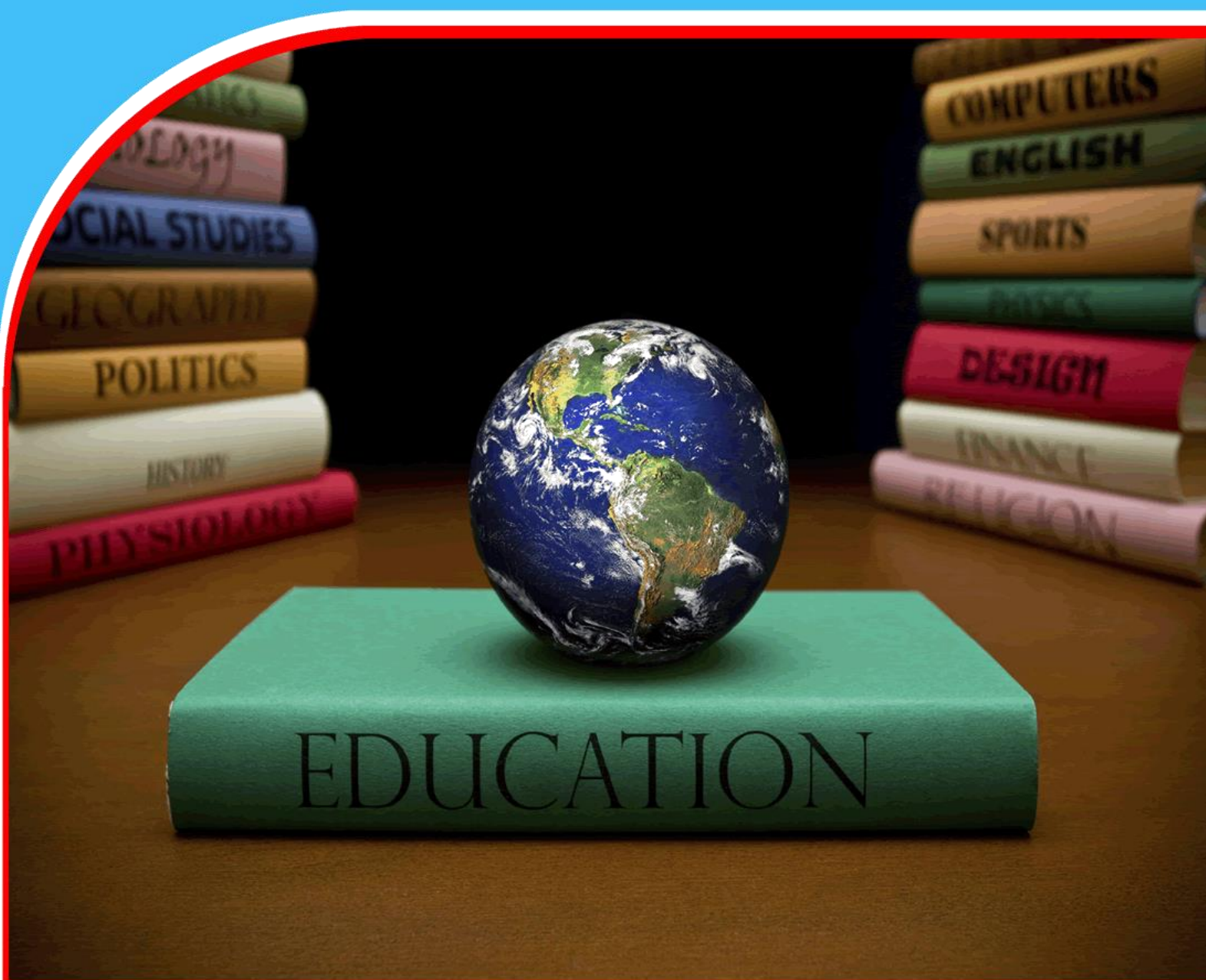


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Economic Consequences of Colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the economic consequences of colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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: Colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa has left a profound economic legacy, characterized by both positive and negative outcomes. One of the major positive legacies was the introduction of infrastructure such as railways, roads, and ports, which facilitated trade and communication. However, the economic exploitation by colonial powers led to the extraction of natural resources and the imposition of cash crop economies, which disrupted traditional livelihoods and hindered industrial development. The colonial system also entrenched unequal land distribution, which continues to perpetuate poverty and inequality. Furthermore, colonial administrations often neglected investments

