

Social Inequalities and the Crisis of Development in Nigeria: Rivers State Experience, 2010-2021

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ABSTRACT: The crux of this paper is to examine the impact of social inequalities on development in Rivers State. The study relied on the Marxian political economy approach. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study, while the Taro Yamane formula was used to streamline the population to a manageable size of 400. After distribution and retrieval of the questionnaire, 320 questionnaires were accepted and used for the study, while 80 were rejected. Statistical tools such as simple percentages, means, and standard deviation were utilised for the analysis. The paper revealed that social inequality is a product of bad governance, insecurity, ethnic politics and marginalization, a lack of social welfare services, and incessant community clashes and chieftaincy tussles. The study further revealed that there are great discrepancies between the rural and urban populations. Furthermore, the study revealed that some manifestations of social inequality in Rivers State include a decreasing rate of life expectancy, an increasing crime rate, armed robbery, infant mortality, and cybercrime. The paper suggests that the different groups in Rivers State should come up with ways to reduce social inequality by balancing social development in all communities. This can be done by using a "macro-policy redistributive framework" to improve how resources are shared and make it easier for poor people to get to those resources, as well as by building the State Governments' ability to deal with local problems and making them stronger through "devolution".

KEYWORD: Inequality, Social Inequality, Rural Communities, Rural Development.

Introduction

Social inequality is still pervasive and engrained in every aspect of social development despite the efforts of governments throughout the world to promote a balanced socioeconomic development in all sections of society. Even worse is the situation in emerging countries, where ethnicity plays a large impact. The size of governments has shrunk, and there has been a perceptible shift toward the privatisation of many formerly government institutions. Numerous nations have undertaken, to varying degrees, the shift from centrally planned and regulated economies to market-based economies due to the inability of the former to render qualitative service to the ordinary people in the society (Adams, 2004).

According to Noyo (2000), emerging countries, notably Sub-Saharan Africa, are currently dealing with a wide range of sociopolitical and economic issues. This is especially true in the economic realm. A considerable number of these harmful effects have significantly altered people's lives and the ways in which institutions respond to their needs.

According to historical research, public resources in Nigeria, such as educational institutions, medical establishments and services, water, land, employment opportunities, and conveniences such as housing, electricity, fuel, and physical infrastructure, have historically favoured the country's elite and those close to political power (Ogbeide & Agu, 2015). According to Adekoya (2019), Nigeria has been a dual economy since its independence, with significant disparities in economic, social, and infrastructure development among regions. Nigeria's poor pace of economic growth reduced the resources available for development in a range of disciplines, including education and health care, among others. Other areas where socioeconomic difficulties have manifested themselves include social welfare, education, health, and poverty. For example, economic growth has largely followed the patterns established by the previous colonial system. Simultaneously, there has been a substantial movement in the racial composition of the group of people in power, as well as in many of the policies that are adopted; nevertheless, this transition has had only a limited influence. Differences in regional and/or geographic well-being frequently coincide with ethnic identities, as ethnic groups frequently reside in certain geographic areas of the country. This is due to the fact that high social inequality reduces regional and/or geographic well-being.

The robust petroleum sector of Rivers State is the primary driver of the federal economy, which is dominated by the State. Despite the fact that the advent of the oil business has resulted in an increased in government revenue, poor management and corruption have prevented the State from achieving quick development and making substantial progress against poverty. Inadequate social facilities are a problem throughout the Niger Delta region, including in Rivers State. The challenge of social development, which has been cited as vital to reaching several of the Sustainable Development Goals, could be solved with the help of these social facilitators, which act as a panacea for the issue (Awojobi, 2014). Health disparities have significant ripple effects that are felt throughout the entire society and place a strain on its resources. Inequalities in health are frequently connected to differences in socioeconomic status as well as access to medical treatment. It has been proven that providing people with universal access to health care brings about a significant reduction in the prevalence of health disparities. However, this does not guarantee that health inequalities will be eliminated entirely. Privatization of the sector in this context provides individuals with the 'power' to purchase their own health care (via private health insurance firms), but this increases the rate of social inequality because it only enables people who have the resources to receive health care.

