European Journal of Social Sciences Studies
ISSN: 2501-8590
ISSN-L: 2501-8590
Available on-line at: www.oapub.org/soc

doi: 10.5281/zenodo.1019984 Volume 2 | Issue 8 | 2017

CONCEPTUALISING SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INEQUALITIES IN ZIMBABWE: A SPATIAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:
Currently, Zimbabwe has numerous development problems that need attention. One area of concern is the spatial inequality in levels of socioeconomic development between regions within the country. In this paper, the spatial pattern of socioeconomic development in Zimbabwe is analysed and the administrative districts are ranked from highest to lowest according to levels of socioeconomic developments. Both primary and secondary data were used to collect data on thirteen indicators of development. The data were analysed using the geometric mean method. The analysis of data revealed that certain areas in Zimbabwe have relatively high levels of development while others have low levels of development or no development at all.

Keywords: socioeconomic development inequalities, conceptualising, spatial perspective, Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

Socioeconomic development in space is generally uneven at all levels, at local level, national level, continental level and even global level. Development refers to the process of economic, social and political change which enhances the wellbeing of the inhabitants of a region (Chazireni, 2015). Perhaps the most evident manifestation of disparities in socioeconomic activities at the national level is the differences in levels of development between urban and rural areas. Spatial development inequalities between regions within a country arise over a long period of time and are the result of the

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interaction between people and their political, physical, social, economic and cultural environments. Certain areas in Zimbabwe have relatively high levels of development while others have low levels of development or no development at all. The degree of spatial variation in economic activities and levels of development in the national economy can have far reaching implications in terms of development planning and policy formation. Information on the spatial pattern of socioeconomic development in Zimbabwe can contribute to development planning, policymaking and implementation. Such socioeconomic inequalities within a national economy often create social, political and economic problems. The objective of this paper is to investigate the uneven spatial pattern of socioeconomic development in Zimbabwe.

2. Study Area

Zimbabwe is a developing country within Southern Africa. The country is bounded on the south by South Africa, on the northwest by Zambia, on the northeast by Mozambique, and on the southwest by Botswana and the Caprivi Strip of Namibia. Average temperatures on the highveld range from 12°C -13°C in winter to 24°C in summer. On the lowveld, the temperatures are normally from 18°C-19°C in winter to 30°C and above in summer (Musonzi, 2008:22). The country has sixty-one administrative districts. Levels of development are highly unequal among and within the administrative districts. This can be attributed to various economic, physical, social and historical factors.

Administrative districts are used as spatial units of analyses for the analysis of the spatial patterns of development in Zimbabwe. The capital city of Zimbabwe is Harare and the country is divided into ten provinces, namely Masvingo, Matebeleland South, Matebeleland North, Manicaland, Midlands, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland central, Bulawayo and Harare. The country is further divided into sixty-two (62) administrative districts (refer to figure 1). The provinces like the administrative districts differ greatly with regard to area, population numbers and levels of socioeconomic development. This can be attributed to various factors including physical differences such as climate, relief, and soils, historical factors such as colonialism and socio-political and economic ones.

