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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to analyze the income inequality and social mobility in Brazil.

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: Income inequality in Brazil is among the highest globally, leading to significant barriers to social mobility. Limited access to education and employment opportunities exacerbates this issue. Despite government efforts, intergenerational mobility remains constrained, necessitating comprehensive reforms for economic inclusion.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Human capital theory, structural marxism & intersectionality theory may be used to anchor future studies on analyze the income inequality and social mobility in Brazil. Prioritize investment in education at all levels, with a focus on improving access to quality schooling, reducing dropout rates, and enhancing vocational training programs. Implement progressive taxation policies that redistribute wealth and reduce income inequality.

Keywords: *Income Inequality, Social Mobility*

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INTRODUCTION

Social mobility encompasses the ability of individuals to move up or down the socioeconomic ladder within a society, and it is influenced by factors such as intergenerational mobility, access to education, and employment opportunities. In developed economies like the United States, there has been a growing concern over declining social mobility in recent decades. Research by Chetty, Hendren, Kline, Saez, & Turner (2014) highlights that intergenerational mobility has stagnated in the US, with children from low-income families facing significant barriers to upward mobility. Additionally, access to quality education and employment opportunities is often unequal, with disparities in resources and opportunities perpetuating socioeconomic divides. For example, in the UK, data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to attend top universities or secure high-paying jobs compared to their more affluent peers, exacerbating income inequality and limiting social mobility.

In developing economies such as India, social mobility is also a pressing issue. Despite significant economic growth in recent years, access to education and employment opportunities remains uneven, particularly in rural areas. According to a study by Desai, Dubey, Joshi, Sen, & Vanneman (2010), intergenerational mobility in India is limited, with children often inheriting the socioeconomic status of their parents. Furthermore, disparities in educational attainment and job prospects persist, with marginalized communities such as Dalits and Adivasis facing systemic barriers to advancement. Similarly, in Brazil, although social mobility has improved in recent decades, income inequality remains high, hindering the ability of individuals from lower-income backgrounds to improve their economic status through education and employment.

In developing economies like China, social mobility has been influenced by rapid economic growth and urbanization. However, disparities persist, particularly between rural and urban areas. Research by Meng & Zhang (2020) suggests that while China has made significant progress in reducing poverty and improving access to education, intergenerational mobility remains relatively low, with socioeconomic status heavily influenced by parental background. Additionally, access to employment opportunities varies widely across regions, with urban residents often benefiting from higher wages and better job prospects compared to their rural counterparts. Despite government efforts to address inequality through policies such as rural development initiatives and investment in education, social mobility in China continues to be shaped by complex socioeconomic factors.

In Latin American economies like Mexico, social mobility is influenced by a combination of historical inequalities, economic policies, and access to education. Research by Levy & Schady (2013) highlights the impact of education on intergenerational mobility in Mexico, with investments in education playing a crucial role in breaking the cycle of poverty. However, access to quality education remains unequal, particularly for indigenous and rural communities, limiting their opportunities for upward mobility. Additionally, structural issues such as informality in the labor market and barriers to entrepreneurship further exacerbate income inequality and hinder social mobility in the region. Despite efforts to promote inclusive growth and improve access to education, social mobility in Latin America remains a complex and multifaceted challenge.

In Southeast Asian economies like Indonesia, social mobility is influenced by a combination of factors including access to education, economic opportunities, and social networks. Research by Sumarto & Suryahadi (2018) suggests that while Indonesia has made significant strides in

expanding access to education, particularly at the primary level, disparities persist in terms of quality and relevance of education, with rural and marginalized communities often facing limited opportunities for advancement. Additionally, informal employment remains prevalent, particularly in the agricultural sector, limiting income growth and perpetuating intergenerational poverty. Efforts to promote social mobility in Indonesia include initiatives to improve the quality of education, expand access to vocational training, and create more inclusive economic policies, although progress remains uneven across regions.

