

## **Causes of Inequality in the Great Mekong Sub-Region**

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### **Abstract**

The objectives of this study were to: 1) study casual factors of inequality and 2) compare the factors 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 the following universities: 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. The participants' points of view released that the causes of inequality were ranked by means of descending order; education (a mean of 3.91), poverty (a mean of 3.88), ethnicity (a mean of 3.28), nationality (a mean of 3.21) and gender (a mean of 3.19).

2. Differences in nationality led to differences in casual factors of inequality which were nationality, gender, education and poverty with significance level of 0.05.

3. The country where participants were living led to the cause of inequality.

**Keyword:** Causes of Inequality

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## **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, which was 69 times the richest family.

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 to basic services from the government. Environmental problems deteriorate from the manufacturing industry to meet external needs rather than internal. Morality and ethics are ignored including human rights and health issues.

Inequality often contributes to poverty, conflict, exploitation. The inquired employment is beneficial for employers who are in higher position, but for whom with lower socioeconomic status is the other way around. 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. The increase in land prices in urban areas makes it difficult to own housing. High cost of living causes increasing of savings rates. That causes a lot of household debt. Those issues mentioned above may lead to insufficient investment in long-term and affect sustainable economic growth.

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

Therefore, 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 is large and the exact population is 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 is 384, for ease of evaluation and analysis. The researcher used a sample size of 600 samples from 4 universities, which were able to meet 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, Collecting data from students who participated in Bus Asean Project organized by the International Education Institute.

### **Variable**

Independent Variables are gender, nationality and country of residence.

Dependent Variables are ethnicity, nationality, gender, education and poverty.

### **Instruments**

The instrument was questionnaires (Quantitative research) being 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	=	the highest level
3.50-4.49	=	high level
2.50-3.49	=	moderate level
1.50-2.49	=	low level
1.00-1.49	=	the lowest level

## Result

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

1. Casual factors of inequality can be shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Causes of Inequality

Variables	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Interpreting result
1. Ethnicity	3.28	1.080	moderate level
2. Nationality	3.21	1.099	moderate level
3. Gender	3.19	1.078	moderate level
4. Education	3.91	1.009	high level
5. Poverty	3.88	1.107	high level
Result	3.49	.695	moderate level

Table 1 shows that the participants' points of view showed that the causes of inequality were ranked by means of descending order: education (a mean of 3.91), poverty (a mean of 3.88), ethnicity (a mean of 3.28), nationality (a mean of 3.21) and gender (a mean of 3.19).

2. The factors which contribute to inequality grouped by gender, age, nationality and country of residence.

**Table 2** Comparing the causes of inequality by gender

Factors	Result
1. Ethnicity	no difference
2. Nationality	no difference
3. Gender	no difference
4. Education	no difference
5. Poverty	no difference

Table 2 shows that the gender difference does not lead to the causes of inequality

**Table 3** Comparing the causes of inequality by nationality

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Result</b>
1. Ethnicity	no difference
2. Nationality	different*
3. Gender	different*
4. Education	different*
5. Poverty	different*

\* with significance level of 0.05

Table 3 shows that differences in nationality result in causal factors of inequality in nationality, gender, education and poverty with the significant level of 0.05.

**Table 4** Comparing the causes of inequality by country of residence

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Result</b>
1. Ethnicity	different*
2. Nationality	different*
3. Gender	different*
4. Education	different*
5. Poverty	different*

\* with significance level of 0.05

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

## **Discussion**

1. The participants' points of view showed that the causes of inequality were ranked by means of descending order: education (a mean of 3.91), poverty (a mean of 3.88), ethnicity (a mean of 3.28), nationality (a mean of 3.21) and gender (a mean of 3.19), which corresponds to David's study (2014). Inequality of people over 99 percent is related to education and ability. If any society or country would like to reduce inequality, development of education or dissemination needed to be provided in the community, society or country. In addition, studies from England (2005) and Dijkstra and Hanmer (2000) mentioned that the gap between salaries, in other words, inequality of US labors' income is primarily due to gender and their jobs.

2. The difference in nationality results in the causal factor of inequality in nationality, gender, education and poverty at the 0.05 significant level. This corresponds to the research conducted by Zhang, Q and Wang, Y. (2004). Nationality is the main factor contributing to inequality in society, along with gender and age.

3. The difference in country of residence results in the causes of inequality. This is in line with research by Popay, Thomas, Williams, Bennett, Gatrell and Bostock (2003) stating that residential locations had an impact on the equality of access to public welfare of medical care.

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