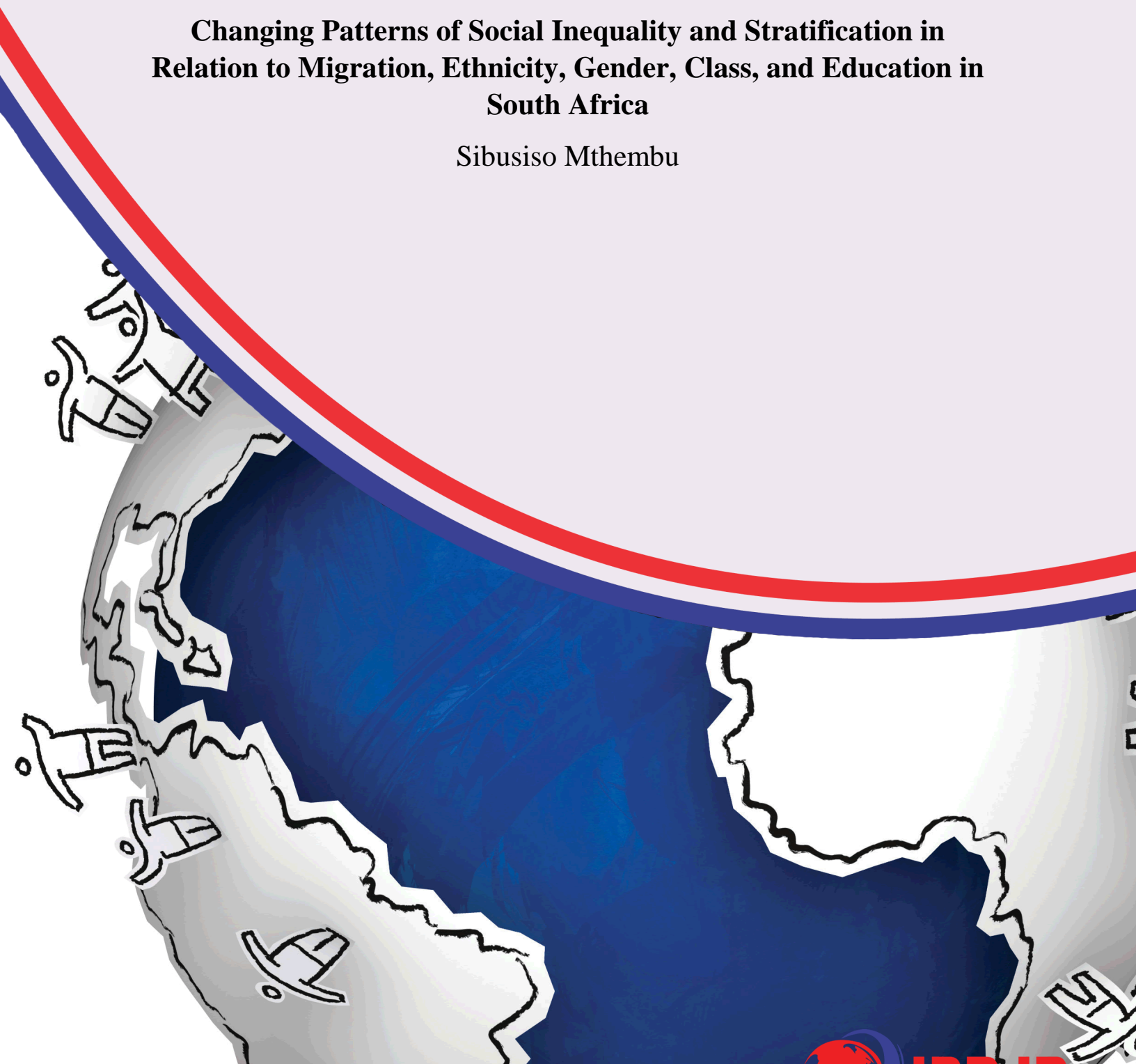



International Journal of Sociology (IJS)

