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The Politics of Inequality and Social Vices Nexus in Nigeria

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Abstract

This research work is aimed at answering the questions of why the increasing inequality, crime rate and poverty in Nigeria. Two models were formulated addressing the dependent variables – inequality and crime rate. It employed the ordinary least square (OLS) method approach to analyse the variables of interest. The results indicate that human development index increased inequality by 6.522725 units, reduced crime rate by 0.137081 units respectively while crime rate and poverty reduced inequality by 2.919025 and 1.218252units respectively. Also it is found that human development index, poverty and inequality all reduced crime rate by 0.37081units, 0.161007units and 0.098731units respectively. It is therefore evident from the study that government should therefore tame corruption and increase palliatives that reduces unemployment hence poverty.

Keywords: Inequality, Politics, Crime Rate, Poverty, Unemployment, Ordinary Least Square, Human Development index.

Introduction

Welfare economics as a branch of economics that deals with normative issues whose purpose is assessing how well the economy works rather that describing how the economy works is faced with myriad of challenges. One of these challenges is the issue of economic and political inequality. While economic inequality is the difference of how assets, wealth, or income are distributed among individuals and/or gap between rich and poor in other words known as the wealth gap. It is therefore said to be the unequal distribution of income, and opportunities between different groups in society (Jantti & Jenkins, 2010). Political inequality comes into play when decisions made by political bodies comes with unequal influence and outcomes. This has been a burning issue among nations as daily people are thrown into poverty with little or no hope of getting out of it.

The over concentration of wealth and power of any country is actually termed its economic inequality. The lack of political representation caused by unbalanced power distribution creates power elites, loss of individual liberties, civil rights and authority abuse of which in Nigeria the clamour for ethnic identity, restructuring, land grabbing by Fulani herdsmen, youths involvement in cybercrime and various rituals are some of the outcomes. For example, while the Goodluck Ebere Jonathans government between 2011 and 2015 had 31% women representation in its appointments, the present administration of General Mohammadu Buhari is having only 16%

women representation in ministerial appointments translating to six out of thirty seven ministers. Chitra Nagarajan captured this scenario thus "this development points to a disturbing trend when it comes to Nigerian women in positions of political leadership. Whereas women were 9% of the national assembly elected in 2007, this figure fell to 7% in 2011. It is at its lowest in the current assembly: only 5.6% of members of the House of Representatives and 6.5% of senators are women. This is far below the global average of 22.5% and the average for sub-Saharan African countries of 23.4%. There is yet to have ever been a woman governor of any of the nation's 36 states. Indeed, as of 2012, only 4% of councillors at the local government level were women".

The reason for this abysmal outing by women is not far-fetched as it ranges from politics being capital intensive in Nigeria to people's perception about women in politics. The perception that women do a lot of immoral things such as sleeping around and corrupt practices may be key. However, evidence abound that women politicians are competent and hold high standards. This is potentially pushing a lot of masses into crimes so as to be able to mitigate the increasing inequality. Little wonder though there is increased cyber-crime activities, kidnappings, human trafficking, and killing for money, embezzlement, bribery and corruption, book haram, banditry and calls for self-determination.

When wealth distribution is unbalanced, it leads to loss of economic opportunity and social mobility, hence creating a permanent class, increase in illiteracy, unemployment, homelessness, hunger and diseases and these are viable threats to the communal and world security at large. However, there is a direct link between economy and national security as it is necessary to understand the importance of a clountry's economic situation, development and impacts via structuralism (Essays, UK. 2018).

In Nigeria, climbing up the social ladder seems a dream for so many. It is on record that as at 2018, Nigeria with an estimated population of 200 million overtook other countries like India to become the poverty capital of the world having about 87 million people in extreme poverty with India having 73 million people (Mailafia, 2019). Being born in poverty with little chance of climbing the social ladder does not confine one into poverty. Climbing up the social ladder can be achieved using education at all levels, skills acquisition enhancement, and training policies alongside social assistance programs. Broadly speaking, Economic inequality can be discussed under wealth and income inequality. While wealth inequality concerns itself with how a small group of people in the world own most of the world's stuff, income inequality is all about the differences in what people get paid in the economy. Whereas wealth inequality is on the increase, income inequality assumes the top earners earning more and more, while the average earners wages is being stagnated or rising at a lower rate.