In South American economies like Argentina, social mobility is influenced by various factors including access to education, economic opportunities, and political stability. Research by Gasparini & Cruces (2018) suggests that while Argentina has made significant progress in expanding access to education, including efforts to improve quality and reduce disparities, social mobility remains constrained by factors such as income inequality and economic volatility. Despite efforts to promote inclusive growth and social welfare programs, disparities persist, particularly among marginalized communities and regions with limited access to resources. Efforts to address these challenges include initiatives to enhance access to education, promote job creation, and strengthen social protection measures, although the effectiveness of these measures is often hindered by political and economic instability.

In African economies like Kenya, social mobility is influenced by a range of factors including access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Research by Owino & Kiiru (2017) highlights the role of education in facilitating upward mobility in Kenya, with investments in primary and secondary education playing a crucial role in improving outcomes for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, challenges such as limited access to quality healthcare and persistent gender disparities in employment continue to pose barriers to social mobility. Efforts to address these challenges include initiatives to enhance access to healthcare services, promote gender equality in the workforce, and create more inclusive economic opportunities for marginalized communities. Despite these efforts, social mobility in Kenya remains a complex and multifaceted issue, requiring sustained investment and policy intervention to address underlying inequalities.

In African economies like South Africa, social mobility is influenced by historical legacies, institutional factors, and structural inequalities. Research by Leibbrandt, Finn, & Woolard (2012) highlights the impact of apartheid-era policies on social mobility in South Africa, with disparities persisting along racial lines and between urban and rural areas. Despite efforts to promote racial equality and address historical injustices, challenges remain, including high levels of unemployment, poverty, and income inequality. Efforts to promote social mobility in South Africa include initiatives to improve access to education, enhance skills development, and promote inclusive economic growth, although progress has been slow and uneven. Addressing these challenges requires sustained investment in education, job creation, and social welfare programs to create opportunities for all citizens to thrive.

In sub-Saharan African economies like Nigeria, social mobility is constrained by a range of factors, including limited access to education and economic opportunities. Research by Adesina & Kyari (2019) highlights the challenges faced by young people in Nigeria, where high levels of unemployment and underemployment contribute to persistent poverty and inequality.

Intergenerational mobility is also limited, with socioeconomic status often determined by factors such as family background and geographic location. Despite efforts to improve access to education and create more inclusive economic policies, social mobility in many sub-Saharan African countries remains a significant challenge, with entrenched inequalities undermining efforts to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development.

In Sub-Saharan African economies like Ghana, social mobility is influenced by various factors including access to education, economic opportunities, and governance. Research by Osei & Osei (2017) suggests that while Ghana has made progress in expanding access to education, particularly at the primary level, social mobility remains constrained by factors such as income inequality, limited job opportunities, and corruption. Despite efforts to promote inclusive growth and improve social welfare programs, disparities persist, particularly among rural and marginalized communities. Efforts to address these challenges include initiatives to enhance access to quality education, promote entrepreneurship, and strengthen governance and anti-corruption measures, although progress has been slow and uneven.

In Nigerian economy, social mobility is influenced by a combination of factors including access to education, economic opportunities, and ethnic dynamics. Research by Adesina & Kyari (2019) highlights the impact of structural challenges such as high levels of unemployment, poverty, and income inequality on social mobility in Nigeria. Despite efforts to promote economic diversification and inclusive growth, disparities persist, particularly among different ethnic groups and regions. Efforts to address these challenges include initiatives to improve access to education, enhance skills development, and promote inclusive economic policies, although progress has been hindered by political instability and governance issues. Addressing these challenges requires sustained investment in education, job creation, and social welfare programs to create opportunities for all citizens to thrive.

Income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, reflects the distribution of income among individuals or households within a society. A high Gini coefficient signifies greater inequality, indicating that a larger proportion of the total income is concentrated among a small percentage of the population, while a low coefficient suggests a more equal distribution of income. This inequality can manifest in various forms, including wage disparities, differences in access to resources and opportunities, and uneven wealth distribution. For example, in societies where there is significant income inequality, the wealthiest individuals or families often control a disproportionate share of resources and power, leading to socioeconomic disparities and reduced social mobility (Atkinson, 2015).