**Changing Patterns of Social Inequality and Stratification in
Relation to Migration, Ethnicity, Gender, Class, and Education in
South Africa**

Sibusiso Mthembu



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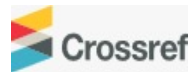
 Sibusiso Mthembu

Article History

Received 17th January 2024

Received in Revised Form 25th January 2024

Accepted 29th January 2024



How to Cite

Mthembu, S. (2024). Changing Patterns of Social Inequality and Stratification in Relation to Migration, Ethnicity, Gender, Class, and Education in South Africa. *International Journal of Sociology*, 8(1), 14 – 26. <https://doi.org/10.47604/ij.s.2327>

Abstract

Purpose: This paper examines the changing patterns of social inequality and stratification in relation to migration, ethnicity, gender, class, and education

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: Changing patterns of social inequality and stratification are influenced by migration, ethnicity, gender, class, and education. Migration can lead to economic disparities for immigrants, either through improved opportunities or exploitation. Ethnicity remains a significant factor, with ethnic minorities facing discrimination and limited access to resources. Gender inequality persists with disparities in pay and leadership roles, while class-based inequality continues through inheritance and income distribution. Access to quality education plays a vital role in social mobility, but disparities in resources and rising tuition costs can limit opportunities.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Intersectionality theory, Human capital theory & Transnationalism theory may be used to anchor future studies on changing patterns of social inequality and stratification in relation to migration, ethnicity, gender, class, and education. Organizations and institutions should implement diversity and inclusion programs that go beyond tokenism. Develop and implement comprehensive immigration reform policies that address the rights and social integration of migrants.

Keywords: *Changing Patterns, Social Inequality, Stratification, Relation, Migration, Ethnicity, Gender, Class, Education*

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INTRODUCTION

Social inequality and stratification are the unequal distribution of valued goods and opportunities among different groups of people in a society. Some of the factors that affect social stratification are wealth, income, race, education, and power. Social inequality and stratification can have significant consequences for individuals and groups in terms of access to resources, opportunities, health, education, and well-being. One example of social inequality and stratification in a developed economy is the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2019, the median household income was \$68,703, but there was a large gap between the richest and the poorest households. The top 5% of households had an income of \$248,729 or more, while the bottom 20% had an income of \$25,774 or less. The income inequality in the U.S. is also related to race and ethnicity. For example, the median household income for Asian Americans was \$98,174, for non-Hispanic whites was \$76,057, for Hispanics was \$56,113, and for African Americans was \$45,438 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

Another example of social inequality and stratification in a developed economy is Japan. Japan is known for its high level of social cohesion and low level of poverty, but it also faces challenges of income inequality and social mobility. According to the OECD, in 2018, the Gini coefficient of Japan was 0.329, which measures the degree of income inequality on a scale from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (perfect inequality). This was higher than the OECD average of 0.315. Moreover, Japan had a low intergenerational earnings elasticity of 0.41, which means that children's earnings are strongly influenced by their parents' earnings. This indicates a low level of social mobility and opportunity for people from disadvantaged backgrounds (OECD, 2020).

In developed economies like the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom, social inequality and stratification exist at various levels and manifest through different types. One significant form of inequality is income inequality, where the distribution of wealth and income is highly skewed. For instance, in the USA, the income gap between the top 1% and the rest of the population has widened significantly over the past few decades. According to Saez and Zucman (2016), the top 1% in the USA captured 52% of all income growth since 2009, while the bottom 50% saw little to no income growth during the same period. A similar trend can be observed in the UK, where the income share of the top 1% has increased substantially since the 1980s, as noted by Atkinson and Piketty (2018). This income inequality can lead to disparities in access to education, healthcare, and opportunities, perpetuating social stratification.

Another dimension of social inequality in these developed economies is educational stratification. Access to quality education can greatly influence an individual's socio-economic status. In Japan, for example, educational inequality is evident in the disparity between urban and rural areas. A study by Hamada and Kondo (2019) highlights how students in urban areas have better access to high-quality schools and resources compared to their rural counterparts, leading to unequal educational outcomes. In the USA, research by Reardon and Owens (2014) found that the achievement gap between high- and low-income students has been widening over the years,

reinforcing social stratification based on education. These examples underscore the multifaceted nature of social inequality and stratification in developed economies, encompassing income disparities and unequal access to education.