Again, gender discrimination, particularly in relation to women's lower social status, has been a subject of grave concern not only among academic and activist communities, but also among government agencies and international organisations such as the United Nations. This is due to the fact that gender discrimination is a problem that affects women more than it affects men (Gill et al., 2017). The goal of these dialogues is to identify and eliminate widespread and systemic obstacles to access for women in their countries. Molyneux and Thomson (2020) argued that when scholars use gender analysis, they are attempting to understand the social expectations, responsibilities, resources, and priorities of women and men within a specific context. Specifically, they are looking at the social, economic, and environmental factors that influence the roles that women and men play as well as their ability to make decisions. The recent conversation about the disparities that exist in the distribution of environmental resources is also a significant burden on the world.

There is little doubt that social inequality is a significant barrier to the development of sustainable economies that optimise the health and well-being of both people and the earth. In Rivers State in particular, inequality is viewed as both a problem in and of itself and a challenge to the eradication of poverty. Impacts include the growing poverty rate as a result of frequent unrest, poor infrastructure facilities, high illiteracy, social dislocation as a result of rural/urban migration and the breakdown of societal values, community unrest, and inefficient and ineffective security agents who are tasked with ensuring the safety of Rivers State's citizens.

Statement of the Problem

The number of individuals living in poverty has steadily increased over the course of the last few decades (Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics 2014). The disparity in income levels in Nigeria has resulted in the country having a small middle class (Awoyemi, 2005). The disparity in income and wealth distribution between the wealthy and the impoverished is narrowing, most noticeably in Rivers State. According to Burtless and Smeeding's (2002) theory, there is a correlation between disparities in income and levels of poverty mostly in the developing countries. The unequal distribution of wealth and income has a negative impact on people's lives, which ultimately leads to the concept of impoverishment. The idea of inequality has been a major contributor to the instability in Nigeria. According to Bintube (2015), the presence of Boko Haram in Nigeria has been hypothesised to be caused by a lack of resources and inaccessibility to the essentials of life. According to the Nigerian Stability and Reconciliation (NSR) report, the disparity in individuals' access to economic resources and opportunities makes people more susceptible to join a rebel organisation. The elimination of the middle class in Nigeria is a direct result of the unequal distribution of wealth and income in the country.

Inequality in income leads to higher rates of poverty, which in turn has a ripple effect on other aspects of society, such as health, education, and the efficiency of businesses. When people are poor, they cannot afford basic necessities or even luxuries, which causes businesses to have fewer customers and a smaller profit margin. According to Era et al. (2015), income inequality is associated with lower output growth over the medium term and negative growth of business performance. This is primarily seen in developing and emerging economies. According to Raja (2010), a prolonged period of greater income inequality in developed nations was a primary contributor to the global financial crisis, which was characterised by an intensification of leverage, an overextension of credit, and a relaxation of underwriting rules for mortgages. Ravallion (2006) contends that social inequality has an effect on both the rate at which growth enables a reduction in poverty and the activities and returns on investment. Furthermore, social inequality has an effect on how poverty may be reduced.

The human and material content of diverse human categories that are not often given a chance by the society because they are seen as persons of a lower category of humans leads to a significant loss for societies. This loss of human and material content is at a very high rate. According to Raheem *et al.* (2014), there is a significant gap between social classes that are more or less equivalent in Rivers State, and the implications of this gap influence everyone. The intimate and personal lives of individuals are impacted by social inequality. They also pointed out that inequality is the root cause of a wide variety of health and social issues, including a shorter life expectancy and a higher infant mortality rate, as well as low educational attainment, decreased social mobility, and increased levels of violence and mental illness.

Again, problems with the environment and low income are intimately tied to one another. Despite the common misconception, those living in poverty are not typically the primary contributors to environmental degradation. They frequently bear the brunt of environmental damage and are frequently caught in a downward spiral, in which the poor are forced to deplete resources to survive, and this degradation of the environment further impoverishes people. In other words, the poor often bear the brunt of environmental damage and are frequently caught in a downward spiral. When things get to a certain point, this downward spiral that reinforces itself becomes intense. A growing number of people are being compelled to relocate, either to lands with a marginal ecological footprint or to urban areas. The deterioration of the natural environment as a consequence of pervasive socioeconomic inequality is a matter of grave concern in rural as well as urban places all over the world. The interplay between poverty and the deterioration of the environment kicks off a downward spiral of ecological deterioration that endangers the physical security,

economic well-being, and health of a significant number of the region's most economically disadvantaged people.

