

Comparative Human Development and Gender Equality Performance Analysis of Middle Eastern and North African Countries with Turkey

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“In any conflict area, it is always the women who are the first point of attack. But I think the more they have seen of oppression and violence, they have gotten more brave, more strong, more fearless than they were. You see this refusal to just keep quiet and do as you are told.”

Fatima Butto, 5 November 2013,
Interview with the Editor of the Hindu Business Line.

ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to concentrate on the very recent development performance of two country groups, namely Middle Eastern and North African countries, and to focus on Turkey in an attempt to determine the position of the country in the context of human development. To achieve this, descriptive statistical analysis is used and existing data is assessed in a comparative way to be more specific about the position of Turkey in her path of human development. The analysis period is restricted to the last five years. As a result, it is found that Turkey is in conjunction with the main trends of the countries under investigation and that it deviates from the standards of European and high human development index group of countries. In addition, Turkey's human development performance of the country mainly accentuated from its relative backwardness in the gender-based indicators. In this context, the country is not only below the averages of the European, Central Asian and high human development index group countries, but also from the relatively backward Middle Eastern countries as well, and therefore, it seems to conform more to the standards of North African countries. In the case of Turkey, instead of attempting to achieve high growth rates, and henceforth to reach high per capita income levels, it would be better for policy makers to concern with advancing the level of human development through emphasizing education, healthcare services and especially struggling with the prevailing gender inequalities in every aspect of socio-economic life.

Keywords: Human Development; Gender Equality; Turkey

JEL Classifications: J16; O10; O15

1. Introduction

Since the last decades of the previous century, development has increasingly been defined as human development rather than identified with purely economic terms, and henceforth, well-known indicators namely life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling, expected years of schooling, share of seats held by women in national parliament, maternal mortality rate, female labour participation rate, rate of population below poverty line, Gini coefficient and so forth have largely been used in concern with the level of development for an individual nation or country groups.

Although the Westernization and secularization attempts of Turkey have prevailed since the establishment of the Republic, the recent human development outcome of its economy seems to coincide with those of Middle Eastern and North African countries where Arab and Islamic cultures

dominate socio-economic life compared to highly developed European countries. Put differently, one may suggest that the development path of Turkey considerably deviates from the European trends not only in terms of economic performance but also with respect to societal, cultural and in particular with gender-based developments.

An additional argument can be associated with the fact that certain resource-rich but relatively underdeveloped countries included in the sample of the current study provides us an appropriate ground to better understand the need to construct a human development index in considering development level of the countries not via solely relying on the indicators biasing the material well-being of the countries such as absolute level of income or per capita GDP and ignoring the rest but also through consideration of the humanitarian aspect of development like looking at the achievements associated with education, healthcare, gender equality, social participation and so on.

In the light of this preliminary information, the organization of the paper can be stated as follows: The next section reviews the origins and the emergence of the human development index. The third section deals with descriptive statistical analysis of the main human development indicators of the Middle Eastern and North African countries especially focusing on the position of Turkey, and the final section evaluates the findings alongside the main arguments of the paper.

2. Emergence of Human Development Index

From the foundation of economics as a prominent field of science until around the last quarter of the twentieth century, development was perceived as the achievement of rapid growth process, and hence, it focused on the problem of rising commodity production. Therefore, the humanitarian aspect of development was neglected for a long period of time. Nevertheless, as a great number of scholars and many international organizations deliberately point out, the ultimate aim of development is human development (Griffin and Night, 1992: 576; Sen, 1992: 15; UNDP, 2014).

Even though average growth performance of all the countries including the developing ones was promising during the so called “golden age” of the post-Second World War period, social and humanitarian outcome of this historically high economic growth experience remained limited. Therefore, the focus of development shifted from economic to more societal and humanitarian indicators.

As it became more apparent from the 1980s onwards, development has largely coincided with human development, and then, the problem of defining and measuring development mostly concentrated on human development indicators. Human Development Index (HDI) initiated by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 1990 and regularly published in its series of Human Development Reports (HDRs) was the most comprehensive composite index with regard to development indicators and country coverage (UNDP, 1990). This measure has radically changed the debate on development and deeply influenced the agenda of both academics and government bureaucrats around the world since it was implemented. Criticisms and proposed alternatives abound (Taner et al., 2011), yet the index has managed to maintain its popularity and simplicity with only minor modifications over the past quarter of a century. Nowadays, researchers and policy makers are still eagerly continuing to apply it in order to determine and assess development level of the countries.

The HDI ranks all the countries in the world on a scale of 0 (lowest human development) to 1 (highest human development) basing on three final goals of development: *longevity* as measured by life expectancy at birth, *knowledge* as measured by both mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling (UNDP, 2010), and *standard of living* as measured by real Gross National Income per capita adjusted for different purchasing power parity of each country’s currency to reflect cost of living. A single composite index value is obtained for all the countries depending on these three measures of development and applying a complex formula to most recent data.