Turning to developing economies, the challenges of social inequality and stratification persist, albeit with different dynamics. In countries like Brazil, income inequality remains a pressing issue. According to Milanovic (2019), Brazil has one of the highest income inequality levels in the world, with the top 1% holding a substantial share of national income. This inequality has implications for access to healthcare and education, exacerbating social disparities. In India, caste-based stratification is a prominent form of social inequality. Research by Thorat and Dubey (2018) highlights how caste-based discrimination continues to affect individuals' access to education and employment opportunities, perpetuating social hierarchies. These examples demonstrate that social inequality takes on unique forms in developing economies, with income disparities and caste-based discrimination playing significant roles.

In developing economies such as India, income inequality remains a significant concern. According to the World Inequality Database, the income shares of the top 1% in India increased from around 6% in the early 1980s to over 22% by 2019. This rising income inequality can be attributed to various factors, including unequal access to education, healthcare, and job opportunities. As highlighted by Dreze and Sen (2013) in their research, India's social stratification is also influenced by disparities in access to essential services like clean water and sanitation, with rural and marginalized communities facing the brunt of these inequalities. These issues perpetuate a cycle of poverty and social disadvantage.

In another developing economy, Brazil, social inequality is intertwined with land ownership and rural livelihoods. According to the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), Brazil's land distribution is highly skewed, with a small percentage of large landowners owning a majority of arable land. This concentration of land ownership contributes to rural poverty and social stratification. MST's efforts to advocate for land reform and equitable land distribution reflect the ongoing struggle against this form of inequality (García-Duran, 2018). Additionally, ethnic and racial disparities persist in Brazil, particularly among Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous communities, further highlighting the complex nature of social inequality in developing economies.

In South Africa, the legacy of apartheid continues to shape social inequality profoundly. Despite political changes and efforts to address racial disparities, income inequality remains a stark reality. According to the World Bank, South Africa consistently ranks as one of the most unequal countries globally in terms of income distribution. In recent years, the Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, has hovered around 0.63, indicating high levels of inequality (World Bank, 2021). This income inequality is often exacerbated by disparities in access to education, healthcare, and job opportunities, with the majority of the Black population facing ongoing social and economic challenges (Seekings & Nattrass, 2015). Additionally, land redistribution and ownership remain contentious issues, further deepening social stratification.

In Nigeria, social inequality is not only marked by income disparities but also by ethnic divisions and regional disparities. The country's northern and southern regions exhibit significant differences in economic development and access to resources. Ethnic-based conflicts, particularly in regions like the Niger Delta, have contributed to social unrest and economic disparities (Okeke-Uzodike, 2019). Nigeria's Gini coefficient stands at around 0.43, indicating moderate income inequality (World Bank, 2021). Research by Aigbokhan (2015) has emphasized the role of oil revenue distribution and unequal access to education and healthcare in perpetuating social stratification in Nigeria.

In Sub-Saharan African economies, social inequality and stratification are further shaped by factors like ethnicity, access to resources, and governance. In Nigeria, for instance, ethnic-based inequalities are evident, with some ethnic groups having more access to political power and economic resources than others. Research by Aigbokhan (2015) highlights how these ethnic disparities contribute to social and economic inequalities within the country. In South Africa, the legacy of apartheid still looms large, with racial inequalities persisting despite political changes. According to Turok and McGranahan (2016), racial disparities in income and access to services continue to be major challenges, reflecting the enduring effects of historical discrimination. These examples illustrate how social inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa is shaped by a complex interplay of historical, cultural, and economic factors.