Political inequality is another form of inequality not receiving much attention as its contemporaries such as gender, income, educational, health and so on. This form of inequality has come to stay as it seems to be embedded in democracy and a broader matrix of relationships which includes ties based on ethnicity, race, gender, religion, and region which ultimately results in institutionalization of clientelism (Dubrow, 2014; Echeverri-Gent, 2009;Van de Walle, 2008).

Rather than making inequality a political agenda, the conflicts between the elite class causes what may be termed elite-driven democratization, hence in attempting to expand their support, they use clientelism to incorporate non-elites (Keefer & Knack, 2002).

Political inequality can be said to be the unequal influence over decisions made by political bodies and the unequal outcomes of these decisions. This means that it is a structured difference in political resources distribution, that as long as it has started in a society, it continues without being stopped but has to be stopped (Dubrow, 2014; Brady, Blome, & Kleider, 2016). However, the challenge has been on how to measure political resources as its unequal distribution amounts to political inequality. Dahl (1996); Dubrow (2014) saw political resources as including almost anything that can be used to achieve political ends – including money, reputation, legal status, social capital and knowledge. The criticism has been on how to answer the question of how much of political inequality that exists in a system. Hence political inequality can be described as; during the voting process, every individual has a vote to cast, but some have political machinery so as to endorse or support someone, while some have the money or clout in influencing the outcome of the votes. In essence, all voters are not equal. Echeverri-Gent (2009) opined that politics contributes to high inequality especially if the political process enables the elites to configure political and economic institutions in ways that protect their interests. According to him, economic and political institutions by supporting high inequality, diminishes the efficiency of resource allocation and unnecessarily they limit the benefits to the poor.

There is evidence from recent studies that politics of inequality is compelling when compared with the traditional inequality. It is evident that natural endowments in Sub-Saharan Africa region shaped colonial institutions. In Van de Walles opinion, the colonial institutions seems to have set the precedence for the ever rising inequality since the colonial institutions operated on a class formation which translated into the fabrics of state building originating from economic institutions, whereby political power was often used to gain economic advantages within the colonial rule (Van de Walle, 2008). Apparently the political class in Sub-Saharan Africa inherited this type of structure, with the aid of their colonial leaders for the sole How does purpose of ensuring that their economic interests were protected. Keefer and Knack said that this may lead to polarization as the politics of redistribution, political violence, ethnic violence etc. are all caused in large extent by polarisation or inequality (Keefer & Knack, 2002). Studies have found that Africa seems to have the highest inequality level persistently over the past decades with a long pattern of it being higher than expected. Inequality in income, education, consumption, health and nutrition, access to public services abound in Sub-Saharan Africa and Africa at large. There is persistent labour-market inequalities and inequality in the ability to influence decision making on issues that affect and better the lives of the public. However, these forms of inequality are rooted in political, ethnic, gender, employment, education and other dimension with the inherent racial dimensions known to exist in Africa (Nel, 2018; Milanovic, 2003; Ravallion & Chen, 2012; Okojie & Shimeles, 2006; Londregan, Bienen, & Van de Walle, 1995). According to Solt (2008), our political engagement is as a result of economic inequality influences. This is because our socioeconomic situation in turn influences our political engagement. Building on existing literatures, Solt (2008) postulated three political inequality theories thus: relativity of power theory, conflict theory and finally the resource theory.

According to him the relativity of power theory has to do with high levels of economic inequality as there is a very wide power gap. Hence the rich assumes that they don't have worthy opponents or rivals among the poor, as such the rich fights among themselves for resources. This means that the rich engage in politics among themselves, leaving the poor to languish on the political sidelines. In the conflict theory, the poor sees inequality as something to fight over thus this leads to more political engagement. According to Solt, the resource theory states that your political engagement is dependent on the resources available to you. From these theories, it is evident that the fight is over the political agenda and distribution of resources (Solt, 2008).