Social mobility, including intergenerational mobility and access to education and employment opportunities, is intricately linked to income inequality. High levels of income inequality can hinder social mobility by creating barriers to accessing quality education and employment opportunities for individuals from lower-income backgrounds. Conversely, more equitable distribution of income can facilitate greater social mobility by reducing these barriers and providing a more level playing field for individuals to pursue upward mobility (Piketty, 2014). Additionally, intergenerational mobility, which refers to the ability of individuals to move up or down the socioeconomic ladder compared to their parents, is influenced by income inequality, as disparities in income and wealth can perpetuate across generations, further entrenching

socioeconomic divides (Chetty, 2014). Thus, addressing income inequality is crucial for fostering greater social mobility and creating a more equitable society.

Problem Statement

Despite Brazil's economic growth and poverty reduction efforts in recent years, persistent income inequality remains a significant challenge, exacerbating social disparities and hindering upward social mobility. According to recent studies (World Bank, 2020), Brazil consistently ranks among the most unequal countries globally, with a substantial portion of the population experiencing limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. This inequality is reflected in the concentration of wealth among the top percentile of earners, while a large segment of the population struggles to escape poverty (Piketty, 2014). Additionally, Brazil's historically entrenched social stratification, compounded by structural barriers such as racial discrimination and unequal access to resources (Silva & Hasenbalg, 2019), further perpetuates the cycle of poverty and limits individuals' ability to climb the socio-economic ladder.

Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory

Originated by economist Gary Becker in the 1960s, Human Capital Theory posits that individuals' investments in education and skills acquisition lead to higher productivity and earnings. In the context of income inequality and social mobility in Brazil, this theory suggests that disparities in access to quality education and training opportunities contribute to income disparities and hinder upward mobility (Villa, 2019).

Structural Marxism

This theory, developed by Karl Marx and later expanded upon by scholars like Erik Olin Wright, focuses on the structural inequalities inherent in capitalist societies. It argues that income inequality is a result of the capitalist economic system, where the bourgeoisie control the means of production, leading to exploitation of the working class. In Brazil, structural Marxism highlights the role of economic structures, such as land ownership concentration and unequal distribution of wealth, in perpetuating income disparities and limiting social mobility (Gómez & Rodríguez, 2018).

Intersectionality Theory

Originating from legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality theory emphasizes how multiple social identities intersect to shape individuals' experiences of oppression and privilege. In the context of Brazil, this theory underscores the interconnectedness of race, class, gender, and other factors in determining income inequality and social mobility. For example, intersectionality theory helps to illuminate how historical legacies of slavery, along with contemporary racial discrimination and gender disparities, contribute to persistent income gaps and hinder upward mobility for marginalized groups (Soares, 2018).

Empirical Review

Chancel and Gasparini (2018) provided a comprehensive analysis of the trends and drivers of income inequality within the country. They utilized longitudinal household survey data spanning

several decades to examine the evolution of income distribution patterns over time. Employing sophisticated econometric techniques, such as Gini coefficient calculations and decomposition analysis, they were able to identify the main factors contributing to Brazil's persistently high level of income inequality. Their findings revealed that unequal access to education and employment opportunities were among the primary drivers of income disparities in Brazil. Additionally, they highlighted the role of government policies, such as social welfare programs and labor market regulations, in either exacerbating or mitigating income inequality. By shedding light on the structural determinants of income inequality, their research provided valuable insights for policymakers and social scientists striving to address the root causes of economic disparities in Brazil.

Ferreira (2019) conducted a seminal study on the relationship between income inequality and social mobility in Brazil, seeking to understand how economic opportunities are transmitted across generations within the country. Drawing on panel data from multiple waves of household surveys, they employed advanced econometric models to analyze intergenerational mobility patterns and identify the factors influencing individuals' economic outcomes over time. Their research revealed a significant degree of income persistence across generations in Brazil, with family background playing a crucial role in determining individuals' socio-economic status. Moreover, they found that educational attainment emerged as a key determinant of upward mobility, suggesting that investments in education could help break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Based on their findings, Ferreira et al. emphasized the importance of inclusive social policies and targeted interventions to promote greater social mobility and reduce income inequality in Brazil.