In Nigeria, social inequality is deeply entrenched and manifests in various forms. One significant aspect is income inequality, with a small percentage of the population, often associated with political elites and business magnates, holding a disproportionate share of the country's wealth. According to a study by Fajana and Kehinde (2017), the Gini coefficient for income inequality in Nigeria was estimated to be around 0.50, indicating a moderate level of inequality. This income inequality is compounded by disparities in access to basic services, such as education and healthcare. Additionally, Nigeria's ethnic diversity plays a significant role in social stratification, as different ethnic groups often have varying levels of representation in political and economic spheres, which can lead to inequalities in resource allocation and opportunity.

In South Africa, the historical legacy of apartheid has left a lasting impact on social inequality. While significant progress has been made since the end of apartheid, racial disparities persist in various aspects of society, including income, education, and employment. According to a report by Statistics South Africa (2020), the unemployment rate among Black South Africans is significantly higher than among their White counterparts, and the majority of South Africa's impoverished population is Black. Income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, has also remained high, hovering around 0.63 in recent years (World Bank, 2021). Land ownership and access to resources also contribute to social stratification, with ongoing debates and policies aimed at addressing historical injustices.

Socioeconomic factors such as migration, ethnicity, gender, class, and education play a pivotal role in shaping levels and types of social inequality and stratification within societies. Migration,

for instance, can lead to both horizontal and vertical social stratification. Horizontal stratification occurs when migrants face discrimination or exclusion in their new host society, which limits their access to resources and opportunities. Vertical stratification can occur as migrants may occupy lower-paying jobs, often due to language barriers or lack of recognition of their qualifications, contributing to income and wealth inequality (Castles & Miller, 2009).

Ethnicity is another significant factor influencing social inequality. Ethnic minorities often experience unequal treatment in areas such as employment, housing, and access to education and healthcare. This type of inequality is referred to as ethnostratification, and it results from social prejudice and discrimination based on one's ethnic background (Feagin & Feagin, 2011). Gender is also a critical factor in stratification. Gender stratification reflects the unequal distribution of power, resources, and opportunities between men and women. This type of stratification leads to gender-based disparities in income, employment, and political representation (Ridgeway, 2011). Furthermore, class and education are fundamental socioeconomic factors that contribute to social stratification. Social class stratification is based on an individual's economic position, often determined by factors like income, wealth, and occupation. Individuals from higher social classes typically have better access to education, healthcare, and job opportunities, while those from lower classes face greater challenges in achieving upward mobility (Wright, 2015). Education is both a determinant and a consequence of social stratification. Unequal access to quality education can perpetuate existing social inequalities, as individuals with better education tend to have higher earning potential and greater social mobility (Bourdieu, 1986).

Problem Statement

The changing patterns of social inequality and stratification in relation to migration, ethnicity, gender, class, and education is a complex and multifaceted problem that affects the lives and well-being of millions of people around the world. Migration regimes are powerful forces that shape the possibilities and limitations of home, belonging, and identity for different groups of migrants, depending on their status, class, and race (Fathi & Ní Laoire, 2024). Moreover, social stratification is not only a result of migration, but also a cause of it, as people seek to improve their economic and social opportunities in different contexts (Oettinger, n.d.). Additionally, social stratification intersects with other dimensions of inequality, such as gender, age, religion, and disability, creating multiple and overlapping forms of disadvantage and privilege (Abercrombie & Urry, 1983). Finally, social stratification has significant implications for health outcomes, as racialized and classed migrants face different risks and challenges in accessing quality health care and maintaining good health (Gee, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality theory, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, explores how social inequalities and stratification are not isolated experiences but rather interconnected and influenced by multiple

dimensions such as race, gender, class, and ethnicity. It emphasizes that individuals' experiences of inequality are shaped by the intersections of these various identities. In the context of changing patterns of social inequality and stratification related to migration, ethnicity, gender, class, and education, intersectionality theory is crucial. It helps us understand that individuals experience unique forms of inequality based on the interplay of these factors. For instance, it helps to examine how migrant women from specific ethnic backgrounds may face distinct forms of discrimination and limited access to education and employment opportunities.