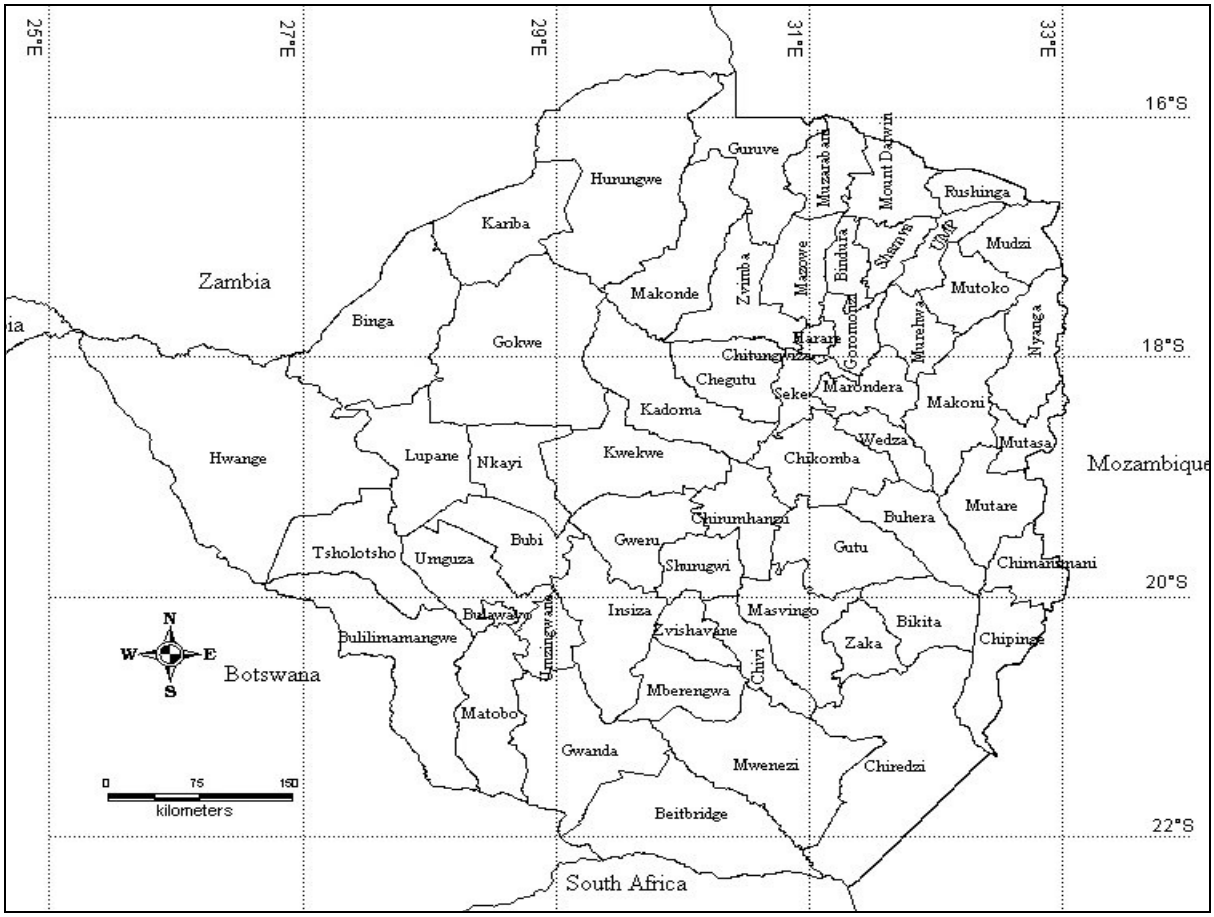

Figure 1: Administrative districts in Zimbabwe

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, 2011

2. Method

Data for this study was obtained from secondary and primary sources. Secondary sources used as sources of data were the Zimbabwe Statistical Agency (2014) published sources and Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (2014) published sources. Questionnaires were also distributed to the administrative districts for soliciting more data on the development indicators. The development indicators upon which data were collected were diarrhoea incidence rate, crude death rate, infant mortality rate, life Expectancy, unemployment rate, percentage of population without any toilet facility, measles incidence rate, maternal mortality rate per 100000 people, Underweight for ages 0-4years by district (% below line), percentage of population below the poverty datum line, illiteracy rate, percentage of population with tertiary qualifications and Dysentery incidence rate.

The multiple component index method was used to analyse data on the selected variables to determine level of development for the identified spatial units. The multiple component index method represents measurements derived from an empirical

process of aggregation of a number of variables. The use of multiple component indexing means that numerous indicators of development are integrated into a single measurement that represents the level of development for a specific region. An index is the ratio of the observed indicator value to a particular base number (such as an average). This means that different values (measured in different units or at different times) can be compared, since all the data is evaluated in terms of the extent to which they compare with a value set as an expectation. Mazziotta and Pareto (2013) use the term data normalisation for such transformation from indicators to simple indices which are dimensionless in form. Before the calculation of simple indices, it was necessary to determine the correlation of each indicator with development. In cases where particular indicators had negative correlation with the general level of development the reciprocals values for those indicators were calculated so that they have positive correlation with the general level of development. Once all the indicators had positive correlation with health service provision, simple indices for each of the indicators were calculated. Simple indices were combined into composite indices so that each administrative district has a single composite index value. The calculated multiple component indices on development for all the administrative districts in Zimbabwe are given in Table 1.