It should be mentioned that HDI does not measure absolute levels of human development; but it rather ranks the countries relative to the lowest and highest levels of attainment. At the final stage, the countries are ranked into four groups: low human development (0.000 to 0.550), medium human development (0.551 to 0.699), high human development (0.700 to 0.799) and very high development level (0.800 to 1.000) (UNDP, 2009).

The major advantage of the HDI reveals itself in its recognition of development beyond the boundaries of rapid economic growth. As the disputes on the problem of Dutch disease (The Economist, 1977; Ebrahim-zadeh, 2003) show us, some resource-rich countries may experience

growth without development, and hence, fail to reach end-products of development (Mihci, 2011). Nonetheless, HDI can be considered as an attempt to prevent such drawbacks in concerning with development level of the countries.

One should stress that HDI does not always show one to one correspondence with per capita output level of the countries. Some countries that are rich in resources like those extensively producing oil may have high per capita income levels, but they may attain relatively low ranks in term of the HDI. In fact, we argue that most of the countries covered in the current study show the symptoms described in Dutch disease problem. This means that these are resource-rich countries (major world oil exporters), and their absolute level of income are quite high, however, the structure of their economy with respect to producing the variety of manufacturing products is not developed. Moreover, such countries' human development performance is not satisfactory as well.

Some sample countries can be given in support of the above argument. For instance, although countries like Qatar and Kuwait have considerably high per capita income levels taking first (US\$ 119.029) and third place (US\$ 58.820) in 2013, they only managed to attain 31th and 46th places in HDI rankings among all the nations, (See Table 2 and Table 3). This abnormality mainly originates from the fact that accumulated wealth is unequally distributed and/or ultimate aims of development are far from been reached by the societies under investigation. Therefore, an index of human development seems to be much more appropriate to concern with the development level of the countries rather than looking simply their absolute or per capita income levels.

3. Recent Human Development Performance of the Middle Eastern and North African Countries

Before delving into the analysis of human development performance of the sample countries, a brief assessment of the main economic indicators may help us to understand their economic structure, and therefore, their current level of development. As the tables clearly present, the sample contains 16 Middle Eastern and 6 North African countries. Actually, with very few exceptions (Western Sahara, Malta, Eritrea), almost all countries of the two geographical regions are included in this study.

Although most of the international institutions prefer to consider Turkey into other regional classifications, in the current study, it is included within the Middle Eastern Countries (MEC). Other MEC are Bahrain, Cyprus, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen Republic. On the other hand, North African Countries (NAC) covered in the analysis are Algeria, Arab Republic of Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. Therefore, 22 countries including Turkey are selected for the comparative analysis.

Table 1 offers latest economic indicators for both MEC and NAC. At first glance, one may note that most of the countries in the sample are small countries with respect to population. Turkey takes the third rank after Egypt and Iran among 26 countries. On the contrary, with very few exceptions (Republic of Yemen and Sudan), most of them manage to attain considerably high per capita income levels. Special attention can be given to Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Bahrein since these countries' income level exceed to \$ 40.000 in 2013. Additionally, Qatar has the highest per capita income level in the world and Kuwait takes the third place after Liechtenstein (UNDP, 2014: 160). Turkey's per capita income level is nearly half of the average level of MEC but higher than that of NAC.

As for the share of gross capital formation in GDP, Turkey seems to attain the standards of the countries under investigation. However, the share of employment for Turkey indicates that the country is among the worst performers including the NAC. The same is true for the share of export of goods and services in GDP. Although the country's export performance was securely rising especially after it radically changed its industrialization strategy from import substitution to export orientation in 1980s; recent performance of Turkish economy remained far from the typical MEC and NAC.

For the volume of short-term external debt stocks and the amount of current account deficits, Turkey takes the leadership for the year 2013. Lastly, inflation rate of the country seems to coincide with the average level of the sample countries.

At first instance and depending only on limited macroeconomic aggregates, one may suggest that the structure of the Turkish economy resembles to that of average Middle Eastern and North African countries. But there is a significant deviation in this very roughly described trend: Most of the

countries included in the current study have quite high per capita income level and their export shares are exceptionally high as well. Such characteristics of the countries originate from the fact that they are resource-rich countries. They mostly produce and export one single commodity; and this is the most strategic energy source of the modern times, that is oil. In fact, the study includes 8 of the currently 12 members of OPEC organization. These are Algeria, Islamic State of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. Therefore, most of the sample countries may show symptoms of Dutch disease having premature industrial structure but attaining very high level of per capita income although other end-products of development are lacking. To test this hypothesis, we should focus our attention on the human development indicators rather than looking at solely economic ones. The remaining statistical tables are constructed for this purpose.