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, associated with economists like Gary Becker, focuses on the role of education and skills in shaping an individual's economic and social status. It argues that investments in education and training contribute to an individual's productivity, earnings, and social mobility. In the study of changing patterns of social inequality and stratification concerning education, this theory is highly relevant. It explains how differences in educational attainment impact an individual's economic opportunities, and how disparities in access to quality education can perpetuate inequality, especially among marginalized groups, including migrants and ethnic minorities.

Transnationalism Theory

Transnationalism theory, often associated with scholars like Nina Glick Schiller and Linda Basch, explores how migrants maintain and create social, economic, and political connections across borders. It emphasizes that migrants' identities and activities are not confined to a single nation-state but are influenced by transnational ties. In the context of changing patterns of social inequality related to migration, ethnicity, and class, transnationalism theory is vital. It helps us understand how migrants navigate complex identity dynamics, maintain connections with their home countries, and access resources and opportunities across borders, ultimately affecting their experiences of inequality and stratification.

Empirical Review

Luthra (2017) investigated the changing patterns of social inequality and stratification among immigrant populations in the United States, with a specific focus on how factors such as migration status, ethnicity, and education intersected to influence economic outcomes. The overarching objective was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of social inequality within immigrant communities in a rapidly globalizing and digitizing society. To achieve this, the researchers employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of census data with qualitative interviews. Quantitative methods allowed for the examination of large-scale patterns and trends, while qualitative interviews provided insights into the lived experiences and narratives of immigrants. This combination of methods offered a holistic perspective on the complexities of social inequality among immigrant populations. The research revealed that while education played a crucial role in reducing income disparities among immigrants, disparities

persisted across ethnic and migration status lines. This finding underscored the need for targeted policy interventions that consider the unique challenges faced by different immigrant groups in the United States. Based on their findings, the study recommended the implementation of policies that address the multifaceted nature of social inequality, including access to education and employment opportunities, with the aim of fostering greater economic and social inclusion among immigrant communities in the United States.

Heath (2018) examined changing patterns of social inequality across the dimensions of gender, class, and ethnicity, with a specific focus on second-generation immigrants. The study aimed to unravel the intricate intersections of these factors and their influence on various aspects of social stratification. To achieve this objective, the researchers relied on extensive quantitative analysis of household survey data from multiple European countries. Employing advanced statistical techniques, they scrutinized educational and labor market outcomes across different social groups. By utilizing large-scale data, the study could provide a broad and statistically robust overview of social inequalities faced by second-generation immigrants in Europe. The research unearthed a complex picture, revealing that second-generation immigrant women faced triple disadvantages related to ethnicity, class, and gender, resulting in lower educational attainment and labor market participation. This multifaceted insight highlighted the need for policies that not only address one dimension of inequality but simultaneously consider the interconnectedness of gender, class, and ethnicity in shaping life chances among second-generation immigrants in Europe. Based on their findings, the research advocated for the development of targeted interventions that could effectively address these complex intersections of inequality. Policies promoting gender equality, socioeconomic integration, and inclusive educational opportunities were identified as essential to mitigate the disadvantages faced by second-generation immigrant women in European societies.

Sakr (2019) embarked on an exploration of the changing patterns of gender inequality within the context of labor market participation and education among Arab women. The research sought to understand the evolving dynamics of gender inequality in a region characterized by diverse cultural and socio-economic factors. To achieve this goal, the study employed a combination of survey data analysis and qualitative interviews. Quantitative analysis allowed for the examination of large-scale trends and patterns, while qualitative interviews provided nuanced insights into the lived experiences and perceptions of Arab women. This mixed-methods approach enabled a multifaceted understanding of the factors influencing women's access to education and employment opportunities in the Arab world. The research unveiled significant regional variations in gender inequality, with some Arab countries experiencing progress in women's education and labor market participation, while others lagged behind. These findings underscored the importance of considering the diverse contexts within the Arab world when addressing gender inequality. In light of the findings, the study emphasized the need for targeted policy initiatives that could bridge the gap in gender equity in education and promote women's economic empowerment in the Arab region. Culturally sensitive educational policies and community engagement were identified as critical components of these efforts.