3. Results and Analysis

Table 1: Ranking of administrative districts in Zimbabwe according to level of development

Bulawayo	156.2	Bindura	74.7	Nyanga	61.3	Nkayi	54.2
Chitungwiza	152.8	Umguza	73.8	Chiredzi	58.6	Mt Darwin	53.8
Harare	119.1	Umzinggwane	73.3	Shamva	58.4	Lupane	53.7
Kwekwe	88.8	Inzisa	72.7	Mberengwa	58.3	Gokwe South	52.9
Marondera	84.5	Mutasa	71.8	Shamva	58.1	Hwange	52.6
Gweru	84.2	Gokwe South	71.6	Murehwa	57.8	Hurungwe	52.1
Masvingo	82.9	Chirumanzi	70.8	Bulilima	57.4	Rushinga	51.9
Kwekwe	81.9	Matobo	69.6	Mangwe	57.3	Buhera	50.8
Gwanda	80.8	Chikomba	68.5	Beitbridge	57.2	Gokwe North	50.6
Goromonzi	79.1	Makonde	68.1	Kariba	56.9	Mwenezi	49.7
Zvishavane	78.7	Mazoe	67.3	Chivi	56.6	Tsholotsho	48.8
Chegutu	77.7	Seke	63.8	Chipinge	55.8	Muzarabani	48.3
Mutare	77.1	Zvimba	63.4	Mutoko	55.5	UMP	47.5
Makoni	76.9	Gutu	63.2	Zaka	54.8	Mudzi	43.3
Kadoma	76.5	Hwedza	62.9	Bikita	54.7	Binga	41.2
		Chimanimani	62.5	Guruve	54.5		

The calculated multiple component indices represented the levels of overall socioeconomic development for all the administrative districts were ranked hierarchically from high to low. Table 1 shows the ranking of districts in Zimbabwe according to level of development.

The data for the multiple component index of the overall socioeconomic development were arranged from high to low values (in Table 1) and class intervals were created on the basis of quartile values. Quartiles divided the data into four equal parts. The formulae 1(n+1)/4 (for the lower quartile), 2(n+1)/4 (for the semi quartile) and 3(n+1)/4 (for the upper quartile or third boundary) were used to calculate the quartiles. Data were, therefore, grouped into four classes. Using the data in Table 1 on the calculated multiple component indices, the lower quartile lies on the 15.75th position. That position is between the values 54.2 and 54.5 and interpolation gives a value of 54.4. The semi-quartile lies on the 31.5th position. That position is halfway between 61.3 and 62.5 and gives a value of 61.9. Finally the upper quartile lies on the 47.25th position. That position is between the values 74.7 and 76.5 and interpolation gives a value of 75.2. Classes were then created on the basis the calculated quartiles (see the legend to Figure 2). The classes of data created were used to generate the map, Figure 2 that shows the spatial variation of socioeconomic the development in Zimbabwe.

The quartile method was used to map the indices to obtain an overview of the spatial variation in socioeconomic development in Zimbabwe (Figure 2). The indices showed a very wide spatial variation and confirmed that severe inequalities exist in levels of socioeconomic development in Zimbabwe. Certain administrative districts in the country experience relatively high levels of development while others have low levels of development or no development at all. This spatial pattern of unequal levels of development and the uneven distribution of socioeconomic activities in Zimbabwe is not a random pattern but is the result of specific processes operating in space over time. Historical, economic, political and other forces have influenced the growth and migration of the population and the location of economic activities in the country.

The districts with the highest levels of overall socioeconomic development, such as Bulawayo, Chitungwiza and Harare (Table 1 and Figure 2) are districts that have the biggest cities in the country. The critical role played by urban areas in the socioeconomic development of the country is manifested in this situation. It has also emerged from Figure 2 that the most developed districts are found in the highveld of the country. Socioeconomic development in Zimbabwe is to a large extent concentrated along the highveld of the country. The Highveld of Zimbabwe has comparatively high rainfall and cool climate which is favourable for agriculture and other economic activities. It is also interesting to note that districts with the second highest level of

development are generally located near those with the highest level of development. This is in agreement with Tobler's (1970) first law of geography which states that "*everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things*". Spatial autocorrelation is operative in the spatial economy of Zimbabwe. Spatial autocorrelation is the tendency for similar things to be close to each other (McBride, 1989:34). That is, districts with the highest and second highest levels of development are generally found close to each other and that is in and around the central axis of Zimbabwe. Districts experiencing the lowest level of overall socioeconomic development are mainly found in the lowveld of the country. This is possibly because the areas are hot, dry and being infested with pests such as mosquitoes and tsetseflies. Such conditions tend to hamper the socioeconomic development of the districts.