As a result of this, Adekoya (2019) highlighted that the prevalence of violent crime in Nigeria as a direct result of the growing incidence of social inequality remained a significant and ongoing challenge. This is due to the fact that the occurrence has become more severe as the percentage of people living in poverty has increased. According to Alamika (2013), who was mentioned in Adekoya (2013), the rate of physical assault in the country jumped from 3% in 2011 to 77% in 2013. This increase occurred over the course of six years. As the incidence of poor governance continues to rise, the number of other crimes, such as domestic violence, robbery, burglary, and murder, among other offences, also continues to rise. It is therefore imperative to examine the impact of social inequality on socio-economic development. It is against this backdrop, the following questions were deduced to guide the study:

- i. What are the perceived causes of social inequalities in Rivers State?
- ii. To what extent do the people in rural communities have access to social services in Rivers State?
- iii. What are the effects of the social inequalities on development in Rivers State?

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to examine the nexus between social inequality and challenges of development in Rivers State. The specific objectives are as follows:

- i. To examine the perceived causes of social inequalities in Rivers State;
- ii. To examine the extent the people in rural communities have access to social services in Rivers State;
- iii. To assess the effects of the social inequalities on the development in Rivers State.

Literature Review

The Concept of Development

There are many definitions of development, and one should not expect a developer, the CEO of a multinational corporation, a resident of a neighbourhood, the head of a community-based organisation (CBO), or a policymaker to necessarily agree on one definition of development or for all of them to think development is something positive. Development has been defined in a variety of ways (Zack, 2018). The term "development" refers to a process that is rights-based and ecologically oriented, as well as a planned and comprehensive economic, social, cultural, and political process that takes place within a specific geographical area with the intention of continuously improving the well-being of the entire population and each and every one of its individuals (Afegbua & Adejuwon, 2012). The people would be actively involved in an open and meaningful engagement in the development, as well as in the equitable sharing of rewards. This all-encompassing term can be broken down into three distinct categories: social development; economic development; and environmental protection. After World War II and well into the 1960s, the definition of development that was utilised the most frequently was not as all-encompassing as the one presented here. The early definitions of development and theories focused solely on economic development, which was typically measured by a change in per capita Gross National Product. This growth in national income was considered the primary indicator of development (Afegbua & Adejuwon, 2012). This narrowly limited strategy was the one that was commonly accepted in Asia, and as a result, the development projects did not include concepts such as full employment, universal social services, and a social safety net. It was anticipated that these advantages would emerge, if necessary, in the wake of economic development (Stuart, 2012).

The Concept of Social Inequality

Inequality among members of a society can be characterised by differences in their levels of money, reputation, or influence, and is referred to by the phrase "social inequality" (Raheem et al., 2014). According to Davis and Moore's in Kunst (2017), there is a certain amount of social disparity present in every culture. A system of social inequality that is based on a hierarchy of groups is referred to as stratification by social scientists (Raheem *et al.*, 2014). Stratification is defined as an organised ranking of entire groups of individuals that maintains uneven economic rewards and power in a society (Raheem *et al.*, 2014). According to the functionalist theory, social disparity and stratification are necessary for the functioning of society and contribute to its order. In economically mature industrial nations, there has been a significant amount of rhetoric and social policy geared toward combating economic and social disparity. Up until this point, the human condition has been one that is inherently uneven. Despite many attempts to improve the human situation, the harsh realities of poverty and huge inequality continue to plague society. The most fortunate people or families have always enjoyed a disproportionate amount of power and status in human civilizations (Raheem et al., 2014). According to Ofoegbu (2015), the egalitarian policies of state socialism suggest that significant reductions in inequality are attainable via state-mandated reform, especially during the first phases of radical institutional transformation. This is particularly true during the early phases of radical institutional restructuring. It is probable, despite this fact, that such reform was pushed too far, and that the majority of the internal and systemic problems that Marxist societies faced were the result of inadequate provisions for motivation.