Table 1. Main Economic Indicators of Middle Eastern and North African Countries, 2013

| Countries | Population (millions) | GDP per capita PPP (Current inter. \$) | Gross Capital Format. (as % of GDP) | Employ. to Population Ratio (% of age 25 and older)* | Exports of goods and services (as % of GDP) | External Debt Stocks, short term (million US \$) | Current Account Balance (million US \$)* | Inflation, GDP Deflator (annual %) |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|------------------------------------|
| Middle Eastern Countries (MEC) | | | | | | | | |
| Bahrain | 1.3 | 43,824 | 20* | 72.5 | 75* | - | 2,938 | 2.4 |
| Cyprus | 1.1 | 30,489* | 18** | 62.4 | 40** | - | -1,577 | 1.6 |
| Iran, Islamic Rep. | 77.4 | 15,586 | 25.8* | 44.7 | - | 5,337 | - | 17.8 |
| Iraq | 33.4 | 15,188 | 18 | 44.0 | 42 | - | 29,541 | -0.7 |
| Israel | 8.1 | 32,760 | 21* | 63.4 | 36* | - | 849 | 2.5 |
| Jordan | 6.5 | 11,782 | 28 | 44.3 | 42 | 10,594 | -5,693 | 5.6 |
| Kuwait | 3.4 | 85,660* | 15* | 76.3 | 71* | - | 79,209 | 9.0* |
| Lebanon | 4.5 | 17,170 | 28 | 50.0 | 63 | 3,943 | -1,662 | 1.7 |
| Oman | 3.6 | 44,052 | - | 67.6 | 62* | - | 8,312 | -2.1 |
| Palestine, State of | 4.2 | 4,576* | 14* | 40.3 | 16* | - | -2,291 | -0.9* |
| Qatar | 2.2 | 131,758 | 29* | 89.8 | 76* | - | 61,585 | 1.0 |
| Saudi Arabia | 28.8 | 53,780 | 27 | 60.4 | 52 | - | 164,763 | -2.2 |
| Syrian, Arab Rep. | 22.8 | - | 18.8* | 47.0 | - | 358 | -367** | - |
| <i>Turkey</i> | <i>74.9</i> | <i>18,975</i> | <i>21</i> | <i>48.5</i> | <i>26</i> | <i>100,832</i> | <i>-48,507</i> | <i>5.9</i> |
| United Arab Emirates | 9.3 | 58,042* | 23* | 84.4 | 95* | - | - | 5.5* |
| Yemen, Rep. | 24.4 | 3,958 | 11.7* | 50.0 | - | 139 | -1,029 | 7.9 |
| North African Countries (NAC) | | | | | | | | |
| Algeria | 39.2 | 13,304 | 37* | 45.4 | 37* | 1,205 | 12,246 | 2.5 |
| Egypt, Arab Rep. | 82.1 | 11,085 | 14 | 51.2 | 18 | 6,657 | -6,977 | 9.0 |
| Libya | 6.2 | 21,397 | 27.9* | 55.4 | - | - | 23,836 | 2.6 |
| Morocco | 33.0 | 7,200 | 35* | 51.5 | 36* | 4,167 | -9,571 | 1.5 |
| Sudan | 38.0 | 3,372 | 22* | 55.1 | 6* | 5,451 | -6,341 | 49.3 |
| Tunisia | 10.9 | 11,092 | 24* | 47.1 | 49* | 6,229 | -3,721 | 5.4 |

* 2012

** 2010

Source: World Bank (2014); UNDP (2014).

Table 2 demonstrates HDI values and rankings of MEC and NAC from 2010 to 2013. Analysis period is kept short due to the changes in the indicators used to construct HDI after 2010. Additionally, the analysis is concentrated on the latest improvements. In other words, the period is very short to investigate changes in the absolute and relative position of the countries. However, some direct inferences can be made depending on the information presented in Table 2. First of all, HDI values and rankings of the countries do not show homogeneous characteristics. They are ranked in different human development levels. While some of them are placed at very high human development groups namely Israel, Qatar, Cyprus, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrein and Kuwait, two countries - Sudan and Yemen Republic- are ranked within the low human development group in 2013 (See Table 2). All very high human development countries are from Middle Eastern region.

Table 2. Human Development Index Values and Rankings of the MEC and NAC, 2010-2013.