Ramadan, Nasiri, Bhowmick and Kollang (2016) As a consequence, the rise and persistent political and economic inequality has brought about the growing concerns about economic growth, education, security, health, income and some other myriad of inequalities. The concerns brought about by the widespread rising political and economic inequality is reducing investments, hence growth as it fuels economic, financial, security and political instability. In line with this assertion by Ramadan et al, Nigeria being a multi-cultural and multi ethnic country having witnessed extreme political and economic inequality has had the trust and cohesion among the ethnic nationalities damaged hence this the country have had to battle with the associated conflicts and the economic development heading southwards discouraging investments. Political and economic inequality has brought about poor public policies in Nigeria thereby hampering poverty reduction thus there is increasing disparities in assessing financial services thereby slowing down financial deepening and cashless transactions. It is of note here unequal societies are less likely to the trust government hence social and civic duties participation is also less likely making them unhappy people.

From all available research done on economic and political inequality, there is none that have been able to specifically link economic and political inequality with social vices (illegal migration, kidnapping, internet fraud, human trafficking, and political violence). This study is therefore set out to understudy to what extent economic and political inequality is causing social vices such as illegal migration, kidnapping, internet fraud, human trafficking and political violence in Nigeria. This forms the gap of this study. However, the following questions will guide the study:

(i) Is there any relationship between inequality and crime rate in Nigeria?
(ii) What is the impact of inequality and poverty on crime rate in Nigeria?

Methodology

This study will be qualitative. We will seek to understand the phenomenon of economic and political inequality by focusing on the total picture rather than breaking it down. This will assist us have an in-depth understanding of how people make sense of the happenings around them. Taking from Ravitch & Carl (2016), the study will typically begin with our interest, the problem focus and or questions we have regarding the specific topic in this case economic and political inequality and social vices nexus in Nigeria.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework will be based on the Marxist class and Democratic elitist theories. While the democratic elitist theory is concerned with power and influence and aims to analyse the mass and public differentiation, Marxist class theory focuses on identification of classes as the major social forces. Furthermore, class can be conceptualised as a social reality that members of a society occupy a common position in the organization of production for which members have the awareness of a community interests or class consciousness and collective ties of solidarity to realize common purposes (Arslan, 2006; Walker, 1966).

Class consciousness is key and is the force behind the Marxist class theory as well as the democratic elitist theory. In studying and interpreting class consciousness by Ostrander, she possibly focused on class related behaviour and values. She sees meaning and behaviour, awareness and practice, thought and action, subjective and objective as being inseparable for understanding and explaining class consciousness. Class consciousness directs the people to behave in their everyday life in class related ways. In addition to the Marxist approach, she uses symbolic interactionism and phenomenology to generate her own view. She tries to synthesise Marxist and non-Marxist approaches on class consciousness using symbolic interactionism and phenomenology. She aims to understand and bridge both objective behavior and subjective meaning by using symbolic interactionism. Class consciousness can be understood by examining class related behavior and daily activities. People act in class-defined and related ways. Furthermore, the theory should be carried out from the practice of everyday life. In this sense, class consciousness must be identified in terms of everyday life rather than awareness of class position in the social hierarchy or potential for revolutionary action (Arslan, 1999).

Research Methodology

The study focused on comprehending the interrelatedness or otherwise among inequality and social vices in the Nigerian economy. By implication, the study hopes to find out if inequality causes social vices or vice versa. The findings of this research will help determine approaches to be adopted in reducing economic and political inequality in Nigeria and society at large. To achieve this, the study will the employ ordinary least square (OLS) regression technique for estimation of the relationship or impact among the variables of interest. Many researchers have dealt with the phenomenon of poverty, inequality and growth using variety of techniques, for example, Ajibola, Loto & Enilolobo (2018) argued that inequality can be influenced by unemployment and per capita income using ordinary least square (OLS) method. For Ogbeide and Agu (2015) their concern is in the causality between inequality and poverty, hence adopted Granger causality technique. This research is concerned with not only the relationship between inequality and social vices but also with the nature of the impact and relationship among the variables, hence the reason for adopting the Ordinary Least Square regression model.