In this study, the phrase "social inequality" refers to the differential access to a number of social "goods" among socially defined groups of people based on age, gender, social class, and ethnicity. These "goods" consist of the labour market and other sources of income, education and health care systems, and political representation and involvement. This research focuses specifically on the labour market and other sources of income. Thomas Hobbes and Karl Marx are at the very least responsible for developing the idea that social difference generates conflict, which leads to underdevelopment. The recurrence of violence and war in Syria, Mali, and Egypt, as well as the problems that many nations of the Arab Spring confront in establishing democracy, have prompted important pundits to highlight the obstacles connected with ethnic and usually religious fractionalization. This is because similar resurgences of violence and war have happened in Syria, Mali, and Egypt, among others (Galadima, 2014). When resources in a society are split unequally, often as a consequence of rules of allocation that promote certain patterns along lines of socially defined categories of people, social inequality occurs (Galadima, 2014). It is the differentiation of access preferences to social commodities in a society based on power, religion, kinship, position, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and class, among other characteristics. This concept is also known as social stratification. Inequality in social situations is often thought to relate to a gap in results, but it may also be seen as a disparity in the options accessible to individuals. Social rights include the labour market, the source of income, health care, as well as freedom of expression, education, political representation, and participation (Adekoya, 2019).

Area of the Study: Rivers State

Rivers State is located in the Niger Delta region of southern Nigeria. It is simply referred to as Rivers (Old Eastern Region). Rivers State is bordered by Imo State to the north, Abia and Akwa Ibom to the east, and Bayelsa and Delta States. It was established in 1967 after being separated from what was once known as the Eastern Region. The city of Port Harcourt, which serves as the capital of the state and is also a major metropolitan area, is often regarded as the commercial heart of the oil industry in Nigeria (Rivers State House of Assembly, 2021).

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According to the census completed in 2006, Rivers State has a total population of 5,198,716 people, making it the sixth most populated state in all of Nigeria. Igbo, Ogoni, and Ijaw are three of the many different ethnic groups located in Rivers State. Rivers State is a very diverse State. Igbo speaking groups, the Ogoni language, and the Ijaw language are just some of the indigenous languages spoken in Rivers State. It is estimated that Rivers State is home to 28 different indigenous languages. It is the 26th largest State in terms of land area, and the landscape of the state is mostly determined by the several rivers, like the Bonny River, that run through it (Rivers State House of Assembly, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

This study used the Marxist paradigm of political economy to demonstrate the relationship between social inequality and the issue of development in Rivers State. The Marxist approach to political economy is rooted in the twin notions of historical and dialectical materialism, developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Hegel. As a methodology, it studies the complication of problems, the interdependence of phenomena, policies, etc., in an attempt to understand their origin, nature and class composition, as well as the logic of their existence and destiny. . This is done to understand their origin, nature and class composition, as well as the logic of their existence and fate. Marxist political economy, or MPE for short, is an umbrella term for a number of different systems of political economy that are loosely related and in the spirit of the writings and concepts of Karl Marx (notably the Communist Manifesto, Grundrisse and Capital). The main objective of the MPE is to subjugate capitalism in order to establish a more just social order. This will require the transformation of the current economic and social structure.

The Marxist analysis of capitalism rests on the identification of a very specific form of economic inequality. This form of economic inequality is that significant portions of the economic infrastructure (what Marxists call the means of production) are owned or controlled by a few (the capitalists), while the majority (the workers, also known under the name of working class or proletariat) possess only their numbers. This form of economic inequality underlies the Marxist critique of capitalism. Marxists believe that in order to survive, workers must become wage earners and sell their labor to capitalists (Nilsson, 2020).

According to Marxist theory, this gives capitalists the ability to exploit workers because they own the goods and services that were produced by employees when they were employed by a capitalist. Capitalist exploitation involves the payment of wages that allow employees to reproduce their labor power, while capitalists appropriate the new values generated during the production process, thereby increasing their own capital or wealth. This allows capitalists to reproduce their labor power and increase their wealth. The intrinsic economic inequality of capitalism, which is that between the capitalists, who control the means of production, and the labor exploited, increases when this leads to the accumulation of capital: the wealth of the capitalists increases, which allows them to exercise greater control over the means of production and to exploit a greater number of workers. On the other hand, the rest of the population has the same or even less access, and more people are forced to work for wages. According to what Marx writes in Capital (2000, p. 880), reproduction on a progressive scale, also called accumulation, reproduces the relation of capital on a progressive scale. This scale has more capitalists or big capitalists at one pole and more wage earners at the other pole. This results in a type of inequality that is probably the one most commonly associated with the concept of economic inequality, especially in Rivers State, and that is inequality of access to goods available in the market. When capitalists use their earnings not to expand their capital, but rather to increase their wealth, this results in an unequal distribution of goods in the market. In other words, the capitalists improve their lives while the workers continue to languish in relative poverty. Oxfam (2018) tracks this type of inequality and recently showed that 1% of the world's population received 82% of the wealth created in the previous year. Meanwhile, those who created the wealth - according to Marxist theory - had to share the rest and 50% of the world's population received nothing.

