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The Link between Income Disparity and Human Rights: Insights from Seven Selected Economies

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ABSTRACT

Income disparity is a serious challenge experienced by many developing countries and has an important effect on the safeguarding of human rights. This study investigates the nexus between income inequality and human rights in selected countries. The study uses secondary data which has been taken from the WDI and Freedom in the World Reports from the year 2013-2025. Descriptive statistics and trends analysis are employed to investigate the nexus between income inequality and human rights. The results imply that economies lower income inequality leads to better human rights on one side and higher income inequality is linked with greater challenges in providing fair access to education, health, employment and fundamental rights. Even though the trends vary among selected economies, the finding shows a close connection between income inequality and human rights. The study shows that government should foster inclusive growth by upgrading healthcare and education, social security, employment generation, financial integration, sound governance and human rights institutions. The study reveals that minimizing income inequality and safeguarding human rights should go hand in hand to attain sustainable and inclusive development.

Key words: Income Disparity, Human Rights, Good Governance, Inclusive growth, Social Protection

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary times, several developing economies have experienced sweeping economic changes. These economies are often known as emerging developing economies as they are shifting from low-income agrarian economies to the industrialized and service driven economies. This transformation has resulted in rapid economic growth, raised foreign investment, urban growth and market expansion. Yet, in spite of this economic improvement, a serious concern that remains to prevail is the issue of income disparity.

Income inequality means the unequal distribution of income and wealth among different sections of society. In other words, it means that some people have lion share of income as compared to others and that creates a gap between rich and poor. Different factors are responsible for widening the gap between rich and poor like private ownership of property, existence of law of inheritance, faulty taxation system, growing unemployment, inflationary rise in prices and licensing policy of the government etc.

In addition to income inequality, human rights challenges remain a serious concern in these developing economies. Human rights are those that involve an individual's life, freedom, equity and dignity and are secured by the Constitution, enshrined in international human rights treaties and executable in court. High income disparity leads to uneven access to fundamental rights particularly for marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

The nexus between income disparity and human rights is complicated as well as significant. On the one side, economic disparity can restricts the ability of a person to relish his basic rights. On the other side, the absence of strong protection of human rights can also lead to rising inequality. Therefore, both income inequality and human rights are both closely connected and tend to strengthen each other.

Government policies also play an important role in this aspect. In developing economies, the governments often encounter challenge of aligning economic progress with social equity. Programmes and policies of the government connected to social welfare, taxation, education and health care and employment generation plays significant role in minimizing inequality and providing equal opportunities for all individuals. Some of the factors like limited resources, fragile institutions, corruption and faulty policy implementation etc. have minimized the effect of such measures. Thus, income disparity persists in affecting the attainment of human rights in these emerging economies.

Education and health care are two important sectors where the effect of income disparity is clearly discernible. Individuals belonging to higher-earning groups generally have access to quality education and health care services whereas individuals belonging to lower-earning groups rely on low-funded public system. This results in inequality where underprivileged groups remain stuck in poverty because of inadequate opportunities. Across time, it not only influences the well-being of individuals but also restricts the development of the country.

The significance of studying the connection between income inequality and human rights depends in understanding how economic systems influence human worth and social justice. In developing economies, where the development process gradually develops, this relationship becomes even more crucial. By studying this link, researchers and decision makers can find out the shortfalls in growth strategies and recommend more fair and inclusive approaches.

Income disparity and human rights are closely associated issues that affect the development achievements of emerging economies. On one hand, the economic growth has led to progress, on the other hand it has also resulted in new issues with regard to equity and fairness. Comprehending the relationship between income inequality and human rights is necessary for creating an inclusive

and resilient society where everyone can exercise their fundamental rights and opportunities on an equal basis.

SELECTED WORKS

Title	Authors	Journal and Year	Findings
Human Development, Freedom and Income Inequality: Evidence from ASEAN Countries.	Gozen, E. G.	<i>Asian Journal of Applied Economics</i> , 32 (2), 33-61,2024.	The findings show that neither Human Development Index nor Extended Freedom-based Human Development Index substantially influences income disparity in short time period but both generate a considerable negative impact in the long period.
Economic Inequality, Debt Crises and Human Rights.	Bohoslavsky, J. P	<i>THE YALE JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL LAW ONLINE</i> , 41 (2), 177-199, 2016.	Inequality should be given special emphasis in debt settlement negotiations and legal decisions relating to that, not only to stop again more human rights abuses regarding persistent debt crisis but also to avoid their repetition.
Economic Inequality in the Age of Human Rights.	Benoliel, D.	<i>University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law</i> , 45 (2), 433-493,2024.	It is believable that there are scenarios whereby well formulated policy reforms, especially in education and investment on human capital can attain more economic growth while minimizing economic disparity. It also concludes that vertical inequalities among social groups and worldwide inequalities between nations should considerably affect the fulfillment of human rights and the attainment of United Nations fostered sustainable development.
Why should it matter that others have more? Poverty, inequality, and the potential of	Salomon, M. E.	<i>Review of international studies</i> , 37 (05), 2137-2155, 2011.	The results show that there is a need regarding the better quality of living, a system of fair distribution of in case of hunger and in specific obligation of international

