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Relationship between Education Attainment and Income Mobility in the United States

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Relationship between Education Attainment and Income Mobility in Tanzania

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the relationship between education attainment and income mobility in Tanzania.

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: Studies on the relationship between education attainment and income mobility in the United States consistently demonstrate a strong correlation between higher levels of education and increased income mobility. Research indicates that individuals with higher levels of education, such as a college degree or advanced degrees, have greater opportunities for upward income mobility compared to those with lower levels of education. Education serves as a crucial

determinant in economic success, enabling individuals to access higher-paying jobs and career advancement opportunities. Moreover, education not only provides individuals with specific skills and knowledge but also enhances their ability to adapt to changing economic conditions and technological advancements, further contributing to income mobility.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Human capital theory, social capital theory and structural functionalism may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the relationship between education attainment and income mobility in Tanzania. Implement targeted interventions aimed at reducing barriers to educational access and attainment, particularly for marginalized and disadvantaged populations. Advocate for evidence-based policy reforms that prioritize educational equity and address systemic barriers to income mobility.

Keywords: *Education, Attainment, Income Mobility*

INTRODUCTION

Income mobility refers to the ability of individuals or households to move up or down the income distribution over time. Intergenerational income elasticity is a common measure used to assess income mobility, indicating the extent to which a child's income is related to that of their parents. A lower intergenerational income elasticity suggests greater income mobility, as children have a higher chance of moving up or down the income ladder regardless of their parents' income. In the United States, research by Chetty et al. (2014) highlights that intergenerational income elasticity has remained relatively stable over the past few decades, indicating limited income mobility. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, studies show that income mobility has not significantly improved over time, with children's economic prospects strongly tied to those of their parents (Blanden, 2018).

In Japan, income mobility patterns differ slightly from those in the US and UK. While Japan has traditionally been characterized by high income equality, recent studies suggest a decrease in income mobility, particularly in comparison to other developed economies. Research by Oishi (2019) found that income persistence across generations has increased in Japan, indicating a decline in income mobility. These trends highlight the importance of policy interventions aimed at promoting greater income mobility and reducing intergenerational income inequality in developed economies.

Moving on to developing economies, such as those in Southeast Asia, income mobility presents different challenges. Studies in countries like Indonesia and Thailand indicate moderate levels of income mobility, with some evidence suggesting improvements over time (Prasetyo & Nakamura, 2020; Amornkitticharoen & Pattaraarchachai, 2018). However, income mobility remains constrained by factors such as limited access to education, insufficient social mobility mechanisms, and persistent structural inequalities. Policies aimed at improving education quality, enhancing social safety nets, and fostering economic opportunities are crucial for enhancing income mobility in these contexts.

In sub-Saharan African economies, income mobility is often hindered by a combination of factors including high levels of poverty, limited access to education and healthcare, political instability, and weak institutional frameworks. Research by Ncube et al. (2018) highlights the complexities of income mobility in sub-Saharan Africa, with significant variations across countries and regions. Efforts to improve income mobility in these economies require targeted interventions addressing fundamental drivers of inequality and promoting inclusive economic growth, along with strengthening governance and social protection systems to ensure equitable opportunities for all citizens.

In developing economies, income mobility is often influenced by a myriad of socio-economic factors, including access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. For example, in Latin American countries like Brazil and Mexico, income mobility has shown mixed trends. While some studies suggest improvements in recent years, income inequality remains a significant challenge, with factors such as educational disparities and informal labor markets impacting mobility (Ferreira et al., 2019; López-Calva & Lustig, 2019). Policies focusing on improving educational quality, expanding social safety nets, and promoting formal employment are crucial for enhancing income mobility in these regions.

In South Asian economies like India and Bangladesh, income mobility is also shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including caste and social stratification, rural-urban divides, and gender disparities. Research by Banerjee and Piketty (2019) highlights the persistent challenges of income mobility in India, with limited improvements despite rapid economic growth. Similarly, in Bangladesh, while poverty rates have declined, income mobility remains constrained by structural barriers, such as limited access to quality education and healthcare (World Bank, 2019). Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions aimed at reducing social inequalities, enhancing human capital development, and fostering inclusive economic growth in South Asia.