Therefore, Marxist theory emphasizes that economic disparity is both a foundation of capitalism and a result of it. It also points out that these disparities are the result of conflicts, for example, over wages or the organization of the work process, as well as cultural conceptions of what constitutes an acceptable quality of life and, therefore, a fair remuneration of the work and conditions. decent work. Moreover, he points out that these disparities are the result of cultural conceptions of what constitutes an acceptable quality of life and what constitutes acceptable working conditions.

Extreme economic inequality is of concern in a number of countries, particularly in Nigeria, due to the pernicious effect that concentrations of wealth can have on equitable political representation. This is especially true in Nigeria. When the wealthy control decision-making in government, the rules are bent to the benefit of the wealthy, usually at the expense of everyone else (Akani, 2017). The results are a decline in democratic governance and a development crisis. Unless bold policy solutions are implemented to change the status quo and reduce the impact of wealth on politics, governments will continue to work for the interests of the wealthy, while economic and political inequality will continue to grow. The late Justice Louis Brandeis of the United States Supreme Court is credited with the famous quote: "We can have democracy or we can have wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both. The political paradigm of Marxism was similar to that of Rivers' state society, which features a significant concentration of wealth in the hands of a few individuals who wield political power. Inequality serves as the foundation on which capitalist society is built. Therefore, governmental structures and other institutions, such as religion, have helped to consolidate its functioning within society. It is commonly considered a crime of treason to attempt to change it.

Methodology

The research adopted a descriptive design. This layout was suitable since it is used to gather data on people's views, beliefs, and habits, as well as a range of societal concerns. The study's population consisted of the entire population of Rivers State and it comprised of a population of seven million, three hundred and three thousand, nine hundred and twenty-four (7,303,924) people (City Population, 2021). The sample size for the study was four hundred (400) male and female children and adult. In carrying out this research work, the sample size was determined through the use of the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. Stratified sampling technique was used to group the population into rural and urban areas while purposive sampling technique was used to select four communities in the rural settings and another four communities in the urban areas. In this research, both primary and secondary sources were used to acquire the majority of the data. Primary sources consisted mostly of information acquired directly from respondents. In this manner, surveys were given directly to respondents and then collected. The purpose of secondary sources is to facilitate information accessibility and supplement primary sources. The literature was analysed using a frequency distribution table, simple percentage, descriptive mean, and standard deviation.

Results And Discussion

Table 1. Respondents Demographics

Items	Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	153	47.8
	Female	167	52.2
	Total	320	100.0
Marital Status	Married	231	72.2
	Single	51	15.9
	Divorced	18	5.6
	Widowed	20	6.3
	Total	320	100.0

Educational Qualification	Primary	17	5.3
	Secondary	168	52.5
	Tertiary	135	42.2
	Total	320	100.0
Occupation	Agriculture	85	26.6
	Trade	90	28.1
	Civil Service	72	22.5
	Company Worker	57	17.8
	Student	16	5.0
	Total	320	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2022)

The gender distributions revealed that out of the 320 respondents, 153(47.8%) were male while above 50 percent of the respondents, (i.e. 167 representing 52.2%) were female. The data also revealed that 231 representing (72.2%) were married, 51 representing (15.9%) were singles, 18 representing (5.6%) were divorcees, while 20 representing (6.3%) widowed. Furthermore, the data revealed that 17 representing (5.3%) were holders of primary school certificate, 168 representing (52.5%) were holders of secondary school certificates while the remaining 135 representing (42.2%) have attended tertiary institutions. The occupational distribution of the respondents indicated that 85(26.6%) were active in agriculture as source of food and livelihood, 90 representing (28.1%) were traders, 72 representing (22.5%) were civil servants, 57 representing (17.8%) were company workers while 16 respondents representing (5%) were students.

Analysis Of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the perceived causes of social inequalities in Rivers State?