international human rights law.			coordination, with in the post-1945 worldwide initiative at people-focused development. The contextual analysis illustrate that positive worldwide human rights law can be employed beyond effort at poverty reduction to provide a principle of fair global allocation.
Human Rights and Economic Inequality:Business as Uncharted Territory.	Litwin, D.	SSRN, 1-39,2023.	The result described a constructive agenda for Human Rights and Economic Inequality discourse recommending that reducing economic inequality could fall within the range of the progressively sound legal framework that needs business to honor human rights.
Inequality and Human Rights: Who Controls What, When, and How.	Larizza, T. L.	<i>International Studies Quarterly</i> , 53 (3), 715-736,2009.	Both income and land disparity have negative and significant impacts on the protection of human rights. Income disparity has a closer relation. It also indicates democracy has a significant positive impact on the protection of human rights. It highlights internal conflict and demographic size have significant adverse impacts on safeguarding human rights.
Human Rights and Economic Injustice.	MEHRA, S.	<i>International Journal of Law Management & Humanities</i> , 4 (5), 695-700,2021.	Legal enforcement has a significant role in promoting the understanding of these rights, like in preventing further violations and in deciding landmark cases that can lead to an appropriate institutional reform.

PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIA: A REVIEW.	Kaur, A.	<i>Jamia Law Journal</i> , 2, 22-39,2017.	The study explores the function of judiciary and the institutions of human rights in safeguarding the fundamental rights and emphasizes the significance of institutional reforms for enhancing the preservation of human rights in India.
Income inequality, status consumption and status anxiety: An exploratory review of implications for sustainability and directions for future research.	Katie Pybus, M. P.	<i>Social Sciences & Humanities Open</i> , 6 (1), 1-8,2022.	The study finds that income disparity results in status anxiety which leads to more consumption in order to maintain social prestige. It also focuses on minimizing income disparity that can help to attain economic stability as well as sustainable environmental management.
Income Inequality in India: Causes, Consequences and Lessons from Developed Economies.	Mangave, D.	<i>Munich Personal RePEc Archive</i> , 1-18,2025.	The study investigates the causes and effects of uneven income distribution in India and suggests that upgrading education and health care, skill development and social welfare are necessary to attain fair and sustainable economic growth.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Gap

Even though many studies explore the nexus between income inequality and human rights from theoretical angles, empirical evidence remains scarce, particularly for emerging economies. This study bridges this gap by employing data and quantitative analysis to provide empirical findings on the nexus between income inequality and human rights.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows.

- To show the nexus between income inequality and human rights.
- To suggest policy measures for attaining inclusive growth and safeguarding human rights.

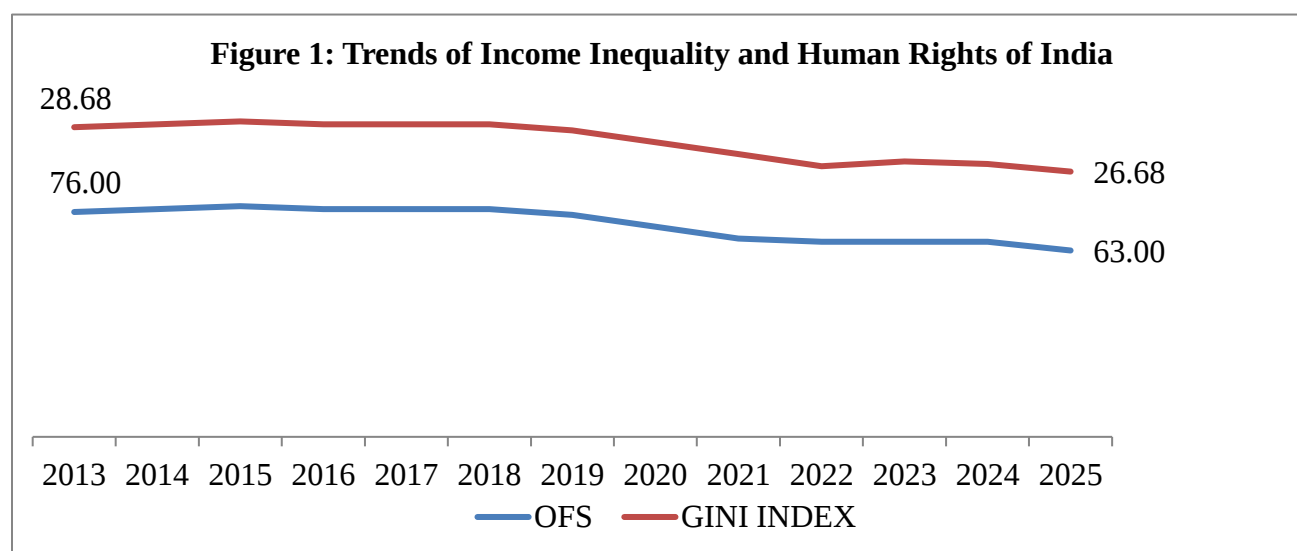
Data and Method

The study is based on secondary data. The data has been taken from WDI (World Development Indicators) published by World Bank Group and Freedom House for the year 2013-2025. Seven countries such as India, Seychelles, Panama, Guyana, Chile, Poland and Papua New

Guinea from the continents like Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Antarctica, Europe and Australia respectively have been taken out of 193 member countries of the United Nations as sample size. The selection of the countries is based on GDP Per capita, Current Prices, 2025. To satisfy our objectives, the present study has been employing Descriptive Statistics. For the analysis purpose graphs and charts are used.