Silva and Soares (2017) evaluated the impact of conditional cash transfer programs, such as Bolsa Família, on poverty reduction and social mobility in Brazil. Their study utilized a combination of quasi-experimental methods and qualitative interviews to assess the effectiveness of these social welfare programs in improving income distribution and mobility prospects for vulnerable populations. Through rigorous analysis, they demonstrated that Bolsa Família and similar initiatives played a significant role in alleviating poverty and promoting social inclusion in Brazil. By providing financial assistance to low-income families, these programs enabled recipients to invest in education, health care, and other productive assets, thereby enhancing their long-term economic prospects. However, Silva and Soares also highlighted the need for complementary policies, such as job training programs and investment in infrastructure, to address structural barriers to mobility and ensure sustainable development outcomes for all Brazilians.

Barros (2018) focused on the spatial dimensions of income inequality and social mobility in Brazil. Their research aimed to analyze regional disparities in economic opportunities and outcomes within the country, utilizing geospatial analysis techniques and census data to identify patterns of inequality across different regions. Through their analysis, they uncovered significant variations in income levels, educational attainment, and access to basic services between urban and rural areas, as well as among different states and municipalities. Moreover, they found that historical factors, such as colonial legacies and patterns of migration, contributed to persistent inequalities between regions. In light of their findings, Barros et al. emphasized the importance of place-based policies and targeted investments to address spatial disparities and promote inclusive development strategies that benefit all regions of Brazil. By understanding the spatial dynamics of inequality,

policymakers can better target resources and interventions to areas with the greatest need, thereby fostering more equitable and sustainable growth.

Mendonça (2020) examined the impact of labor market dynamics on income inequality and social mobility in Brazil. Their research sought to understand how changes in employment structures, wage dynamics, and labor market institutions influenced individuals' economic outcomes over time. Utilizing panel data regression models and labor market indicators, they analyzed the relationship between labor market variables and income inequality, as well as mobility prospects for Brazilian workers. Their findings revealed that shifts towards informal employment and precarious work arrangements contributed to widening income disparities and limited upward mobility opportunities for many individuals. Additionally, they highlighted the role of social protection measures, such as minimum wage policies and labor market regulations, in mitigating the adverse effects of labor market volatility on income distribution and mobility. Based on their research, advocated for labor market reforms aimed at promoting decent work and inclusive growth, as well as strengthening social safety nets to protect vulnerable workers from economic shocks.

Assunção (2018) delved into the gender dimensions of income inequality and social mobility in Brazil, seeking to understand how gender disparities intersect with broader patterns of economic inequality within the country. Their study utilized gender-disaggregated data and decomposition techniques to analyze the extent to which gender differences in education, employment, and other socio-economic factors contributed to overall income inequality. Through their analysis, they found that gender inequalities played a significant role in shaping individuals' economic outcomes, with women often experiencing lower wages, limited access to formal employment, and higher rates of poverty compared to men. Moreover, they highlighted the need for gender-responsive policies and initiatives to address structural barriers and promote gender equity in income distribution and mobility outcomes. By advocating for gender-sensitive interventions, aimed to advance the goal of inclusive development and social justice in Brazil, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities to thrive in society.

Santos (2017) explored the impact of racial inequality on social mobility in Brazil, focusing on how race, class, and gender intersect to shape individuals' life chances and economic trajectories within the country. Their research employed intersectional analysis and ethnographic methods to examine the experiences of marginalized communities and identify the barriers they face in accessing economic opportunities. Through their study, they uncovered systemic patterns of racial discrimination and exclusion that perpetuated racial disparities in income, education, and employment. Moreover, they highlighted the role of historical legacies, such as slavery and colonialism, in shaping contemporary racial inequalities in Brazil. In light of their findings, Santos et al. called for anti-discrimination policies and affirmative action measures to address racial disparities and promote inclusive development strategies that benefit all Brazilians. By acknowledging the intersecting forms of inequality, policymakers can better design interventions that target the root causes of social exclusion and promote greater equality of opportunity for marginalized groups.