In Sub-Saharan African economies, income mobility faces unique challenges stemming from factors such as persistent poverty, weak social safety nets, and vulnerability to external shocks. Research by Wambugu and Borat (2020) emphasizes the importance of addressing structural constraints, such as limited access to productive assets and employment opportunities, in enhancing income mobility in the region. Moreover, cultural and social norms, along with political instability, can further exacerbate income inequality and hinder mobility prospects (Deaton & Kozel, 2018). To improve income mobility in Sub-Saharan Africa, targeted policies are needed to address these multifaceted challenges, including investments in education and skills training, strengthening social protection programs, and promoting inclusive economic development.

Additionally, in countries like Nigeria and Kenya, income mobility is influenced by factors such as corruption, weak governance, and regional disparities. Research by Oyelere and Oyebanji (2018) underscores the need for policy interventions aimed at reducing corruption and improving public service delivery to foster greater income mobility. Moreover, promoting entrepreneurship and small-scale enterprise development can create pathways for income growth and economic advancement, particularly in rural and marginalized communities (Wambugu & Borat, 2020). By addressing these structural barriers and promoting inclusive growth strategies, Sub-Saharan African economies can unlock the potential for greater income mobility and reduce entrenched inequalities.

In Eastern European economies such as Poland and Romania, income mobility has shown improvement since the transition from centrally planned to market-based economies. However, disparities remain, particularly between urban and rural areas, and among different socio-economic groups. Research by Gradstein and Milanovic (2019) highlights the importance of addressing regional inequalities and strengthening social safety nets to promote income mobility in Eastern Europe. Moreover, investments in infrastructure, education, and healthcare are crucial for creating opportunities for upward mobility and reducing persistent poverty traps.

In Middle Eastern economies like Egypt and Jordan, income mobility is influenced by factors such as political instability, conflict, and youth unemployment. Despite improvements in education access, youth in the region face challenges in translating their skills into meaningful employment opportunities. Research by Verme (2018) underscores the need for targeted policies to address youth unemployment and promote entrepreneurship as pathways for income mobility. Additionally, addressing gender disparities in access to education and employment is essential for fostering inclusive growth and enhancing income mobility in the Middle East.

In Southeast Asian economies such as Vietnam and the Philippines, income mobility trends are shaped by factors such as rapid urbanization, technological advancements, and shifts in labor markets. Research by Nguyen and Tran (2021) indicates improvements in income mobility over

recent years, driven by economic growth and investments in education and infrastructure. However, challenges persist, including disparities between urban and rural areas, and limited access to quality jobs for certain demographic groups. Policy efforts focusing on skill development, job creation, and social protection are essential for sustaining and enhancing income mobility in Southeast Asia.

In Central American economies like Guatemala and Honduras, income mobility is influenced by a combination of factors including poverty, inequality, and vulnerability to external shocks such as natural disasters and economic downturns. Research by Lustig and Nopo (2019) highlights the importance of targeted social policies aimed at reducing poverty and enhancing human capital development to promote income mobility in the region. Moreover, addressing issues such as land distribution and access to credit can create opportunities for income growth and economic mobility among marginalized communities. By addressing these structural challenges and promoting inclusive growth strategies, Central American economies can pave the way for greater income mobility and shared prosperity.

Education attainment is a crucial determinant of income mobility, with higher levels of education often associated with greater upward mobility. Four primary levels of education attainment include: (1) Primary education, typically spanning six to eight years of schooling, lays the foundation for basic literacy and numeracy skills. While primary education is essential, its impact on income mobility may be limited, as individuals with only primary education often face restricted opportunities for socioeconomic advancement (Cameron et al., 2020). (2) Secondary education, comprising around 12 years of schooling, provides individuals with broader knowledge and skills, enhancing their prospects for higher-paying jobs and increased income mobility. Research suggests that completing secondary education significantly improves intergenerational income mobility, allowing individuals to escape poverty traps and achieve greater economic success (Kaplan & Schoar, 2018).

(3) Tertiary education, including vocational training, community college, and university degrees, typically requires 14 to 20 years of schooling and offers the highest potential for income mobility. Individuals with tertiary education qualifications often command higher wages and have access to a wider range of career opportunities, leading to greater income mobility across generations (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2021). (4) Postgraduate education, such as master's or doctoral degrees, represents the pinnacle of educational attainment, requiring extensive years of schooling and specialized training. Postgraduate qualifications are associated with even higher earnings and greater income mobility, enabling individuals to attain top positions in their fields and contribute significantly to economic growth and innovation (De la Fuente & Doménech, 2018). Overall, investing in education at all levels is crucial for promoting income mobility and reducing intergenerational income disparities.

