

Effects of Inequality in the Great Mekong Sub-Region

Jaturong Sriwongwanna^{1*}

^{1*}Faculty of Business Administration and Management, Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University, Thailand

Natthapong Nanthasamroeng²

²Faculty of Industrial Technology, Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University, Thailand

Umaporn Wittayasin³

³International Education Institute, Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University, Thailand

Sothy Mean⁴

⁴The University of South-East Asia, Siem Reap, Cambodia

Abstract

The objectives of this study were to: 1) study impact factors of inequality and 2) compare the effects that contribute to inequality grouped by gender, age, nationality and country of residence by using a questionnaire to collect data from all 600 participants who were students of Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University (Thailand), Pakse Teacher Training College and Champasak University (Laos) and University of South-East Asia (Cambodia). Statistics used in data analysis were mean, standard deviation, t-test, and f-test.

The findings of the study indicated that,

1. Factors affecting inequality were educational opportunities (a mean of 3.85), career opportunities (a mean of 3.82), quality of life (a mean of 3.77), poverty (a mean of 3.76) and health services (a mean of 3.52).

2. Gender differences resulted in inequality of educational opportunities, career opportunities and Poverty.

3. Differences in nationality affected inequalities of educational opportunities, career opportunities and poverty.

4. Differences in the country of residence resulted in inequality of all factors.

Keyword: Effects of inequality

Faculty of Business Administration and Management, Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University
2 Ratchathani Road, Mueang District, Ubon Ratchathani Province, 34000, Thailand
Tel. +66-45-352000 ext.1401 E-mail: jaturong.s@ubru.ac.th

Introduction

The National Statistical Office explored the wealth of Thai people for the first time comprising ownership of land, houses and other financial assets. The result was that 69 percent of the nation's wealth was in the richest households, with only 20 percent of the total. The 20 percent was the poorest households with only 1 percent of property.

As a result, there is an economic disparity through the unfair distribution of income. The community is weak because of people who have left homeland. Workers are from the countryside to factories. They cannot access basic services from the government. Environmental problems deteriorate from the manufacturing industry to meet external needs. Morality and ethics including human rights and health issues are ignored.

Inequality often contributes to poverty, conflicts, and exploitation. The employment is beneficial for employers who are in higher position. A change of values that focuses on only wealth rather than ethics is one of the causes of corruption from grassroots level up to high levels. People move to the city for better opportunities. That causes congestion, increases crime and reduces security of life and property. An increase in land prices in urban areas makes it difficult to own housing. High cost of living causes increasing savings rates. That causes a lot of household debt. These issues may lead to insufficient investment in long-term and affect sustainable economic growth.

Sheahan and Iglesias (1998), who did a research on inequality in Latin America, stated that inequality is more or less likely to affect access to public welfare and the other opportunities.

This article focuses on the effects of inequality, which is useful for those organizations that want to address this disparity.

Objectives

1. To study impact factors of inequality.
2. To compare the impact factors which contribute to inequality grouped by gender, age, nationality and country of residence.

Methodology

Population

The population was students of networking universities, Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University (Thailand), Pakse Teacher Training College and Champasak University (Laos) and University of South-East Asia (Cambodia) without knowing

the exact population.

Sample

Since the population was large and the exact population was unknown, the sample size can be calculated from the unknown sample size (Cohen and Cohen, 1983) with a confidence level of 95% and a tolerance of 5%. The sample size was 384, for evaluation and analysis. The researcher used a sample size of 600 samples from 4 universities, which met the required criteria of being not less than 384 samples.

Sampling

This research used multi-stage sampling in the following order.

Step 1: Purposive Sampling: Sampling from 4 universities in three countries: Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University, Pakse Teacher Training Collage and Champasak University (Laos), University of South-East Asia (Cambodia).

Step 2: Convenience sampling data from students who participated in Bus Asean Project organized by the International Education Institute.

Variable

Independent Variables were gender, nationality and country of residence. Dependent variables were educational opportunities, quality of life, health services, career opportunities and poverty/riches.

Instruments

The instrument was questionnaires (Quantitative research) in closed-ended form. The questions were likert scale. It could be classified into 5 levels as follows (Liker, 1967):

5	=	most
4	=	more
3	=	moderate
2	=	low
1	=	very low

The mean of observable variables was divided into 5 levels as follows (I, Anderson, Tatham, 1995).