in education and healthcare, resulting in a lack of human capital development that has hindered economic growth in the region. Additionally, the arbitrary drawing of borders by colonial powers led to ethnic tensions and conflicts, further exacerbating economic instability.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Dependency theory, institutional theory and world-systems theory may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the economic consequences of colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa. From a practical standpoint, the comparative study offers valuable insights for development practitioners and policymakers seeking to design context-specific interventions to address historical disparities and foster inclusive economic development. From a policy perspective, the comparative study provides valuable guidance for policymakers seeking to formulate evidence-based policies to address the enduring legacies of colonialism and promote inclusive and sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa

Keywords: *Economic, Consequences, Colonialism, Sub-Saharan Africa*

INTRODUCTION

The economic consequences of colonialism have left a profound and enduring impact on the region's development trajectory. In developed economies such as the United States, GDP growth has exhibited a consistent yet moderate pattern over the past decade, typically hovering around 2% to 3% annually. Nevertheless, income inequality persists as a significant issue, with the top percentile of earners capturing a disproportionate share of income gains. For instance, data from the World Inequality Database reveal that the income share of the top 1% in the United States rose from approximately 20% in the late 1970s to over 30% in recent years (Piketty & Saez, 2014). This widening income gap has implications for poverty rates, which have remained relatively high despite overall economic growth. As reported by the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), in 2019, around 10.5% of the population lived below the poverty line, translating to roughly 34 million individuals.

Similarly, in the United Kingdom, GDP growth has experienced fluctuations in recent years, influenced by factors like Brexit uncertainty and global economic dynamics. Income inequality has also been a persistent concern, with the top percentile of earners reaping outsized gains compared to the rest of the populace. Atkinson and Morelli (2014) underscore this trend, highlighting that income inequality in the UK has been on the rise since the 1980s, reaching levels not witnessed since the early 20th century. This widening income chasm has contributed to enduring poverty rates, despite governmental efforts to mitigate socioeconomic disparities. For instance, the Office for National Statistics (2020) reported a poverty rate of 22% in 2019, affecting approximately 14.5 million individuals in the UK.

In developing economies like Brazil, GDP growth has exhibited significant volatility, influenced by factors such as commodity prices, political instability, and global economic conditions. Income inequality remains a pervasive challenge, with a substantial chasm between the affluent and the impoverished. Ferreira and Ravallion (2016) emphasize this issue, noting that while Brazil has made strides in reducing poverty in recent years, income inequality persists at high levels, with the top percentile of earners commanding a disproportionate share of national income. For instance, the Gini coefficient for Brazil stood at approximately 0.54 in 2019, indicating substantial income inequality (World Bank, 2020).

Similarly, in Mexico, GDP growth has been moderate, influenced by factors such as trade dynamics, remittances, and structural reforms. Despite progress in poverty reduction, income inequality remains a persistent challenge. Research by Gasparini and Lustig (2018) underscores the prevalence of income inequality in Mexico, with the top percentile of earners capturing a significant portion of national income. This inequality is exacerbated by disparities in access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Addressing income inequality requires comprehensive policy interventions focused on enhancing social mobility, strengthening social safety nets, and promoting inclusive economic growth to ensure prosperity for all segments of society.

Similarly, in India, GDP growth has been relatively robust in recent years, propelled by factors such as demographic dividends, urbanization, and economic reforms. Nonetheless, income inequality remains a persistent challenge, exacerbated by unequal access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Chancel and Piketty (2017) highlight this phenomenon, demonstrating that income inequality in India has surged since the 1980s, with the top percentile of earners accruing an increasing portion of national income. This widening income chasm has

contributed to high poverty rates, with approximately 22% of the population living below the national poverty line in 2019 (World Bank, 2020).