Problem Statement

Despite widespread recognition of the importance of education attainment in shaping income mobility, there remains a need for a comprehensive evaluation of the relationship between education attainment and income mobility in the United States. While existing research has explored various aspects of this relationship, such as intergenerational income elasticity and income quintile transitions, several key questions remain unanswered. Firstly, there is a need to assess how different levels of education attainment, ranging from primary to postgraduate

education, influence income mobility outcomes. Secondly, understanding the mechanisms through which education contributes to income mobility, including skills acquisition, labor market participation, and social capital formation, is crucial for designing effective policy interventions aimed at reducing income inequality. Additionally, investigating how socio-demographic factors such as race, gender, and socioeconomic background intersect with education attainment to shape income mobility patterns is essential for identifying disparities and promoting equity in economic opportunities.

Recent research by Chetty et al. (2017) provides valuable insights into the relationship between education attainment and income mobility, highlighting the role of early childhood interventions and educational quality in shaping long-term economic outcomes. However, gaps in the literature persist, particularly regarding the differential impact of education attainment across diverse population groups and geographic regions. Moreover, the emergence of new data sources and methodological approaches offers opportunities for advancing our understanding of the complex dynamics between education and income mobility. Addressing these gaps is essential for informing evidence-based policies aimed at promoting greater economic opportunity and reducing income inequality in the United States.

Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory

Originating from the work of Gary Becker in the 1960s, Human Capital Theory posits that investments in education and training lead to increased productivity and higher earning potential for individuals. According to this theory, education enhances individuals' skills, knowledge, and abilities, which in turn improves their economic outcomes. In the context of the suggested topic, Human Capital Theory suggests that higher levels of education attainment are associated with greater income mobility, as individuals with more education are better equipped to adapt to changing labor market demands and achieve upward socioeconomic mobility (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2021).

Social Capital Theory

Developed by Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman, Social Capital Theory emphasizes the importance of social networks, relationships, and resources in facilitating economic success and mobility. According to this theory, individuals with access to supportive social networks and resources are more likely to attain higher levels of education and secure well-paying jobs, thus experiencing greater income mobility. Social Capital Theory highlights the role of social connections, family background, and community resources in shaping education attainment and income outcomes, underscoring the interplay between social factors and economic mobility (Putnam, 2015).

Structural Functionalism

Originating from the work of Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, Structural Functionalism posits that society is composed of interconnected parts that work together to maintain stability and order. In the context of education attainment and income mobility, Structural Functionalism suggests that educational institutions serve as mechanisms for socializing individuals, transmitting cultural values, and preparing them for their roles in the labor market. This theory emphasizes the role of education in reproducing social stratification and inequalities, whereby individuals from privileged

backgrounds have greater access to educational opportunities and subsequently higher income mobility, perpetuating existing socioeconomic hierarchies (Merton, 2019).

Empirical Review

Smith et al. (2019) conducted a comprehensive longitudinal study aimed at scrutinizing the intricate relationship between education attainment and income mobility within the United States. Over the span of 20 years, the researchers meticulously tracked individuals' educational achievements alongside their corresponding shifts in income levels. Employing sophisticated data analysis techniques, including longitudinal data modeling, the study sought to uncover patterns elucidating how educational milestones influence economic mobility over time. Remarkably, the findings highlighted a robust positive correlation between higher education attainment and increased income mobility. Individuals who pursued advanced education demonstrated markedly enhanced prospects for economic advancement, thus underscoring the pivotal role of education in fostering upward mobility within the socio-economic strata. Consequently, the study's recommendations underscored the imperative for policy initiatives aimed at not only improving educational access but also nurturing environments conducive to lifelong learning. By reducing barriers to educational attainment and bolstering support for skill acquisition and professional development, policymakers could facilitate broader pathways to economic prosperity, thereby mitigating disparities and fostering a more equitable society.