Calvo (2016) understood the evolving patterns of inequality among different social classes in the region, taking into consideration the complex dynamics of economic growth and development. The research aimed to shed light on the persisting income disparities despite economic progress in some Latin American countries. To address this objective, the researchers conducted extensive quantitative analysis of household survey data from multiple Latin American nations. This rigorous analysis allowed for an examination of income inequality trends across different social classes within the region. The study uncovered that income inequality persisted in Latin America, with marginalized social classes disproportionately affected. Even amid economic growth, certain social groups faced limited improvements in their economic well-being. The research underscored the importance of comprehensive policy reforms to address class-based disparities. It highlighted the need for equitable access to education, as well as social welfare programs aimed at reducing poverty and inequality across Latin America. In essence, the study called for targeted measures to ensure the benefits of economic growth were more evenly distributed among various social classes.

Ramos (2018) delved into the intersection of education and gender inequality, specifically examining how educational attainment influenced the gender wage gap. The research aimed to unravel the complex relationship between education and gender-based wage disparities, offering insights into potential pathways for reducing gender inequality. To address this purpose, the researchers conducted a detailed quantitative analysis using micro-level data and econometric techniques. This approach enabled the researchers to examine wage differentials among men and women with varying levels of education. The study revealed that education played a significant role in reducing the gender wage gap, particularly for women with higher educational attainment. This finding highlighted the importance of investing in women's education as a means to address gender-based wage disparities in South Asia. Based on their findings, the research advocated for policies that promote equal access to education for women and girls in the region. It emphasized the potential of education as a powerful tool for advancing gender equality and economic empowerment in South Asia.

Nieuwenhuis and Hooimeijer (2016) aimed to explore changing patterns of residential segregation in European cities, particularly in relation to migration and ethnicity. The research sought to understand the dynamics of residential segregation and its implications for social inequality and access to resources within urban areas. To achieve this goal, the researchers employed spatial analysis techniques and drew on census data to examine the spatial distribution of different ethnic and migrant groups within urban environments. This approach allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the degree of segregation and its variations across different cities and regions. The research highlighted the persistence of ethnic and migrant segregation in European cities, with implications for social inequality and access to resources. The study underscored the importance of urban planning and housing policies that promoted integration and reduced residential segregation among diverse populations in European cities. It called for measures aimed at creating inclusive urban environments that facilitate social cohesion and equal opportunities for all residents.

Riddell (2017) understood the evolving patterns of educational inequality among marginalized ethnic minority groups. The research sought to unravel the complex factors influencing educational outcomes and opportunities for these minority communities. To address this purpose, the researchers conducted qualitative research involving interviews and focus group discussions within the targeted ethnic minority communities. This qualitative approach allowed for a deep exploration of the lived experiences, challenges, and perspectives of the participants. The research unveiled disparities in access to quality education among ethnic minority groups, affecting their social mobility and opportunities. The study emphasized the importance of culturally sensitive educational policies and community engagement to address educational inequalities among marginalized ethnic minority communities in Australia. It called for tailored interventions that consider the unique needs and aspirations of these groups to foster greater educational equity and inclusion.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

FINDINGS

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

Conceptual Research Gaps: While the studies by (Heath, 2018; Riddell, 2017) examined various dimensions of inequality such as gender, class, ethnicity, and education separately, there is a research gap in understanding how these factors intersect and compound to influence social stratification. Future research should explore the complex interplay between these dimensions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of inequality dynamics. Although the studies recommend policy interventions to address inequality, there is limited empirical research evaluating the effectiveness of these policies in reducing disparities. Future research should focus on assessing the impact of specific policy measures on reducing inequality in different contexts (Luthra, 2017; Calvo, 2016).

Contextual Research Gaps: The studies by (Sakr, 2019; Nieuwenhuis & Hooimeijer, 2016) acknowledged regional variations in inequality, but more in-depth analysis is needed to understand the specific contextual factors that contribute to these variations. Research should explore the cultural, economic, and political determinants that shape inequality within different regions. The research gaps include limited attention to marginalized and vulnerable communities, such as indigenous populations and ethnic minorities. Future studies should focus on these groups to

uncover their unique experiences of inequality and develop targeted policy recommendations (Sakr, 2019; Calvo, 2016; Riddell, 2017).