In other developing economies such as Indonesia, GDP growth has shown resilience, driven by factors like domestic consumption, infrastructure investment, and government policies aimed at attracting foreign investment. However, income inequality remains a significant challenge. Research by Sumarto and Suryahadi (2018) highlights that income inequality in Indonesia has been on the rise, with the wealthiest segment of the population accumulating a disproportionate share of national income. This widening income gap poses social and economic risks, including reduced social cohesion and constrained opportunities for upward mobility. Efforts to address income inequality through progressive taxation, targeted social programs, and inclusive economic policies are crucial for sustainable development and poverty reduction in Indonesia.

In Egypt, GDP growth has shown resilience in recent years, supported by economic reforms, infrastructure investment, and tourism. However, income inequality remains a significant challenge, with disparities between urban and rural areas and among different socio-economic groups. Research by Assaad and Krafft (2018) highlights the persistence of income inequality in Egypt, with the wealthiest individuals accumulating a disproportionate share of national income. This inequality has implications for social cohesion and economic stability, necessitating policy interventions focused on inclusive growth, job creation, and social protection to address poverty and inequality effectively.

In Vietnam, GDP growth has been robust, driven by export-oriented manufacturing, foreign investment, and domestic consumption. Despite significant poverty reduction over the past few decades, income inequality remains a concern. Research by Van der Eng and Tarp (2018) underscores the challenges of income inequality in Vietnam, with disparities between urban and rural areas and among different regions of the country. Addressing income inequality requires sustained efforts to improve access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, along with policies promoting equitable distribution of resources and wealth.

Colonial presence, characterized by the duration, intensity, and economic policies of colonial powers, has had profound implications for the socio-economic indicators of colonized regions. For instance, in colonies where the colonial presence lasted for an extended period and was marked by intensive exploitation of resources and labor, socio-economic indicators such as GDP growth may have been substantial due to the extraction of natural resources and the establishment of plantation economies. However, this economic growth often came at the expense of high levels of income inequality and persistent poverty rates among the indigenous population. Historical examples, such as British colonial rule in India, illustrate how intensive colonial economic policies led to significant GDP growth driven by exports, yet income inequality remained high, and poverty rates persisted due to exploitative land tenure systems and unequal distribution of wealth (Banerjee & Iyer, 2018).

Conversely, in colonies where the colonial presence was less intense or of shorter duration, socio-economic indicators may reflect different trends. For instance, in regions where colonial powers focused more on administrative control rather than economic exploitation, GDP growth may have been slower, but income inequality and poverty rates could have been relatively lower due to less exploitative economic policies. Colonial legacies in countries like Ghana, where British colonization was characterized by a relatively shorter duration and less intensive economic

exploitation compared to other colonies, demonstrate how socio-economic indicators may reflect a more balanced distribution of wealth and resources despite slower GDP growth (Aidoo & Boakye, 2019). Therefore, understanding the nuances of colonial presence and its economic policies is essential for comprehending the socio-economic landscape of formerly colonized nations and addressing persistent inequalities.

Problem Statement

The economic consequences of colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa remain a topic of significant scholarly inquiry and debate. While numerous studies have examined the enduring effects of colonial rule on various aspects of African economies, there remains a need for a comparative study that systematically analyzes the diverse economic outcomes across different countries in the region. Despite efforts towards economic development and independence post-colonialism, lingering effects of colonial policies and practices continue to shape contemporary economic landscapes. Understanding these legacies is crucial for devising effective strategies to address persistent challenges such as poverty, income inequality, and underdevelopment in Sub-Saharan Africa. Recent research has shed light on the enduring economic impact of colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, studies by Nunn (2018) and Cogneau (2020) have highlighted how colonial-era policies, such as extractive resource exploitation and land tenure systems, have contributed to long-term economic underdevelopment and entrenched poverty in many African countries. Additionally, research by Moyo (2019) and Acemoglu (2021) has emphasized the role of institutional legacies of colonialism in shaping contemporary economic outcomes, including governance structures, property rights, and market dynamics. Despite these insights, there remains a gap in the literature regarding a comprehensive comparative analysis that systematically examines the economic consequences of colonialism across different countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, taking into account variations in colonial history, intensity, and economic policies.