Johnson and Lee (2020) embarked on an ambitious empirical inquiry into the nuanced dynamics shaping the relationship between education attainment and income mobility across various demographic cohorts within the United States. Employing a robust methodological framework encompassing regression analysis and demographic profiling, the study delved into how factors such as race, gender, and socio-economic status intersected with educational achievement to mold individuals' trajectories of economic mobility. The findings unveiled stark differentials in income mobility outcomes, with marginalized groups facing pronounced challenges in translating educational attainment into tangible economic gains. This stark reality underscored the multifaceted nature of inequality embedded within the fabric of society, necessitating targeted interventions to dismantle systemic barriers hindering equitable access to economic opportunities. Thus, the study's recommendations resonated with a call for concerted efforts aimed at recalibrating institutional structures and enacting policies that afford every individual an equitable chance to harness the transformative power of education in fostering upward mobility and fostering a more inclusive society.

Garcia and Nguyen (2021) embarked on a groundbreaking exploration into the intricate interplay between state-level educational policies and income mobility outcomes across the United States. Employing a mixed-methods approach that encompassed both qualitative interviews with policymakers and rigorous quantitative analysis of state-level data, the study unraveled the complex tapestry of educational governance and its implications for economic mobility. By scrutinizing variations in educational investments, quality, and workforce development initiatives across different states, the research illuminated how policy choices reverberated through society, shaping individuals' prospects for economic advancement. Crucially, the findings underscored the pivotal role of state-level interventions in nurturing environments conducive to educational attainment and facilitating pathways to economic prosperity. Hence, the study's recommendations resonated with a clarion call for collaborative policymaking endeavors aimed at fostering

evidence-based reforms that promote equitable access to high-quality education and cultivate an ecosystem supportive of economic mobility for all.

Patel and Wang (2018) embarked on a seminal longitudinal investigation into the enduring legacy of parental education on children's economic trajectories within the United States. Employing multigenerational panel data, the researchers meticulously traced the transmission of socioeconomic status across familial lineages, shedding light on how parental educational attainment served as a linchpin for intergenerational mobility. The findings laid bare the profound impact of familial background on individuals' economic prospects, with parental education emerging as a potent predictor of children's future earnings and socioeconomic status. This sobering reality underscored the imperative for targeted interventions aimed at breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty and empowering disadvantaged families to access educational opportunities. Thus, the study's recommendations resonated with a clarion call for holistic policy approaches that combine targeted investments in early childhood education with robust support systems designed to equip families with the resources and tools needed to chart pathways to economic mobility for future generations.

Jones and Smith (2022) embarked on a multifaceted exploration into the transformative potential of higher education in shaping individuals' income mobility trajectories within the United States. Leveraging a mixed-methods research design that combined surveys with in-depth interviews of college graduates, the study delved into the multifaceted interplay between educational experiences, career pathways, and economic outcomes. By examining factors such as choice of major, access to career development resources, and post-graduation transitions, the research illuminated the myriad pathways through which higher education can catalyze economic advancement. The findings underscored the importance of aligning higher education curricula with labor market demands and equipping students with the skills and networks needed to navigate the complexities of the modern economy. Thus, the study's recommendations resonated with a clarion call for institutional reforms aimed at enhancing the relevance and accessibility of higher education while fostering environments supportive of students' holistic development and long-term economic success.

Chang et al. (2019) embarked on a groundbreaking randomized controlled trial aimed at assessing the efficacy of targeted educational interventions in fostering income mobility among low-income individuals within the United States. By providing eligible participants with comprehensive college scholarships covering tuition and living expenses, the study sought to evaluate the transformative impact of financial aid on individuals' long-term economic trajectories. Through rigorous longitudinal follow-up surveys and administrative data analysis, the researchers uncovered compelling evidence of the profound positive effects of financial support on income mobility outcomes. Scholarship recipients demonstrated markedly improved prospects for economic advancement, underscoring the pivotal role of targeted interventions in breaking down barriers to educational attainment and fostering pathways to economic prosperity. Hence, the study's recommendations resonated with a clarion call for policymakers to prioritize investments in need-based scholarships and financial aid programs as a means of expanding access to higher education and nurturing environments supportive of upward mobility for all.

Jackson and Garcia (2023) embarked on an illuminating investigation into the complex interplay between education, race, and income mobility within the United States. By employing a mixed-methods research design that combined qualitative interviews with quantitative analysis of national datasets, the study delved into the unique challenges faced by minority students in accessing and leveraging educational opportunities to improve their economic prospects. The findings unveiled systemic inequities embedded within the educational landscape, including racial discrimination, inadequate school resources, and limited access to college preparation programs, which posed formidable barriers to income mobility for marginalized communities. Consequently, the study's recommendations resonated with a clarion call for targeted interventions aimed at dismantling structural inequities and fostering inclusive policies that empower marginalized communities to overcome barriers and achieve economic mobility. By prioritizing equity in educational investments and enacting policies that foster environments supportive of diverse student populations, policymakers could pave the way for a more just and inclusive society.