Table 2. The perceived causes of social inequalities in Rivers State

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.	Decision
1	Corruption	146	150	18	6	3.36	0.67	Accepted
2	Bad and inept governance	144	145	24	7	3.33	0.71	Accepted
3	Ethnic politics and marginalization	144	153	17	6	3.35	0.67	Accepted
4	Lack of continuity in government	130	164	20	6	3.30	0.67	Accepted
5	Insecurity/criminality	131	169	14	6	3.32	0.64	Accepted
6	Lack of social welfare services	161	128	25	6	3.38	0.71	Accepted
7	Chieftaincy tussles/communal conflicts	139	164	11	6	3.36	0.64	Accepted
	Grand Mean					3.34	0.67	Accepted

Source: Field Survey (2022)

The table above assessed the perceived causes of social inequality in Rivers State. The analysis revealed that corruption (Mean = 3.36, Std. = 0.67), bad governance (Mean = 3.33, Std. = 0.71), ethnic politics and marginalization (Mean = 3.35, Std. = 0.67), and lack of continuity in government (Mean = 3.30, Std. = 0.67). The analysis also revealed that insecurity (Mean = 3.32, Std. = 0.64), lack of social welfare services (Mean = 3.38, Std. = 0.71) and incessant community clashes and chieftaincy tussles.

Research Question 2: To what extent do the people in rural communities have access to social services in Rivers State?

Table 3. The Extent People in Rural Communities have Access to Social Services in Rivers State

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.	Decision
8	The access roads in your community are in good condition	10	106	148	56	2.21	0.76	Not Accepted
9	you have a functional school	5	130	153	32	2.33	0.67	Not Accepted
10	There is healthcare centre in your community	68	158	71	23	2.84	0.83	Accepted
11	There are healthcare facilities and medical personnel in your community	26	158	130	6	2.63	0.65	Accepted
12	There is an industry(ies) in your area	18	40	145	117	1.87	0.83	Not Accepted
13	The drinking water quality in your community is in good condition	14	19	145	142	1.70	0.76	Not Accepted
14	There is access to power supply in your community	59	77	93	91	2.32	1.07	Not Accepted
15	There is a police station in your community	92	153	62	13	3.01	0.80	Accepted
	Grand Mean					2.36	0.79	Accepted

Source: Field Survey (2022)

The Table 2 above assessed the social inequalities that exist in rural communities in Rivers State. The finding revealed that most of the respondents in the rural communities do not have access to social services provided by governments. The analysis revealed that the mean ratios of 2.21 and 2.33 and corresponding standard deviation of 0.76 and 0.67 indicated that most of the respondents do not have good access road and a good public school. The mean ratios of 2.84 and 2.63 and corresponding standard deviation of 0.83 and 0.65 indicated that the respondents have access to a healthcare facilities and there are personnel in those facilities. The mean ratios of 1.87, 1.70 and 2.32 and corresponding standard deviation of 0.83, 0.76 and 1.07 revealed that most of the respondents do not have industry(ies) in their neighbourhood, lack access to good drinking water and do not have access to power supply. The mean ratio of 3.01 and corresponding standard deviation of 0.80 revealed that majority of the respondents have police post in their area.

Research Question 3: What are the effects of the social inequalities on development in Rivers State?

Table 4. The effects of the social inequalities on development in Rivers State

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.	Decision
16	Infant mortality	111	155	42	12	3.14	0.78	Accepted
17	Unemployment	135	161	18	6	3.32	0.66	Accepted
18	Rural-urban migration	88	178	42	12	3.06	0.74	Accepted
19	Increasing poverty ratio	139	154	19	8	3.32	0.69	Accepted
20	Increasing crime rate and armed robbery	186	112	15	7	3.49	0.69	Accepted
21	Teenage pregnancy	113	152	46	9	3.15	0.76	Accepted

22	Promiscuity	185	111	18	6	3.48	0.69	Accepted
23	Increasing rate of out of school children/child labour	161	128	25	6	3.38	0.71	Accepted
24	Decreasing rate of life expectancy	130	174	10	6	3.33	0.63	Accepted
25	Ritual killings	195	112	7	6	3.55	0.63	Accepted
26	Cybercrime	89	217	8	6	3.21	0.57	Accepted
	Grand Mean					3.62	0.68	Accepted

Source: Field Survey (2022)