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 Gap: Chancel and Gasparini (2018) provided valuable insights into the drivers and consequences of income inequality, there is a lack of research focusing on the intersectionality of various forms of inequality in Brazil. Specifically, studies often examine income disparities in isolation, without adequately considering how factors such as gender, race, and spatial location intersect to shape individuals' economic opportunities and outcomes. Future research could adopt an intersectional approach to analyze the complex interplay between different axes of inequality and their cumulative effects on social mobility and economic well-being in Brazil.

Contextual Gap: Despite the extensive research on income inequality and social mobility in Brazil, there is a need for studies that examine these issues within specific regional or local contexts. Existing research tends to provide a national-level analysis, overlooking the heterogeneity of experiences within different states, municipalities, and communities. Future studies could adopt a micro-level perspective to investigate how regional disparities in economic opportunities, social services, and infrastructure contribute to variations in income inequality and mobility outcomes across different parts of Brazil (Silva and Soares, 2017).

Geographical Gap: Mendonça (2020) touched upon spatial dimensions of inequality, there remains a gap in understanding the dynamics of urban-rural disparities and their implications for income distribution and social mobility in Brazil. Existing research often focuses on broad regional differences, overlooking the specific challenges faced by rural communities in accessing economic opportunities and social services. Future research could employ a geospatial analysis approach to map out localized patterns of inequality and identify areas with the greatest need for targeted interventions and investment in infrastructure and human capital development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Income inequality and social mobility are complex and interrelated issues that have significant implications for the socio-economic landscape of Brazil. As one of the most unequal countries in the world, Brazil faces persistent challenges in addressing disparities in income distribution and providing opportunities for upward mobility. Despite economic growth and poverty reduction efforts in recent years, income inequality remains a pervasive issue, with a significant portion of the population experiencing limited access to resources and opportunities. Moreover, the relationship between income inequality and social mobility in Brazil is intricate, with unequal access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities contributing to entrenched social stratification. While some individuals may be able to overcome socio-economic barriers and

achieve upward mobility through education or entrepreneurship, systemic inequalities often hinder the mobility prospects of marginalized communities, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty and exclusion.

Addressing income inequality and promoting social mobility in Brazil requires multifaceted approaches that address both the structural determinants of inequality and the barriers to mobility faced by disadvantaged groups. This includes policies aimed at improving access to quality education, healthcare, and social services, as well as initiatives to promote inclusive economic growth, job creation, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Furthermore, efforts to reduce income inequality must be complemented by measures to enhance social mobility, such as targeted interventions to support marginalized communities, promote diversity and inclusion in the workforce, and address systemic discrimination and social exclusion. By fostering a more equitable and inclusive society, Brazil can unlock the full potential of its human capital, promote economic prosperity, and build a more resilient and cohesive society for future generations.

Recommendation

Theory

Conduct research that employs an intersectional framework to understand how various factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, and geographical location intersect to shape income inequality and social mobility in Brazil. This approach will provide nuanced insights into the unique experiences of different social groups and their pathways to economic advancement. Investigate the structural determinants of income inequality, including historical legacies, institutional arrangements, and economic policies. By examining these underlying factors, researchers can uncover the root causes of inequality and inform theories that address systemic barriers to social mobility.

Practice

Prioritize investment in education at all levels, with a focus on improving access to quality schooling, reducing dropout rates, and enhancing vocational training programs. By providing equitable educational opportunities, Brazil can empower individuals to acquire the skills necessary for upward mobility and break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Develop programs and initiatives to support workers in the informal sector, who often face precarious working conditions and limited access to social protection. This could include initiatives to formalize informal employment, expand access to microfinance and entrepreneurship training, and provide social safety nets for vulnerable workers.

Policy

Implement progressive taxation policies that redistribute wealth and reduce income inequality. This could involve increasing taxes on high-income earners and capital gains, while providing tax breaks or incentives for low-income individuals and small businesses. Strengthen social protection programs such as Bolsa Família, Brazil's conditional cash transfer program, to provide targeted assistance to low-income families. Additionally, expand access to healthcare, housing, and other essential services to reduce socioeconomic disparities and improve overall well-being. Enact labor market reforms to enhance job quality, ensure decent wages, and promote labor rights. This could

include measures to address informal employment, strengthen collective bargaining mechanisms, and combat discrimination in the workplace.

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