We included poverty as a variable to ascertain whether the poor status of an individual is capable of causing his or her involvement in crime in Nigeria. Efforts towards the establishment of a possible relationship between inequality, crime rate and poverty in Nigeria leading to specification of two distinct linear equations. While the first equation examines the impact of human development index, poverty, crime rate and inflationary rate on inequality in Nigeria, the second will examine the impact of inequality, human development index, poverty and inflation on crime rate in Nigeria.

Data Sources and Definition of Variables

The unemployment rate (used as proxy for poverty) and inflation rates were obtained from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Annual Abstract of Statistics for the various years. Time series data on inequality for Nigeria are non-existent, hence, per Capita Income (PCI, adjusted Net National Income per capita; current US Dollar) obtained from World Bank Development Indicator (2019) is used as a proxy for inequality.

Models Specification

The modified form of the model used by Ajibola, Loto & Enilolobo (2018) in establishing a relationship between inequality and GDP growth is used here to establish a relationship between inequality, crime rate and poverty.

Hence the model:

$INEQ_t = f(HDI_t, POV_t, CRI_t, INF_t)$ -------------------------------------- (3)

$CRI_t = f(HDI_t, POV_t, INEQ_t, INF_t)$ -------------------------------------- (4)

Where INEQ = Inequality, HDI= Human development Index, POV = Poverty rate, CRI= Crime rate and INF = Inflation rate.

While the following modified specification in equations (3) shows the relationship and captures the influence of Human development Index, Poverty rate, Crime rate and Inflation rate on Inequality in Nigeria.

$\ln INQt = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \ln HDIt + \beta_2 \ln POVt + \beta_3 CRIt + \beta_4 INFt + \varepsilon_t$ ----------------------------- (5)

However, we will also study in turn how each of these variables (INQ, HDI, POV and INF) impacts on CRI (crime rate) in Nigeria within the year under the study. Hence the model;

$\ln CRIt = \lambda_0 + \lambda_1 \ln INQt + \lambda_2 \ln HDIt + \lambda_3 POVt + \lambda_4 \ln INFt + \varepsilon_t$ -------------------------------(6)

A priori expectation

$\beta_0 < 0, \beta_1 < 0, \beta_2 < 0, \beta_3 < 0$ and $\beta_4 > 0$

and

$\lambda_0 < 0, \lambda_1 < 0, \lambda_2 < 0, \lambda_3 < 0$ and $\lambda_4 > 0$

Empirical Results and Discussion

Looking at the output of the descriptive statistics below, it is obvious that all the variables except poverty (POV) are PlatyKurtic. Only POV that is LeptoKurtic with a value of 3.250501 as it is greater than 3. Also HDI and INQ are negatively skewed while the CRI and POV are positively skewed, while INF is normally skewed at approximately zero. The probabilities of INQ, HDI, CRI and INF are not statistically significant, therefore we accept the null hypothesis of a normal distribution, also in the case of POV with a probability of 0.042496 which is statistically significant, and we therefore reject the null hypothesis of a normal distribution as it is not normal.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistic

	INEQ	HDI	CRI	POV	INF
Mean	1859.451	0.484737	10.92263	11.49158	12.59526
Median	1968.560	0.490000	10.72000	9.490000	12.20000
Maximum	3222.690	0.530000	12.75000	20.67000	18.90000
Minimum	567.9300	0.430000	9.100000	8.510000	6.600000
Std. Dev.	829.6771	0.036112	1.084353	4.228130	3.501556
Skewness	-0.179691	-0.170399	0.134737	1.406788	0.015995
Kurtosis	1.912984	1.724237	1.881669	3.250501	2.095635

Jarque-Bera	1.037685	1.380441	1.047597	6.316673	0.648296
Probability	0.595209	0.501465	0.592267	0.042496	0.723143
Sum	35329.56	9.210000	207.5300	218.3400	239.3100
Sum Sq. Dev.	12390552	0.023474	21.16477	321.7875	220.6961
Observations	19	19	19	19	19

Ordinary Least Square result

The OLS regression is done in two phases: The first one is that we tried to ascertain the impact of the variables, poverty, human development index, crime rate and inflation on Inequality in Nigeria during the period under the study. Secondly, we went further to determine the impact of inequality and the variables HDI, POV and INF on crime rate (CRI) in Nigeria during the period under the study too. The OLS results output is as shown below.