Geographical Research Gaps: The studies by (Sakr, 2019; Calvo, 2016) primarily focus on specific regions (e.g., the United States, Europe, South Asia, Latin America, Australia) without conducting cross-regional comparisons. Research that compares and contrasts inequality patterns and policy responses across different global regions can provide valuable insights. Some regions, such as Africa and the Middle East, are not adequately represented in the studies. Future research should include these regions to broaden the understanding of global inequality dynamics.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The changing patterns of social inequality and stratification are deeply intertwined with complex dynamics related to migration, ethnicity, gender, class, and education. These multifaceted factors intersect and interact in shaping the contemporary landscape of social disparities. Migration, driven by economic, political, and social factors, plays a crucial role in altering the demographic composition of societies, often leading to the emergence of diverse ethno cultural communities. Ethnicity, in turn, can become a basis for both inclusion and exclusion, as discrimination and unequal access to opportunities persist in many contexts.

Gender, another critical dimension, continues to be a powerful determinant of social inequality, with persistent gender gaps in income, representation, and access to resources. The intersections of gender with ethnicity and class further complicate the experiences of marginalized groups, highlighting the need for an intersectional approach in understanding stratification. Class, rooted in economic disparities, remains a fundamental driver of inequality, with educational attainment being a key factor in social mobility. Education, while often seen as a means of addressing social inequality, can also perpetuate disparities when access is unequal. The changing patterns of social inequality and stratification demand holistic and context-specific analyses that consider the interplay of these factors. As societies continue to evolve, addressing these complex dynamics is essential for fostering greater equity and social justice. Policy interventions and societal efforts should prioritize inclusivity, equal opportunities, and the recognition of intersectionality to address the multifaceted challenges posed by social inequality in contemporary contexts.

Recommendation

Theory

Embrace and promote the use of an intersectionality framework that recognizes the interconnectedness of various social identities, such as race, gender, class, and migration status. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of how multiple forms of inequality intersect and compound, shaping individuals' experiences. Incorporate a global perspective into theoretical frameworks. Acknowledge that migration, ethnicity, and globalization are

interconnected, and the impacts of inequality transcend national borders. Theories should consider the global dynamics that influence local patterns of stratification. Develop dynamic theories that account for the evolving nature of social inequality and stratification. Recognize that social structures and identities are not static, and theories should adapt to capture changing realities, such as the gig economy, digitalization, and transnational movements.

Practice

Organizations and institutions should implement diversity and inclusion programs that go beyond tokenism. These programs should actively address issues related to ethnicity, gender, migration, and class by creating inclusive environments, ensuring equal opportunities, and fostering diverse leadership. Provide cultural competency training to professionals in sectors like healthcare, education, and law enforcement. This training should focus on understanding the unique experiences and challenges faced by individuals from diverse backgrounds and equip practitioners to offer equitable services. Continue to implement and strengthen affirmative action policies that promote equal access to education and employment for marginalized groups. These policies should be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure their effectiveness.

Policy

Develop and implement comprehensive immigration reform policies that address the rights and social integration of migrants. These policies should offer pathways to legal status, protect labor rights, and provide access to essential services. Enforce gender equity policies that address the gender pay gap, promote work-life balance, and combat workplace discrimination. These policies should be accompanied by measures to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Advocate for progressive taxation policies that redistribute wealth and reduce income inequality. The revenue generated can be reinvested in education, healthcare, and social services to benefit marginalized communities. Implement education policies that bridge the achievement gap among different socio-economic, racial, and ethnic groups. Promote inclusive curricula that reflect diverse perspectives and histories. Strengthen anti-discrimination legislation to protect individuals based on characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, and migration status. Ensure that enforcement mechanisms are robust and accessible. Invest in data collection and research funding to better understand the changing patterns of social inequality and stratification. Policymakers should rely on evidence-based research to design effective policies that address specific inequalities.

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