to criticize the government’s policies. The data was separated into three categories: people should be able to say these things publicly, government should be able to prevent people from

saying these things, and don't know (DK)/refused. The second data set measured Freedom of Religion also measured the total number of 100 people who believe citizens of their country should be allowed the freedom to practice their own beliefs. The data was separated into four categories: people who believe freedom of religion is very important, somewhat important, not too important, not important at all, and don't know(DK)/refused. The dependent variable was collected from databank.worldbank.org. The data sets available on the website was separated by topic and the data that was obtained for the dependent variable came from the Health category. The specific 38 countries that were in the first data set were checked off, and the data used measured the mortality rate of children 0-5 years old out of 1,000. The data used was filed under the year 2013. After the data was collected, it was copied and pasted into a single Excel File, then downloaded onto SPSS. The data was then analyzed using multiple regression. Data under the column 'Very Important' for Freedom of Speech and 'Very Important' for Freedom of Religion were used for the two independent variables. The data used for the dependent variable was Mortality Rate out of 1000 for children who were younger than five years old.

Results

A model consisting of Freedom of Speech and Religion accounted for only 7.4% of the variation in, and did not significantly predict the mortality rate for children from the ages of 0-5 which was used to measure development of a country, $F(2,35)=1.402, p>0.05$

Discussion

The results showed that a model consisting of Freedom of Speech and Religion did not significantly predict the development of a country, which was measured using child mortality rate. Many people may assume that when more people in a country hold the belief that people

should have access to their rights of expression, the country will be more developed. For example, in a country which grants its citizens freedom of speech, a person would be able to voice their need for help and the government, or whichever ruling body in charge, would reciprocate their voice by answering their plea. A government may seek to take action by improving the country's health sector which includes having more educated doctors, enhancing the cleanliness of hospitals, having a supply of necessary medicines and care kits, and instilling a health care system nationwide. These actions would help to decrease the child mortality rate, the dependent variable in this study, because the country's people would have greater access to important resources. In this case, the resources would help infants survive in their youth.

However, the results show that this may not be true because the two variables did not have a significant relationship. Some variables or factors that could have affected this relationship were that the data sets did not come from the same year. The data used for freedom of speech and religion were collected in the spring of 2013, while the data used to measure the development of the country was gathered in 2015. This may affect the data in that a country's development in 2015 may be significantly different from what it was in the spring of 2013. Furthermore, this may affect the significance of the variables' relationship due to the fact that people's opinions, or the development of a country, could have modified from 2013 to 2015 as conditions in a country are constantly changing.

In addition to this, another source of error could be the exclusion of other extraneous that would affect the development of a country. For example, in a war torn country, the mortality rate of children under five would be much higher than that of places where war is not taking place. That could be due to the fact that many of the fatalities during war may be that of young children

and infants. In addition to this, the confounding factor could also affect people's opinion on freedom of expression because this may be the very factor that leads to war. Many countries used in the data set are countries where there is war or conflict, such as Syria, Israel and Palestinian territories. This can affect the study because this variable or these confounding variables were not taken into account, which can affect whether or not the relationship between the two factors was significant or not. Further research can analyze the opinions of people regarding the right to free speech in war torn countries while including this extraneous variable so that any relationships among the factors can be elucidated for.

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