The table above was used to assess the effects of social inequalities on development in Rivers State. The analysis revealed that the incidents of infant mortality (Mean = 3.14, Std. = 0.78), unemployment (Mean = 3.32, Std. = 0.66), rural-urban migration (Mean = 3.06, Std. = 0.74), increasing rate of poverty (Mean = 3.32, Std. = 0.69), and the challenge of increasing crime rate and armed robbery (Mean = 3.49, Std. = 0.69). The analysis also revealed that other indices such as teenage pregnancy (Mean = 3.15, Std. = 0.76), promiscuous behaviours (Mean = 3.48, Std. = 0.69), and the increasing rate of out of school children/child labour (Mean = 3.38, Std. = 0.71) as some of the manifestation of social inequality in Rivers State. Furthermore, the study also revealed that decreasing rate of life expectancy (Mean = 3.33, Std. = 0.63), ritual killings (Mean = 3.55, Std. = 0.63), and cybercrime (Mean = 3.21, Std. = 0.57) were some of the manifestation and impacts of social inequality on development in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The Causes of Social Inequalities in Rivers State

The paper aimed to assess the impact of social inequalities in Rivers State on development. The study deduced three research questions and three objectives to guide discussion. The specific objectives were (i) to determine the causes of social inequality in Rivers State, (ii) determine the indices of social inequality in the state and (iii) examine the consequences of the inequalities on development in the state.

In the first research question which reads: What are the perceived causes of social inequalities in Rivers State and was presented on Table 2 above, the analysis revealed that corruption bad governance, ethnic politics and marginalization, and lack of continuity in government were some of the factors encouraging social inequalities in Rivers State. The analysis also revealed that insecurity, lack of social welfare services and incessant community clashes and chieftaincy tussles were some of the factors resulting to social inequalities. Oino and Kioli (2014) also cited ethnicity as one of the elements that contribute to social inequality. This finding is also in line with what Raheem et al. (2014) found: that regional imbalance and marginalisation lead to serious distributional problems like hyper-urbanization, spatial concentration of people and modern activities, unemployment and underemployment, income inequality and poverty, persistent food shortages, worsening material conditions for farm populations, and dependence on the outside world. Modugu and Anyaduba (2013) also agreed that the rate of white collar crime in the public sector is unprecedented and is limiting the distribution of wealth across all social strata in the society. Financial resources are one of the most crucial resources that facilitate development in any society. When financial resources are mismanaged, it affects development in all ramifications and the poor are the most affected due to their vulnerability.

Rural Communities and Social Services in Rivers State

The research question two which reads: To what extent do the people in rural communities have access to social services in Rivers State and presented on the Table 3 above assessed the social inequalities that exist in Rivers State communities. The finding revealed that most of the respondents do not have access to social services provided by government. The analysis revealed that most of the respondents do not have good access

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to good roads and a good public school. Although most of the respondents have access to an healthcare facilities and there are personnel in those facilities as well as police post, most of the respondents also indicated that they do not have industry(ies) in their neighbourhood, lack access to good drinking water and do not have access to power supply. The implication is that the most of the roads in the state especially in the rural communities are in bad shape and are not accessible for the people. The study analysis also revealed that the school infrastructures in the communities are not well equipped for adequate teaching and learning.

The problems of socioeconomic disparity in development have spread to the field of education. Data and information on the developments of education in Nigeria from the Ministry of Education and other studies indicate that colonial development policies had a significant impact on enrolment levels. Access to elementary education and the quality of primary education vary substantially between regions. In the distribution of educational resources, the residents of rural towns are overlooked. The focus is mostly on metropolitan centres. Unequal distribution of resources has seen certain states and local government areas in Nigeria benefit more from development than others. Access to infrastructure, social amenities, and educational amenities was and still is dispersed along colonial administrative divisions, with villages in the north and south west benefitting from their closeness to these services.

The Consequences of Social Inequalities on Development in Rivers State

The research question three which reads: What are the effects of the social inequalities on development in Rivers State and was presented on Table 4 above was used to assess the effects of social inequalities on development in Rivers State. The analysis revealed that the incidents of infant mortality, unemployment, rural-urban migration, increasing rate of poverty, and the challenge of increasing crime rate and armed robbery were some of the consequences of social inequalities in Rivers State. The analysis also revealed that other indices such as teenage pregnancy, promiscuous behaviours, and the increasing rate of out of school children/child labour, as some of the manifestation of social inequality in Rivers State. Furthermore, the study also revealed that decreasing rate of life expectancy; ritual killings and cybercrime were some of the manifestation and impacts of social inequality on development in Rivers State.