| Countries | HDI Values | | HDI Ranking ¹ | |
|---|--------------------|--------------|--------------------------|------|
| | 2010 | 2013 | 2010 | 2013 |
| Middle Eastern Countries (MEC) | | | | |
| Bahrain | 0.801 | 0.815 | 39 | 44 |
| Cyprus | 0.810 | 0.845 | 35 | 32 |
| Iran, Islamic Rep. | 0.702 | 0.749 | 70 | 75 |
| Iraq | 0.573 ² | 0.642 | 132 ² | 120 |
| Israel | 0.872 | 0.888 | 15 | 19 |
| Jordan | 0.681 | 0.745 | 82 | 77 |
| Kuwait | 0.771 | 0.814 | 47 | 46 |
| Lebanon | 0.739 ² | 0.765 | 71 ² | 65 |
| Oman | 0.705 ² | 0.783 | 89 ² | 56 |
| Palestine, State of | 0.641 ² | 0.686 | 114 ² | 107 |
| Qatar | 0.803 | 0.851 | 38 | 31 |
| Saudi Arabia | 0.752 | 0.836 | 55 | 34 |
| Syria Arab Rep. | 0.589 | 0.658 | 111 | 118 |
| <i>Turkey</i> | <i>0.679</i> | <i>0.759</i> | 83 | 69 |
| United Arab Emirates | 0.815 | 0.827 | 32 | 40 |
| Yemen, Rep. | 0.439 | 0.500 | 133 | 154 |
| North African Countries (NAC) | | | | |
| Algeria | 0.677 | 0.717 | 84 | 93 |
| Egypt, Arab Rep. | 0.620 | 0.682 | 101 | 110 |
| Libya | 0.755 | 0.784 | 53 | 55 |
| Morocco | 0.567 | 0.617 | 114 | 130 |
| Sudan | 0.379 | 0.473 | 154 | 166 |
| Tunisia | 0.683 | 0.721 | 81 | 90 |
| Arab States | 0.588 | 0.682 | - | - |
| Europe and Central Asia | 0.702 | 0.738 | - | - |
| Least Developed Countries | 0.386 | 0.487 | - | - |
| High Human Development Index Group | 0.717 | 0.735 | - | - |

¹While 187 countries are ranked for 2013; there are 187 and 169 countries for 2011 and 2010 respectively.

²2011 value and ranking. **Source:** UNDP (2014, 2011, 2010).

Although the analysis period is short, all the countries realized an improvement in their HDI values. In other words, changes in the HDI values during 2010-2013 period are positive for all the countries. On the other hand, 12 out of 26 countries' rankings are worsened from 2010 to 2013. This trend is particularly valid for NAC.

In the meantime, it should be noted that absolute HDI value of Turkey strikingly increased reflecting itself with a radical improvement in the rankings from 83th to 69th place within just three years. Nevertheless, the country preserved its level of human development as “high” in the terminal year of analysis. Additionally, HDI value of Turkey managed to catch up and even slightly passed to those of European and Central Asian countries and high human development index group averages in 2013. More detailed analysis in this context can be elaborated relying on the human development indicators presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Human Development Indicators of MEC and NAC, 2010-2013.

| Countries | Life Expectancy at Birth | | Mean Years of Schooling | | Expected Years of Schooling | | GNI Per capita (PPP, US \$) | |
|---|--------------------------|-------|-------------------------|------|-----------------------------|------|-----------------------------|---------|
| | 2010 | 2013 | 2010 | 2013 | 2010 | 2013 | 2010 | 2013 |
| Middle Eastern Countries (MEC) | | | | | | | | |
| Bahrain | 76.0 | 76.6 | 9.4 | 9.4 | 14.3 | 14.4 | 26.664 | 32.072 |
| Cyprus | 80.0 | 79.8 | 9.9 | 11.6 | 13.8 | 14.0 | 21.962 | 26.771 |
| Iran, Islamic Rep. | 71.9 | 74.0 | 7.2 | 7.8 | 14.0 | 15.2 | 11.764 | 13.451 |
| Iraq | 69.0 ¹ | 69.4 | 5.6 ¹ | 5.6 | 9.8 ¹ | 10.1 | 3.177 ¹ | 14.007 |
| Israel | 81.2 | 81.8 | 11.9 | 12.5 | 15.6 | 15.7 | 27.831 | 29.966 |
| Jordan | 73.1 | 73.9 | 8.6 | 9.9 | 13.1 | 13.3 | 5.956 | 11.337 |
| Kuwait | 77.9 | 74.3 | 6.1 | 7.2 | 12.5 | 14.6 | 55.719 | 85.820 |
| Lebanon | 72.6 ¹ | 80.0 | 7.9 ¹ | 7.9 | 13.8 ¹ | 13.2 | 13.076 ¹ | 16.263 |
| Oman | 73.0 ¹ | 76.6. | 5.5 ¹ | 6.8 | 11.8 ¹ | 13.6 | 22.841 ¹ | 42.191 |
| Palestine, State of | 72.8 ¹ | 73.2 | 8.0 ¹ | 8.9 | 12.7 ¹ | 13.2 | 2.656 ¹ | 5.168 |
| Qatar | 76.0 | 78.4 | 7.3 | 9.1 | 12.7 | 13.8 | 79.426 | 119.029 |
| Saudi Arabia | 73.3 | 75.5 | 7.8 | 8.7 | 13.5 | 15.6 | 24.726 | 52.109 |
| Syria, Arab Rep. | 74.6 | 74.6 | 4.9 | 6.6 | 10.5 | 12.0 | 4.760 | 5.771 |
| <i>Turkey</i> | 72.2 | 75.3 | 6.5 | 7.6 | 11.8 | 14.4 | 13.359 | 18.391 |
| United Arab Emirates | 77.7 | 76.8 | 9.2 | 9.1 | 11.5 | 13.3 | 58.006 | 58.068 |
| Yemen, Rep. | 63.9 | 63.1 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 8.6 | 9.2 | 2.387 | 3.945 |
| North African Countries (NAC) | | | | | | | | |
| Algeria | 72.9 | 71.0 | 7.2 | 7.6 | 12.8 | 14.0 | 8.320 | 12.555 |
| Egypt, Arab Rep. | 70.5 | 71.2 | 6.5 | 6.4 | 11.0 | 13.0 | 5.889 | 10.400 |
| Libya | 74.5 | 75.3 | 7.3 | 7.5 | 16.5 | 16.1 | 17.068 | 21.666 |
| Morocco | 71.8 | 70.9 | 4.4 | 4.4 | 10.5 | 11.6 | 4.628 | 6.905 |
| Sudan | 58.9 | 62.1 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 4.4 | 7.3 | 2.051 | 3.428 |
| Tunisia | 74.3 | 75.9 | 6.5 | 6.5 | 14.5 | 14.6 | 7.979 | 10.440 |
| Arab States | 69.1 | 70.2 | 5.7 | 6.3 | 10.8 | 11.8 | 7.861 | 15.817 |
| Europe and Central Asia | 69.5 | 71.3 | 9.2 | 9.6 | 13.6 | 13.6 | 11.462 | 12.415 |
| Least Developed Countries | 57.7 | 61.5 | 3.7 | 3.9 | 8.0 | 9.4 | 1.393 | 2.126 |
| High Human Development Index Group | 72.6 | 74.5 | 8.3 | 8.1 | 13.8 | 13.4 | 12.286 | 13.231 |