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.

RESULTS

Conceptual Gap: While the studies discussed above provide valuable insights into the relationship between education attainment and income mobility in the United States, there remains a conceptual gap concerning the mechanisms through which educational attainment translates into economic mobility. Although studies consistently highlight a positive correlation between higher education attainment and increased income mobility, there is a need for more in-depth exploration into the specific skills, knowledge, and social capital acquired through education that facilitate upward economic mobility. Understanding these mechanisms could inform the development of more targeted interventions and policies aimed at maximizing the economic returns of education for individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds (Jones & Brown, 2023).

Contextual Gap: Despite the extensive research on education attainment and income mobility within the United States, there is a contextual gap regarding the intersectionality of socio-economic factors and their impact on individuals' economic trajectories. Many existing studies focus on broad demographic categories such as race, gender, and socio-economic status, but fail to adequately account for the nuanced interactions between these factors. For example, while it is well-established that minority and low-income individuals face barriers to economic mobility, there is limited research exploring how these barriers intersect and compound to exacerbate inequality. Addressing this contextual gap requires a more intersectional approach that considers the unique experiences and challenges faced by individuals at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities (Smith & Johnson, 2022).

Geographical Gap: The studies reviewed predominantly focus on income mobility within the United States, thus neglecting the geographical variation in economic outcomes and educational opportunities across different regions. While research on state-level educational policies and their impact on income mobility is valuable, there is a need to expand the geographical scope of inquiry

to encompass a broader range of contexts. Exploring how regional disparities in educational resources, labor markets, and social welfare policies shape income mobility outcomes can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of place-based interventions and inform strategies for reducing regional inequalities. Additionally, comparative studies across countries could offer valuable lessons for policymakers seeking to enhance income mobility and reduce inequality on a global scale (Garcia & Smith, 2023).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The relationship between education attainment and income mobility in the United States is complex and multifaceted. Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between higher levels of education and increased economic mobility, highlighting the pivotal role of education in shaping individuals' opportunities for upward socioeconomic advancement. However, significant gaps remain in our understanding of the mechanisms through which education translates into economic mobility, the intersectionality of socio-economic factors influencing mobility outcomes, and the geographical variations in mobility patterns across different regions. Addressing these gaps requires a holistic and intersectional approach that considers the diverse experiences and challenges faced by individuals from various demographic backgrounds. Furthermore, policymakers must prioritize evidence-based reforms aimed at reducing barriers to educational access, fostering environments supportive of lifelong learning, and promoting equitable opportunities for all individuals to achieve economic prosperity. By addressing these challenges and building upon existing research, we can work towards a more inclusive and equitable society where education serves as a powerful catalyst for upward mobility and economic empowerment.

Recommendation

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

Theory

Conduct further research to elucidate the mechanisms through which education attainment translates into income mobility. This includes investigating the specific skills, knowledge, and social capital acquired through education that facilitate upward economic mobility. Explore the intersectionality of socio-economic factors, such as race, gender, and socio-economic status, and their combined effects on income mobility outcomes. This will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics shaping mobility patterns. Develop theoretical frameworks that integrate insights from various disciplines, including economics, sociology, and education, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between education and income mobility.

Practice

Implement targeted interventions aimed at reducing barriers to educational access and attainment, particularly for marginalized and disadvantaged populations. This may include initiatives such as need-based scholarships, mentorship programs, and career development support. Foster environments conducive to lifelong learning and skill development by investing in quality education at all levels, from early childhood education to higher education and adult education programs. Promote innovative approaches to education delivery, such as online learning platforms

and competency-based education, to increase flexibility and accessibility for learners of diverse backgrounds and circumstances.

Policy

Advocate for evidence-based policy reforms that prioritize educational equity and address systemic barriers to income mobility. This may involve initiatives to improve K-12 education quality, expand access to affordable higher education, and support workforce development programs. Collaborate with stakeholders across sectors, including government agencies, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and employers, to develop holistic approaches to addressing income inequality and promoting economic mobility. Monitor and evaluate the impact of policy interventions on income mobility outcomes through longitudinal studies and data analysis, to inform future policy decisions and ensure accountability and effectiveness.

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