There are clear health disparities across socioeconomic groups/classes in Rivers State . People in lower socioeconomic groups/classes are more likely to suffer from chronic illness and die sooner than those in higher socioeconomic groups/classes. Due to a lack of well-maintained health facilities, rural Rivers State residents are disproportionately impacted. The government's inability to address the expanding gap between socioeconomic classes has resulted in deteriorating health facilities, hence aggravating social inequality. Adekoya (2019) argues that the distribution of health facilities and workers in Nigeria is a significant contributor to the observed health disparities at the national level. Adekoya (2019) further noted that, since independence, several regions of the nation have lacked healthcare services such as dispensaries, posing a significant problem for rural residents.

The study also established a link between social inequality and violent crime. Recent increases in the prevalence of violent crime in Rivers State may be attributed to the rising inequality gap between the poor and the wealthy. The new analysis verifies a prior remark by Adesina (2013) that it is simple to understand how this demographic of disadvantaged individuals might pose a security danger to the state based on the above-described high degree of socioeconomic inequality in Nigeria. In many instances, unemployment, which includes cultism, has been connected to the state's many security problems, which include terrorism. According to the proverb, "The idle hand is the devil's workshop," a state in which the majority of the population is impoverished and hungry and a large number of adolescents are jobless and unemployed would undoubtedly have a high crime rate. It is now the usual for thousands of jobless individuals to respond to advertisements for jobs for which only a few will be hired. The excessive misuse and underutilization of human resources have a direct effect on the nation's production and competitiveness.

Moreover, Rivers State is one of the nations in which the correlation between high inequality and rising crime rates is perhaps most pronounced. According to Okafor (2011) and Ejo-Orusa (2020), underprivileged Nigerian young engage in several antisocial behaviours such as political thuggery, militancy, restlessness, and other social vices. In a similar vein, Olukayode (2017) argues that Nigerian young, the majority of whom are unclear about their future, are annually plunged into despondency and uncertainty due to widespread unemployment. He adds that the consequences of this socioeconomic dislocation among youth are evident in the high rate of their participation in crime, armed robbery, political thuggery, prostitution, cybercrime, and other debilitating social vices, which are primarily motivated by frustration. Other significant crimes committed by jobless youth include armed robbery, abduction, terrorism, arson, vandalism, and assaults on important national buildings and infrastructure.

Conclusion

Corruption, ethnicity, and poor administration are among the leading drivers of socioeconomic disparity in Rivers State. This is reflected in patterns of social stratification that split society along ethnic lines into unequal strata. Social inequality manifests itself in several ways, including power, money and resource distribution, vocations, educational attainment, policy development, and social reforms. The impact of government failures on social inequality are two-sided, shown by increased corruption, marginalisation, and uneven allocation of national resources.

Rivers State has been subjected to directed democracy, that is, a democracy that borders on authoritarianism and perpetuates the interests of the minority, over an extended period of time. Despite the fact that the Nigerian Constitution of 1999 seems to represent the end of a military period and usher in a new age of Nigeria's political and socio-economic progress, social transformation remains elusive. However, although it enables for dramatic changes in the management of the nation's affairs and offers people a larger voice and involvement through the devolved system, new pathways for marginalisation and regional imbalances may arise. Therefore, they should be deterred by instituting inclusive regional governing frameworks and avoiding vices like corruption and nepotism.

A significant allure of a decentralised system in Nigeria is its promise to bring about fair transfer of national resources to the grassroots, so addressing socioeconomic inequities that were intrinsic to a centralised form of government for decades.

Recommendations

Based on the identified findings, the study recommended that:

- i. Stakeholders should design methods for eliminating social disparity by balancing social development in all Rivers State communities. This can be achieved by employing a redistributive framework of macroeconomic policies to improve resource allocation and increase the ability of the poor to access these resources, as well as capacity building and strengthening of county governments on decentralization, to address adequately address the basic issues plaguing the people of Rivers State.
- ii. It also suggests that employment should be one of the most important tools in Nigeria's fight against poverty and inequality. Individuals and the private sector should be encouraged to participate actively in this endeavour by instilling an entrepreneurial spirit.
- iii. To minimise inequality in the state, governments should establish measures to address youth unemployment in sectors dominated by young people, such as information and communication technology, the entertainment industry, and the hotel industry. Youths who graduate from postsecondary institutions without jobs should get unemployment benefits. This will reduce the environmental stress that might lead to criminal behaviour.

- iv. Furthermore, microcredit programmes should be facilitated to enable unemployed youth to engage in self-employment. They should be provided with entrepreneurial training support to enhance their skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development.

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