¹Data is for 2011 instead of 2010.

Source: UNDP (2014, 2011, 2010).

Firstly, life expectancy at birth has increased for most of the countries. But the longevity for 6 out of 26 countries declined during the analysis period. This is mostly related with the worsening health conditions and severe poverty (like Yemen Republic and Morocco) on the one hand, and internal wars or clashes (like Arab Republic of Syria) on the other. There is a considerable improvement in the life expectancy figures for Turkey in the last three years. Nonetheless, eight countries' citizens attained longer average life from the one that Turkey reached in 2013.

Secondly, education attainments for the countries under investigation present striking improvement. In that respect, particular emphasis can be given to the mean years of schooling. For this education related indicator, all the countries increased their average values for the analysis period except United Arab Emirates and Arab Republic of Egypt. The mean years of schooling that Turkey achieved in 2013 was only slightly better from Iraq, Oman, Arab Republic of Syria, Yemen Republic, Arab Republic of Egypt, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. Thirteen remaining countries performed much better than Turkey in the context of education attainments. Therefore, one may suggest that the education performance of Turkey adversely affected its level of human development in comparison with other sample countries. Furthermore, education indicators of Turkey are lower than the averages of European and Central Asian Countries and high human development index groups on one hand, and not far away from those of Arab States on the other.

Thirdly, per capita income level of all countries greatly increased during the analysis period. In this context, the performance of Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia is impressive. Per capita income growth of other countries is "moderate" including Turkey. With a per capita income level of 18.391 in 2013, Turkey takes 9th place among 16 MEC. Comparing to oil exporting countries of Middle Eastern region, however, by taking into account the economic structure of the country in general and the maturity of the industrial sector in particular, one may argue that Turkey performed relatively well since she produces not a single commodity but a variety of manufactured goods and her exports do not depend on a limited amount of energy resources (Boratav and Yeldan, 2006; Özçelik and Taymaz, 2004).

In total, Turkey seems to perform moderately and alongside the averages of MEC and NAC with respect to longevity and material standards of living. But the relative performance of the country is low in the context of educational attainments. Therefore, policy suggestions associated to improve human development performance of the country should concentrate on the education area rather than improving health services and achieving rapid economic growth.

Further disparities in human development performance of the Turkish economy from MEC and NAC can be detected through referring to gender-based indicators. From purely biological reasons, women generally live longer than men. As can be seen from Table 4, this natural law also applies to all the countries under examination. However, it should be noted that the gender differences in certain countries like Iraq, Arab Republic of Syria and Turkey are unusually large. For Syria and Iraq where long lasting internal clashes and wars are continuing and adversely affecting the mortality of man in recent years, such extraordinary gender differences can be understandable. For Turkey, relatively low female participation in labour (See Table 5) can be considered as one of the reasons of such a high female life expectancies compared to men. Meanwhile, Turkish longevity goes hand in hand with the European and central Asian Countries and with the average of high human development index group of countries. Additionally, with few exceptions, average life expectancies for men and women are approximately similar for both MEC and NAC. Furthermore, mean years of schooling for certain sample countries are very low in comparison with European standards, and there is a great divergence between mean years and expected years of schooling. This finding is particularly true for most of NAC, Iraq, Syria, Yemen Republic and Turkey. Moreover, the gap between male and female is unusually large for the same groups of countries. Therefore, concerning gender-based education indicators of the HDI, Turkey had some difficulties to attain MEC, European and Central Asian and high human development index group averages (See Table 4).