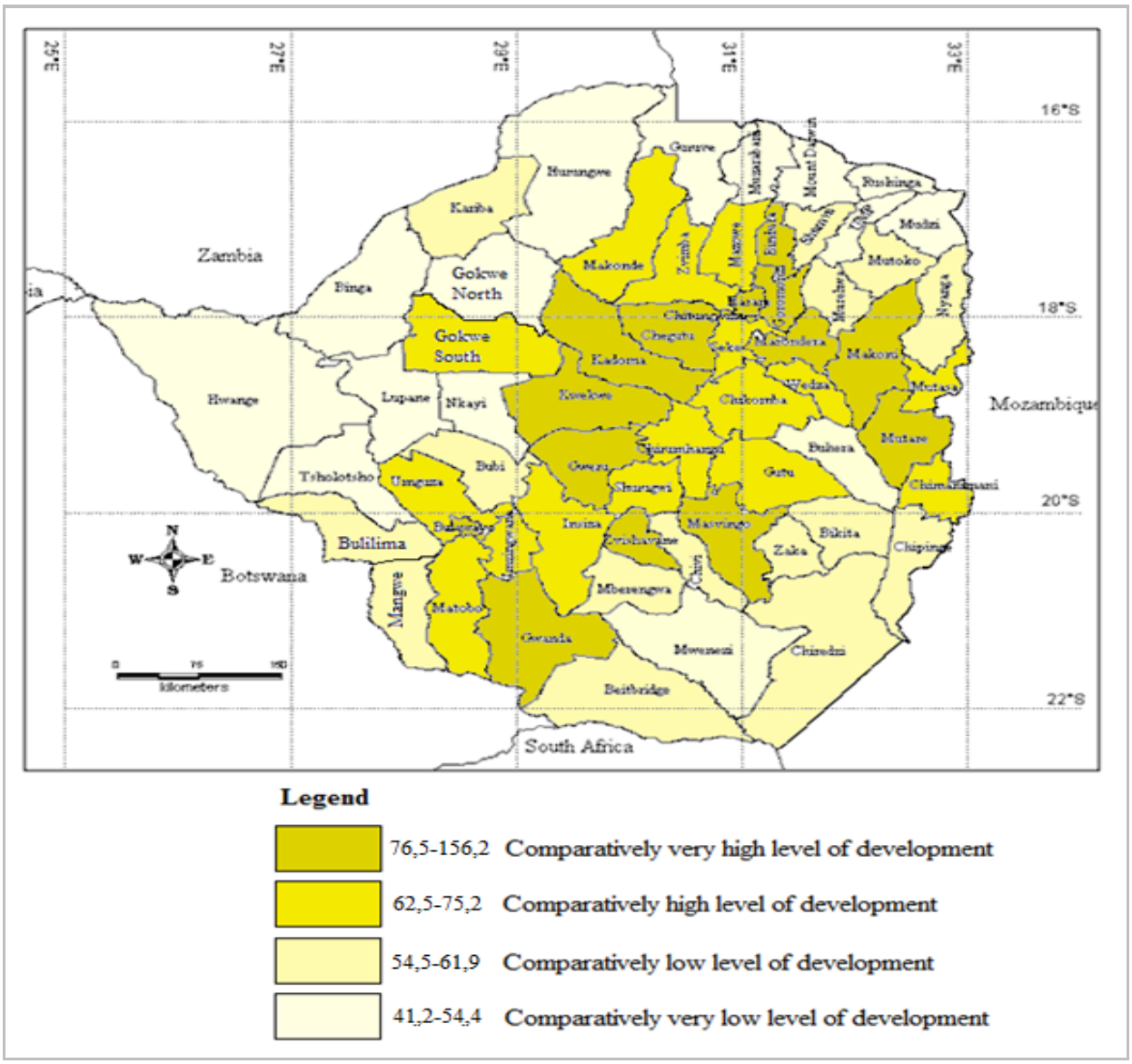

Figure 2: Spatial variation of socioeconomic the development in Zimbabwe

4. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that severe inequalities in socioeconomic development exist in Zimbabwe. The spatial pattern of development is primarily influenced by location of urban centres and the physical conditions. Urban districts or those close to urban centres generally have better socioeconomic development compared to those with rural inclination. Administrative districts with a cooler and wet climate in Zimbabwe generally have better development than the hot dry once.

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