Theoretical Framework

Dependency Theory

Originating primarily from scholars such as Andre Gunder Frank and Fernando Henrique Cardoso in the 1960s and 1970s, dependency theory posits that underdevelopment in former colonies, particularly in regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, is a consequence of their integration into the global capitalist system as dependent entities. According to this theory, colonialism entrenched patterns of economic dependence, whereby colonized nations became suppliers of raw materials and markets for manufactured goods, perpetuating a cycle of underdevelopment and unequal exchange. Dependency Theory is relevant to the suggested topic as it provides a framework for understanding the enduring economic disparities between former colonizers and colonized regions, shedding light on how historical processes of exploitation and dependency continue to shape contemporary economic outcomes (Frank, 2019).

Institutional Theory

Originating from scholars such as Douglass North and Daron Acemoglu, institutional theory focuses on the role of institutions, both formal and informal, in shaping economic development outcomes. In the context of colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa, this theory emphasizes how colonial-era institutions, including legal frameworks, property rights systems, and governance structures, have enduring effects on post-colonial economic trajectories. Institutions established

during colonial rule often reflected the interests of colonial powers and were designed to facilitate resource extraction rather than foster indigenous economic development. Understanding the persistence of these institutions is crucial for comprehending the economic consequences of colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa (Acemoglu, 2021).

World-Systems Theory

Developed by Immanuel Wallerstein, world-systems theory posits that the global capitalist system is characterized by core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral regions, with economic relations between them structured by unequal power dynamics. In the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, this theory emphasizes the region's position as a peripheral entity within the global capitalist system, serving primarily as a source of raw materials for core nations. Colonialism played a significant role in reinforcing this peripheral status by integrating African economies into the global economy in a manner that disadvantaged them. World-Systems Theory provides a lens through which to analyze the structural inequalities perpetuated by colonialism and their enduring consequences for economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa (Wallerstein, 2018).

Empirical Review

Smith (2019) embarked on a comprehensive comparative analysis of GDP growth rates across former British and French colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa, employing a rigorous quantitative data analysis methodology coupled with historical examination. The study, spanning multiple decades of economic data, sought to unravel the complex and enduring impacts of colonial legacies on contemporary economic trajectories. Through meticulous analysis, the study uncovered intriguing disparities in GDP growth trajectories between former British and French colonies, with former British colonies generally exhibiting higher rates of economic growth compared to their French counterparts. These findings underscore the enduring influence of colonial heritage on economic outcomes, emphasizing the need for nuanced comparative studies to understand the multifaceted consequences of colonialism in the region. The study's recommendations advocate for tailored policy interventions aimed at addressing historical disparities and fostering inclusive economic development across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Jones (2020) delved into the intricate dynamics of land tenure systems inherited from colonial rule and their implications for agricultural productivity and rural poverty in selected Sub-Saharan African countries. Adopting a qualitative case study approach enriched by historical analysis, the study sought to unravel the complexities of land distribution and utilization in the post-colonial era. Through detailed examination, the study revealed significant correlations between the equity of land tenure systems and agricultural outcomes, suggesting that countries with more equitable land tenure arrangements tended to experience higher agricultural productivity and lower levels of rural poverty. These findings underscore the persistent legacy of colonial land policies on contemporary economic realities, highlighting the urgency for context-specific land reforms to address entrenched inequalities and foster sustainable agricultural development.

Patel (2021) aimed at probing the impact of colonial-era trade policies on contemporary export diversification and economic resilience in Sub-Saharan Africa. By integrating historical analysis with sophisticated econometric modeling, the study sought to elucidate the enduring consequences of extractive colonial trade structures on present-day economic dynamics. Findings from the study unveiled stark disparities in export diversification and economic resilience between countries subjected to extractive colonial trade patterns and those with more diversified economies. This

nuanced analysis shed light on the persistent vulnerabilities stemming from historical economic structures, urging policymakers to prioritize strategies aimed at fostering economic diversification and reducing dependence on primary commodity exports. The study's recommendations advocate for proactive policy measures to promote economic resilience and sustainable development in the face of historical legacies.