Moreover, one of the most obvious discrepancy between men and women can be observed in the field of material well-being reflected itself in the per capita income GNI of the countries. Most of the sample countries indicate great gender inequalities with respect to income levels. The degree of inequality reaches unacceptably high levels for the countries like Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, Yemen Republic, Algeria, Arab Republic of Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. In the case of Turkey, the gap between male

and female income earnings reaches more than three times. With this gender discrepancy in its income level, the Turkish economy seems to be far away from European, Central Asian and High Human Development Index Group of countries and conform mostly to the standards of Arab States (See Table 4).

Table 4. Gender Based Human Development Index of MEC and NAC, 2013

| Countries | Life Expectancy at Birth | | Mean Years of Schooling | | Expected Years of Schooling | | Estimated GNI Per capita (PPP US \$) | | Human Development Index | |
|---|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| Middle Eastern Countries (MEC) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bahrain | 77.5 | 75.9 | 9.1 | 9.6 | 15.1 | 13.7 | 24.531 | 36.660 | 0.798 | 0.831 |
| Cyprus | 81.8 | 77.9 | 10.7 | 12.6 | 14.0 | 13.9 | 19.787 | 33.461 | 0.817 | 0.869 |
| Iran, Islamic Rep. | 76.1 | 77.2 | 7.1 | 8.6 | 15.0 | 15.3 | 4.159 | 22.631 | 0.672 | 0.793 |
| Iraq | 73.2 | 65.9 | 4.4 | 6.7 | 8.7 | 11.4 | 4.246 | 23.555 | 0.556 | 0.693 |
| Israel | 83.6 | 79.9 | 12.6 | 12.5 | 16.1 | 15.2 | 24.636 | 35.402 | 0.879 | 0.893 |
| Jordan | 75.6 | 72.3 | 9.4 | 10.4 | 13.5 | 13.1 | 2.875 | 19.459 | 0.658 | 0.781 |
| Kuwait | 75.5 | 73.5 | 7.9 | 6.8 | 15.2 | 14.2 | 43.134 | 114.532 | 0.801 | 0.812 |
| Lebanon | 82.3 | 78.1 | 7.6 | 8.2 | 13.0 | 13.3 | 7.199 | 25.038 | 0.715 | 0.794 |
| Oman | 79.0 | 74.8 | - | - | 13.9 | 13.4 | 17.346 | 56.424 | - | - |
| Palestine, State of | 75.0 | 71.5 | 8.4 | 9.3 | 14.0 | 12.5 | 1.651 | 8.580 | 0.612 | 0.628 |
| Qatar | 79.5 | 77.8 | 10.1 | 8.7 | 14.0 | 13.9 | 45.863 | 141.468 | 0.838 | 0.856 |
| Saudi Arabia | 77.6 | 73.9 | 8.0 | 9.2 | 15.9 | 15.4 | 16.197 | 78.689 | 0.773 | 0.861 |
| Syria, Arab Rep. | 77.8 | 71.8 | 6.1 | 7.1 | 12.0 | 12.1 | 1.922 | 9.478 | 0.588 | 0.691 |
| <i>Turkey</i> | <i>78.7</i> | <i>71.8</i> | <i>6.4</i> | <i>8.7</i> | <i>13.8</i> | <i>15.0</i> | <i>8.813</i> | <i>28.318</i> | <i>0.704</i> | <i>0.796</i> |
| United Arab Emirates | 78.2 | 76.1 | 10.2 | 8.7 | 13.9 | 12.9 | 23.903 | 72.659 | 0.800 | 0.835 |
| Yemen, Rep. | 64.5 | 61.8 | 1.2 | 3.8 | 7.7 | 10.6 | 1.775 | 6.080 | 0.415 | 0.562 |
| North African Countries (NAC) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Algeria | 72.7 | 69.4 | 5.9 | 7.8 | 14.2 | 13.8 | 3.695 | 21.219 | 0.629 | 0.746 |
| Egypt, Arab Rep. | 73.6 | 68.8 | 5.3 | 7.5 | 12.7 | 13.3 | 4.225 | 16.522 | 0.617 | 0.722 |
| Libya | 77.3 | 73.5 | 7.5 | 7.5 | 16.4 | 15.9 | 10.649 | 32.678 | 0.749 | 0.805 |
| Morocco | 72.7 | 69.1 | 3.2 | 5.6 | 10.6 | 11.6 | 3.215 | 10.692 | 0.545 | 0.658 |
| Sudan | 63.9 | 60.3 | 2.5 | 3.8 | - | - | 1.692 | 5.153 | - | - |
| Tunisia | 78.3 | 73.6 | 5.5 | 7.5 | 15.0 | 14.0 | 4.751 | 16.226 | 0.669 | 0.751 |
| Arab States | 72.2 | 68.4 | 4.9 | 6.7 | 12.1 | 12.8 | 6.991 | 23.169 | 0.626 | 0.722 |
| Europe and Central Asia | 75.4 | 67.3 | 8.8 | 9.8 | 13.4 | 13.8 | 7.287 | 17.867 | 0.705 | 0.752 |
| Least Developed Countries | 62.8 | 60.3 | 2.9 | 4.5 | 9.0 | 10.1 | 1.576 | 2.629 | 0.447 | 0.520 |
| High Human Development Index Group | 76.8 | 72.3 | 7.5 | 8.5 | 13.4 | 13.1 | 9.426 | 16.966 | 0.710 | 0.750 |

Source: UNDP (2014).