4.50-5.00	=	highest level
3.50-4.49	=	high level
2.50-3.49	=	moderate level
1.50-2.49	=	low level
1.00-1.49	=	lowest level

Result

Research results can be shown by consistency with the following objectives.

1. Effects of inequality can be shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Effects of inequality

Variables	\bar{x}	S.D	Interpreting result
1. Educational opportunities	3.85	.918	high level
2. Quality of life	3.77	.915	high level
3. Health services	3.52	1.012	high level
4. Career opportunities	3.82	.960	high level
5. Poverty / Riches.	3.76	1.092	high level
Result	3.74	.730	high level

Table 1 shows that factors affecting inequality were educational opportunities (a mean of 3.85), career opportunities (a mean of 3.82), quality of life (a mean of 3.77), poverty / riches (a mean of 3.76) and health services (a mean of 3.52).

2. Comparing the effects that contribute to inequality grouped by gender, age, nationality and country of residence

Table 2 Comparing the effects of inequality by gender

Factors	Result
1. Educational opportunities	different*
2. Quality of life	no difference
3. Health services	no difference
4. Career opportunities	different*
5. Poverty / Riches.	different*

* with significance level of 0.05

Table 2 shows that the gender difference results in inequality of educational opportunities, career opportunities and poverty / riches with the significant level of 0.05.

Table 3 Comparing the effects of inequality by nationality

Factors	Result
1. Educational opportunities	different*
2. Quality of life	no difference
3. Health services	no difference
4. Career opportunities	different*
5. Poverty / Riches.	different*

* with significance level of 0.05

Table 3 shows that the nationality results in inequality of educational opportunities, career opportunities and poverty / riches with the significant level of 0.05.

Table 4 Comparing the effects of inequality by country of residence

Factors	Result
1. Educational opportunities	different*
2. Quality of life	different*
3. Health services	different*
4. Career opportunities	different*
5. Poverty / Riches.	different*

* with significance level of 0.05

Table 4 shows that differences in country of residence affect inequality in all factors with the significant level of 0.05.

Discussion

1. Factors affecting inequality of educational opportunities were in the highest level. This corresponds to Jencks's work (1972) which stated that inequality affects the chances of attending a different school or university such as admission to school program with a great curriculum or courses that are accepted in society.

2. Gender differences result in inequality of educational opportunities, career opportunities and poverty/riches. That is in line with Klasen (2002) stating that gender affects equality in education and has a long-term impact on the economic system of society, community or country. This research has also shown that there is a gap between GDP about 0.4 - 09 percent in a country where males and females are differently educated.

3. Differences in nationality affect inequality of educational opportunities, career opportunities and poverty/richness. That is related to Gibson's (1966) study on difference of nationality between immigrant students from Spain to America and American students. The results showed that differences in nationality affect national discrimination.

4. Differences in the country of residence result in inequality in all aspects. This is consistent with Raymond's (1974) concept that differences in social levels comprising different residential backgrounds affect equality/educational opportunities.

References

- Boudon, R. (1974). *Education, opportunity, and social inequality: Changing prospects in Western society*. New York: Wiley-Interscience.
- Cohen, J., & Cohen, P. (1983). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences*. Hillsdale N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Gibson, C. (1966). *Spain in America* (New American Nation). New York: Harpercollins College Div.
- Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E., & Tatham, R. L. (1995). *Multivariate data analysis: With readings*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall International.
- Jencks, C. (1972). *Inequality; A reassessment of the effect of family and schooling in America*. London: Allen Lane.
- Jeong, H. (2008). Assessment of relationship between growth and inequality: Micro evidence from Thailand. *Macroeconomic Dynamics*, 12(S2).
- Klasen, S. (2002). Low schooling for girls, slower growth for all? Cross-country evidence on the effect of gender inequality in education on economic development. *The World Bank Economic Review*, 16(3), 345-373.
- Likert, R. (1967). Reading in attitude theory and measurement. In M. Fishbein (Ed.), *Reading in Attitude Theory and Measurement* (pp. 90-95). New York: Ohn Wiley & Sons.
- Sheahan, J., & Iglesias, E. (1998). Kinds and causes of inequality in Latin America (C. L. Graham & R. H. Sabot, Eds.). In N. Birdsall (Ed.), *Beyond tradeoffs market reform and equitable growth in Latin America*(pp. 29-61). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.