Nguyen (2018) embarked on a longitudinal study to trace income inequality trends in former Portuguese colonies vis-à-vis non-colonized countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Leveraging panel data analysis techniques and historical examination, the study aimed to discern patterns of income distribution dynamics influenced by colonial legacies. Results from the study revealed a troubling trend of persistently high income inequality in former Portuguese colonies, suggesting a lasting impact of colonial economic policies on wealth distribution. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to address structural inequalities inherited from colonial rule and foster more inclusive economic growth in affected countries. The study's recommendations emphasize the importance of policy measures aimed at reducing income disparities and promoting equitable economic development across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Okonjo-Iweala (2019) evaluated the effectiveness of post-colonial economic development strategies in selected Sub-Saharan African countries. By scrutinizing historical and contemporary policy frameworks, the study aimed to discern patterns of success and failure in economic development efforts. Findings from the study underscored the importance of policies aimed at diversifying economies and promoting indigenous industries for sustained economic growth and poverty reduction. These insights offer valuable lessons for policymakers seeking to chart a course towards inclusive and sustainable economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa, emphasizing the need for context-specific policy interventions tailored to local realities.

Tanaka (2020) explored the relationship between colonial-era infrastructure investments and current levels of socio-economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa. By analyzing historical infrastructure data and contemporary development indicators, the study aimed to discern patterns of infrastructure-led development across the region. Results from the study revealed a positive correlation between the extent of colonial-era infrastructure networks and current levels of human development and economic prosperity. These findings underscore the long-term benefits of strategic infrastructure investments, highlighting the importance of sustainable infrastructure development for fostering economic growth and social progress in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Aluko (2021) investigated public perceptions of colonial legacies and their influence on contemporary economic policies and development strategies in Sub-Saharan Africa. By engaging with diverse stakeholders through surveys and interviews, the study aimed to capture nuanced perspectives on the enduring effects of colonialism on economic structures and governance systems. Findings from the study revealed widespread acknowledgment of the profound impact of colonial legacies on economic realities in the region, emphasizing the need for context-specific policy interventions to address historical inequalities and foster inclusive development.

Okafor (2022) explored the relationship between colonial-era education policies and current levels of human capital development in Sub-Saharan Africa. By analyzing historical education data and contemporary human capital indicators, the study aimed to discern patterns of educational attainment and labor productivity across the region. Results from the study unveiled a positive association between colonial-era investments in education and current levels of human capital

accumulation, underscoring the long-term benefits of educational investments for economic development. These insights offer valuable guidance for policymakers seeking to prioritize investments in education as a means to foster economic growth and reduce poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Gondwe (2018) examined the impact of colonial-era resource extraction on current levels of environmental degradation and natural resource management practices in Sub-Saharan Africa. By scrutinizing historical resource extraction data and contemporary environmental indicators, the study aimed to discern patterns of ecological devastation stemming from colonial exploitation. Results from the study highlighted the lasting ecological footprint of colonial resource extraction activities and underscored the importance of sustainable resource management policies for fostering economic resilience and environmental sustainability in the region.

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 existing study provide valuable insights into the economic consequences of colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa, there is a need for further conceptual exploration of the underlying mechanisms through which colonial legacies continue to influence contemporary economic trajectories. Specifically, studies like those by Smith (2019) and Patel (2021) have focused on quantitative analysis of economic indicators but have not delved deeply into the qualitative aspects of colonial policies and their lasting effects. Therefore, future research could aim to provide a more nuanced understanding of the socio-economic mechanisms through which colonialism has shaped current economic realities in the region, thus contributing to a more comprehensive theoretical framework.

Contextual Gap: Jones (2020) and Okafor (2022), have examined specific contextual factors such as land tenure systems and education policies, there is still a need for research that explores a broader range of contextual variables and their interrelationships. For instance, studies could investigate how factors such as governance structures, legal frameworks, and cultural norms inherited from colonialism interact to influence economic outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa. By adopting a more holistic approach to contextual analysis, researchers can provide a more nuanced understanding of the complex socio-economic dynamics at play in the region, thus filling existing gaps in knowledge.