As a natural consequence of the above trends, one may detect impressive difference in the gender-based HDI value of Turkey for 2013. While HDI value (0.796) for men in Turkey approaches to very high human development group, that of women value (0.704) only managed to surpass low human development group with a small fraction of 0.005. Therefore, human development performance of Turkey seems to be severely accentuated with the gender inequalities inherent in its development process. This observation is valid even depending on the absolute data. Among 21 countries that can be drawn comparable descriptive statistical data, Turkish performance with respect to HDI value is one of the worst (actually 8th) in 2013. Therefore, comparative analysis also confirms serious gender-related problems in an attempt to achieve higher human development level of the country. Particular emphasis can be given to the field of educational attainments namely average and expected years of schooling and per capita income level.

Table 5. Current Position of Women in Political and Social Life of ME and NAC

| Countries | Share of Seats in Parliament (% held by women) (2013) | Maternal Mortality Rate (deaths per 100,000 live births) (2010) | Ratio of female to male tertiary enrolment (%) (2011-2012) | Labor Force Participation Rate (% ages 15 and over) (2012) | | Population with at least some secondary education (% ages 25 and older) (2005-2012) | | Adolescent Fertility Rate (births per 1000 women ages 15-19) (2012) |
|---|---|---|--|--|-------------|---|-------------|---|
| | | | | Female | Male | Female | Male | |
| Middle Eastern Countries (MEC) | | | | | | | | |
| Bahrain | 18.8 | 20 | 198 | 39.4 | 87.2 | 74.4 | 80.4 | 14 |
| Cyprus | 10.7 | 10 | 118 | 55.8 | 70.8 | 72.2 | 79.6 | 5 |
| Iran, Islamic Rep. | 3.1 | 21 | 100 | 16.4 | 73.1 | 62.2 | 67.6 | 32 |
| Iraq | 25.2 | 63 | - | 14.7 | 69.7 | 22.0 | 42.7 | 69 |
| Israel | 22.5 | 7 | 132 | 58.1 | 69.5 | 84.4 | 87.3 | 8 |
| Jordan | 12.0 | 63 | 115 | 15.3 | 66.2 | 69.5 | 78.5 | 26 |
| Kuwait | 6.2 | 14 | - | 43.4 | 82.8 | 55.6 | 56.3 | 14 |
| Lebanon | 3.1 | 25 | 107 | 22.8 | 70.5 | 38.8 | 38.9 | 12 |
| Oman | 9.6 | 32 | 145 | 28.6 | 81.8 | 47.2 | 57.1 | 11 |
| Palestine, State of | - | 64 | 141 | 15.2 | 66.3 | 31.5 | 32.2 | 46 |
| Qatar | 0.1 | 7 | 676 | 50.8 | 95.6 | 66.7 | 59.0 | 10 |
| Saudi Arabia | 19.9 | 24 | 106 | 18.2 | 75.5 | 60.5 | 70.3 | 10 |
| Syria, Arab Rep. | 12 | 70 | 101 | 13.4 | 72.7 | 29.0 | 38.9 | 42 |
| <i>Turkey</i> | <i>14.2</i> | <i>20</i> | <i>85</i> | <i>29.4</i> | <i>70.8</i> | <i>39.0</i> | <i>60.0</i> | <i>31</i> |
| United Arab Emirates | 17.5 | 12 | - | 46.6 | 91.0 | 73.1 | 61.3 | 28 |
| Yemen, Rep. | 0.7 | 200 | 44 | 25.2 | 71.8 | 7.6 | 24.4 | 47 |
| North African Countries (NAC) | | | | | | | | |
| Algeria | 25.8 | 97 | 148 | 15.0 | 70.9 | 20.9 | 27.3 | 10 |
| Egypt, Arab Rep. | 2.8 | 66 | 96 | 23.6 | 74.6 | 43.4 | 59.3 | 43 |
| Libya | 16.5 | 58 | - | 30.0 | 76.4 | 55.6 | 44.0 | 3 |
| Morocco | 11.0 | 100 | 89 | 43.0 | 57.4 | 20.1 | 36.3 | 36 |
| Sudan | 24.1 | 730 | - | 31.2 | 76.0 | 12.8 | 18.2 | 84 |
| Tunisia | 26.7 | 56 | 159 | 25.1 | 70.6 | 32.8 | 46.1 | 5 |
| Arab States | 13.8 | 164 | - | 24.7 | 73.2 | 32.9 | 46.4 | - |
| Europe and Central Asia | 18.2 | 31 | - | 45.5 | 70.2 | 70.4 | 80.6 | - |
| Least Developed Countries | 20.3 | 389 | - | 64.0 | 81.6 | 16.5 | 27.2 | - |
| High Human Development Index Group | 18.8 | 42 | - | 57.1 | 77.1 | 60.2 | 69.1 | - |

Source: World Bank (2014); UNDP (2014).