Table 2: Dependent Variable: Log(INEQ)

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Statistic	Probability
C	21.94162	2.249627	9.753448	0.0000
LOG(HDI)	6.522725	1.544592	4.222944	0.0009
LOG(CRI)	-2.919025	1.226050	-2.380836	0.0320
LOG(POV)	-1.218252	0.199717	-6.099874	0.0000
LOG(INF)	0.031851	0.138194	0.230483	0.8211
R^2=0.958739; Adj.R^2=0.946950; F-Stat.=81.32499; Prob(F.Stat) = 0.00000 DW Stat.=1.988915				

From Table 2 above, the Adjusted R-Squared is 94.695% meaning that the variations in the level of inequality in Nigeria within the period under this study is brought about by the variable – human development index, crime rate, poverty and inflation rate. Also a unit increase in human development index and inflation rate, keeping other variables constant will bring about a 6.522725units and 0.031851units increase respectively in inequality in Nigeria, while a unit increase in crime rate and poverty will reduce inequality by 2.919025units and 1.218252units respectively. At an F-Statististic of 81.32499, it is highly significant, hence we accept the null hypothesis.

Table 3: Dependent Variable: Log(CRI)

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Statistic	Probability
C	3.393501	0.715354	4.743805	0.0003
LOG(INEQ)	-0.098731	0.041469	-2.380836	0.0320
LOG(HDI)	-0.137081	0.426779	-0.321199	0.7528

LOG(POV)	-0.161007	0.055525	-2.899718	0.0116
LOG(INF)	0.003528	0.025446	0.138627	0.8917
R^2=0.956264; Adj.R^2=0.943768; F-Stat.=76.52536; Prob(F.Stat) = 0.00000 DW Stat.=0.915307				

Also from the above Table 3, it is obvious that 94.3768% of the variations in the dependent variable crime rate (CRI) within the period of study is caused by the independent variables (PCI, HDI, POV and INF). The F-Statistic is significant at 76.5236 hence we will not reject the null hypothesis. It is also evident from the output that a unit increase in INEQ, HDI and POV rate will bring about 0.098731units, 0.137081units and 0.161007units decrease in CRI (crime rate) in Nigeria respectively, while a unit increase in inflation will bring about a 0.003525units increase in CRI (crime rate) in Nigeria within the period under the study.

Inequality and Crime rates under different governments in Nigeria

From Table 4 below, looking at the various regimes from 1997 to 2019, it is obvious that poverty was at a low ebb during the Obasanjos regime being at a mean value of 9.071% though it was lowest during the Abubakar two year regime when poverty had a mean value of 7.450%, then crime rate spiked during Obasanjos regime when it was 12.089%. The cause of the spike in crime rate is not far-fetched as it was the time the regime was battling with the Niger delta restiveness that affected the economy. The Yaradua/Goodluck Jonathan regime performed better in the management of crime as the crime rate reduced by almost two digits to settle at 10.66857%. However, poverty spiked during the present regime of General Mohammadu Buhari (rtd) when it rose by more than eight digits to be at 17.846%. It is obvious from the output that the General Mohammadu Buhari regime has contributed the highest form of inequality in Nigeria at 2,425.172% while the Abubakar, Obasanjo and Yaradua/Jonathan administrations contributed 470.75%, 946.8743% and 2,367.94% respectively.