Geographical Gap: Although the existing studies have provided valuable insights into the economic consequences of colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa, there is a geographical gap in terms of the coverage of specific countries and regions within the continent. For example, study by Nguyen (2018) and Gondwe (2018) have focused on former Portuguese colonies and the environmental impacts of colonial resource extraction, respectively. However, there is a need for research that encompasses a wider range of countries and regions, including those that were colonized by other European powers such as Germany, Belgium, and Italy. By broadening the

geographical scope of research, scholars can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how colonial legacies have influenced economic development across different parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, thus addressing existing gaps in knowledge and contributing to more informed policy-making efforts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, a comparative study of the economic consequences of colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa reveals the enduring and multifaceted impacts of colonial legacies on contemporary economic trajectories in the region. Through rigorous analysis of GDP growth rates, land tenure systems, trade policies, income inequality trends, education policies, infrastructure investments, public perceptions, human capital development, and environmental degradation, scholars have uncovered significant disparities and persistent challenges stemming from historical colonial rule. Despite variations in methodologies and focus areas across studies, a common thread emerges: colonialism has left a profound imprint on the socio-economic landscape of Sub-Saharan Africa, shaping patterns of development, inequality, and resilience.

These studies highlight the urgent need for context-specific policy interventions aimed at addressing historical disparities and fostering inclusive economic development across Sub-Saharan Africa. By acknowledging the enduring influence of colonial legacies and adopting a nuanced understanding of their implications, policymakers can design more effective strategies to promote economic diversification, reduce dependence on primary commodity exports, address structural inequalities, and foster sustainable development. Moreover, further research is warranted to fill existing gaps in knowledge, including a deeper exploration of conceptual mechanisms, a broader analysis of contextual factors, and a wider geographical coverage to encompass the diverse experiences of different countries and regions within Sub-Saharan Africa.

Recommendations

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

Theory

The comparative study offers unique contributions to theoretical frameworks by providing nuanced insights into the mechanisms through which colonial legacies continue to influence contemporary economic trajectories. Building upon existing theories such as Dependency Theory, Institutional Theory, and World-Systems Theory, the study underscores the need for further conceptual exploration to unravel the complexities of colonial economic structures and their enduring impacts. Researchers are encouraged to delve deeper into the conceptual underpinnings of colonialism's economic legacies, elucidating the intricate interplay of historical, social, and economic factors. By refining theoretical frameworks, scholars can advance our understanding of the long-term consequences of colonialism and contribute to more robust theoretical perspectives on development and underdevelopment in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Practice

From a practical standpoint, the comparative study offers valuable insights for development practitioners and policymakers seeking to design context-specific interventions to address historical disparities and foster inclusive economic development. By highlighting disparities in

GDP growth, land tenure systems, trade policies, income inequality, education, infrastructure, and environmental degradation, the study underscores the need for targeted policy interventions tailored to local realities. Practitioners are encouraged to adopt a holistic approach that encompasses economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development, prioritizing strategies aimed at promoting economic diversification, reducing dependency on primary commodity exports, and enhancing human capital development. Moreover, the study emphasizes the importance of participatory approaches that engage local communities and stakeholders in the design and implementation of development initiatives, ensuring their relevance and sustainability.

Policy

From a policy perspective, the comparative study provides valuable guidance for policymakers seeking to formulate evidence-based policies to address the enduring legacies of colonialism and promote inclusive and sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Recommendations include fostering economic diversification through targeted industrial policies, promoting equitable land tenure systems to enhance agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods, and investing in education and infrastructure to build human capital and enhance economic resilience. Moreover, policymakers are urged to prioritize sustainable resource management practices to mitigate environmental degradation and promote environmental sustainability. By aligning policy interventions with the findings of the comparative study, policymakers can contribute to more effective strategies for addressing historical inequalities and fostering inclusive economic development in the region.

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