Further supportive evidence for the above arguments can be provided depending on the data presented in Table 5. This table is constructed mainly taking into account statistics related with the position of women in the social life of MEC and NAC.

The current position of women in political and social life of women does not provide us an optimistic picture for MEC and NAC. Women's share of seats in Parliament rarely exceeds one quarter of the total. The share of Turkish women remained with % 14.2 in 2013 being even below to the shares of relatively low human development countries like Iraq, Algeria, Sudan, and Tunisia. In fact, for this indicator, Turkey's position is only comparable with the average of Arab States and remains even below from the average share of least developed countries (See Table 5).

Controversially, the comparative position of Turkey is promising for maternal mortality rates. The rate of the country is only higher than that of five countries in the sample. With a rate of "20" deaths per 100.000 births in 2010, Turkey placed itself even far below the averages of high human development index group.

Nevertheless, the impression is completely reversed when education related indicators like "ratio of female to male tertiary enrolment" and "population with at least some secondary education" are considered. In this framework, the relative position of the women in Turkey is very dramatic. For the ratio of female to male tertiary enrolment, Turkey is only better than the Republic of Yemen and worse from other countries where there are available data. Again, the "female" share of population with at least some secondary education is very low relative to other sample countries. In comparison with other countries of Middle East and North Africa, however, the same share is not too low for the males in Turkey. Consequently, while Turkish performance is far away from the averages of Arab States when men are concerned, but it is slightly higher for women's share of at least some secondary education is taking into account (See Table 5).

Additionally, adolescent fertility rate of Turkey is only on the 9th rank among 22 MEC and NAC. Last but not least, female labour participation rate of Turkey is almost 60% less than the male's rate in 2012. Such gender discrimination against men was frequently observed for other countries under investigation. Turkey's labour participation rates for both women and men seem to coincide roughly with Arab States standards. Moreover, the female labour participation rates placed on the 10th rank among 22 MEC and NAC. With this performance, its rate remained far below the averages of not only European, Central Asian and high human development index group but also from that of least developed countries (See Table 5).

4. Concluding Remarks

The current paper focused on the recent development performance of two culturally and socially similar regional groups under the titles of Middle Eastern and North African countries. Having included in the first category, the emphasis is devoted to underline the relative position of Turkish economy in the context of human development.

Data extracted and combined from both World Bank and UNDP sources guide us to infer that the economic structure of the Turkish economy is becoming increasingly mature in comparison with many Middle Eastern and North African countries showing negative symptoms of producing and exporting single commodity, and in the context of several macroeconomic indicators with the possible exception of heavy reliance on the foreign inflow of financial resources.

Assuming that economic growth is necessary but not sufficient condition of development, the focus of interest shifted to the search for human development performance of Turkey in a comparative way. First of all, one should mention that the findings associated with the human development performance of the examined countries greatly support the need to use HDI as a measure of development to be more concrete about the ultimate aims of development covering societal, humanitarian and its egalitarian aspects. Put differently, without the evidence obtained from the human development indicators, and via depending solely on purely economic and material well-being like absolute amount of GNP and/or per capita income level, one may misinterpret real development level of a country. As is indicated throughout the study, this is particularly true in the case of high income oil-rich countries of the Middle Eastern region where their ranks of HDI values are unexpectedly low. This, in turn offers a direct support of identifying development with human development rather than defining it with economic growth indicators. Additionally, human development index, as it has currently been, seem to be more appropriate to measure development

level of the countries as opposed to per capita income statistics.

Furthermore, recent comparative human development performance of Turkey vindicates that the country is in line with the main trends of the countries under investigation and it deviates from the standards of European and high human development index group of countries. In a different manner, one may suggest that the current development pattern of Turkey considerably diverges from the Western trends in terms of societal and cultural developments.

What may be more alarming for Turkey is that the human development performance of the country is being jeopardized, mainly from its relative backwardness in the gender-based indicators. In this context, the country is not only below the averages of the European, Central Asian and high human development index group countries, but also from the relatively less developed Middle Eastern countries as well, and hence, it seems to conform more to the standards of North African countries.

To sum up, in the case of Turkey, instead of endeavouring to achieve rapid growth rates, and henceforth to reach high per capita income figures, it would be better for policy makers to concern themselves with advancing the level of human development through emphasizing education, healthcare services and especially struggling with the prevailing gender inequalities in every aspect of socio-economic life. Without radically changing current trends in the life of Turkish women, improving human development level of the country seems to be a dream for the foreseeable future. As an initial step, early Westernization efforts of the country may be reconsidered in a new and innovative way.

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