Table 4: *Descriptive statistics output for different regimes from 1997 – 2019*

Abubakar – 1997 - 1998

	INEQ	HDI	CRI	POV	INF
Mean	470.7500	0.405000	NA	7.450000	9.250000
Median	470.7500	0.405000	NA	7.450000	9.250000
Maximum	479.9800	0.410000	NA	8.500000	10.00000
Minimum	461.5200	0.400000	NA	6.400000	8.500000
Std. Dev.	13.05319	0.007071	NA	1.484924	1.060660
Skewness	0.000000	3.03E-17	NA	0.000000	0.000000
Kurtosis	1.000000	1.000000	NA	1.000000	1.000000
Jarque-Bera	0.333333	0.333333	NA	0.333333	0.333333
Probability	0.846482	0.846482	NA	0.846482	0.846482
Sum	941.5000	0.810000	NA	14.90000	18.50000
Sum Sq. Dev.	170.3858	5.00E-05	NA	2.205000	1.125000
Observations	2	2	0	2	2

OBJ-1999-2007

	INEQ	HDI	CRI	POV	INF
Mean	946.8743	0.445714	12.08857	9.071429	13.35714
Median	795.3900	0.440000	12.10000	9.040000	14.00000
Maximum	1656.420	0.470000	12.75000	9.240000	18.90000
Minimum	567.9300	0.430000	11.50000	8.800000	6.600000
Std. Dev.	397.1255	0.017182	0.485195	0.155609	4.599586
Skewness	0.801525	0.721318	0.015345	-0.503262	-0.327505
Kurtosis	2.370626	1.831165	1.539550	2.363446	1.811326
Jarque-Bera	0.865049	1.005484	0.622375	0.413669	0.537245
Probability	0.648869	0.604870	0.732576	0.813154	0.764432
Sum	6628.120	3.120000	84.62000	63.50000	93.50000
Sum Sq. Dev.	946251.9	0.001771	1.412486	0.145286	126.9371
Observations	7	7	7	7	7

Yaradua/GEJ – 2008-2014

	INEQ	HDI	CRI	POV	INF
Mean	2367.940	0.492857	10.66857	9.372857	11.01429
Median	2292.450	0.490000	10.50000	9.650000	11.60000
Maximum	2998.070	0.520000	11.46000	9.840000	13.80000
Minimum	1883.460	0.480000	10.21000	8.510000	8.000000
Std. Dev.	417.7712	0.013801	0.434221	0.550355	2.086008
Skewness	0.207005	1.098468	0.850429	-0.850836	-0.367255
Kurtosis	1.824400	3.216875	2.529439	1.906250	1.912327
Jarque-Bera	0.453086	1.421457	0.908351	1.193493	0.502407
Probability	0.797285	0.491286	0.634971	0.550600	0.777864
Sum	16575.58	3.450000	74.68000	65.61000	77.10000
Sum Sq. Dev.	1047196.	0.001143	1.131286	1.817343	26.10857
Observations	7	7	7	7	7

PMB – 2015-2019

	INEQ	HDI	CRI	POV	INF
Mean	2425.172	0.528000	9.646000	17.84600	13.74200
Median	2176.000	0.530000	9.780000	19.68000	15.40000
Maximum	3222.690	0.530000	10.00000	20.67000	16.52000
Minimum	1968.560	0.520000	9.100000	12.62000	9.000000
Std. Dev.	537.9129	0.004472	0.355077	3.373008	3.143075
Skewness	0.650900	-1.500000	-0.690689	-0.788701	-0.698874
Kurtosis	1.811716	3.250000	2.105184	2.043639	1.904927
Jarque-Bera	0.647229	1.888021	0.564354	0.708921	0.656851
Probability	0.723529	0.389064	0.754140	0.701552	0.720057
Sum	12125.86	2.640000	48.23000	89.23000	68.71000
Sum Sq. Dev.	1157401.	8.00E-05	0.504320	45.50872	39.51568

Observations	5	5	5	5	5

Conclusion

In this study, we empirically investigated the relationship between economic inequality and crime rate in Nigeria from 1997 – 2019. In the course of study, we find that the impact of change of strategy and policy by incoming administrations are not felt immediately as they operate for sometime with those of the outgoing administration. We also find that given this changes, human development index increased inequality by 6.522725 units, reduced crime rate by 0.137081 units and crime rate and poverty reduced inequality by 2.919025 and 1.218252units respectively. On the other hand it is found that human development index, poverty and inequality are all negatively signed on crime rate. Government should therefore tame corruption, intensify efforts at job creation, improve on security and increase palliatives that reduces unemployment hence poverty.

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