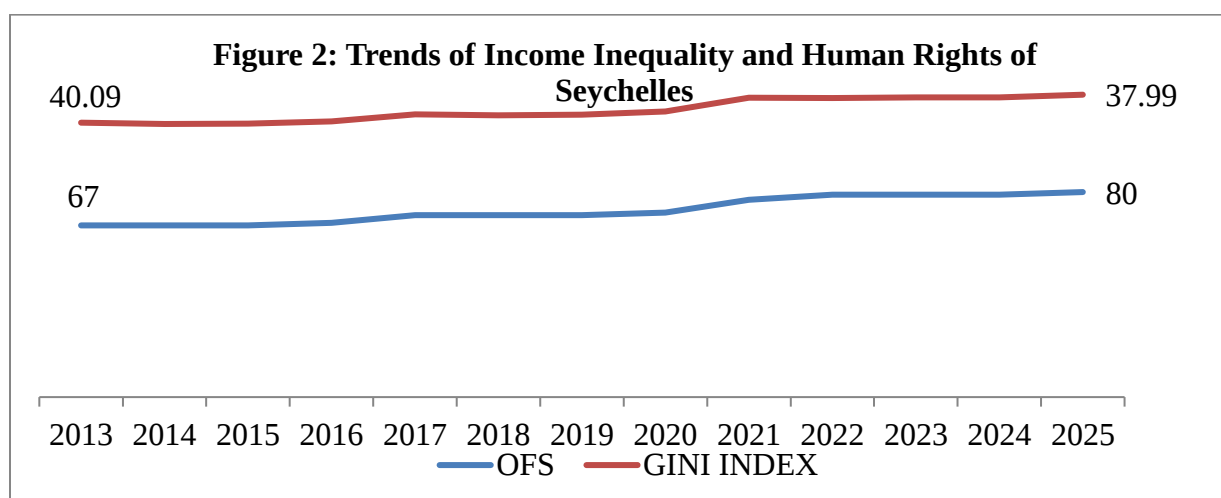
ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

I. The link between income inequality and human rights.



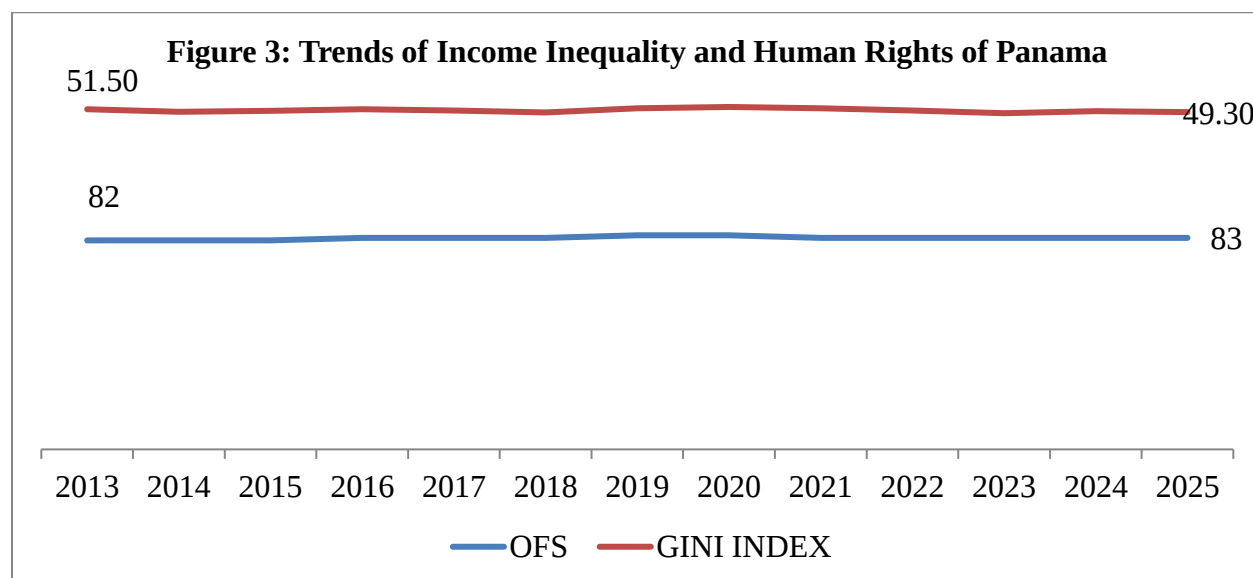
Source: Author's Calculation from Secondary data

This trend line implies that the level of income inequality and the human rights violation score are moving in a downward direction. It is found that the income inequality score has been reduced to 26.68 in 2025 as compared to 28.68 in the year 2013.



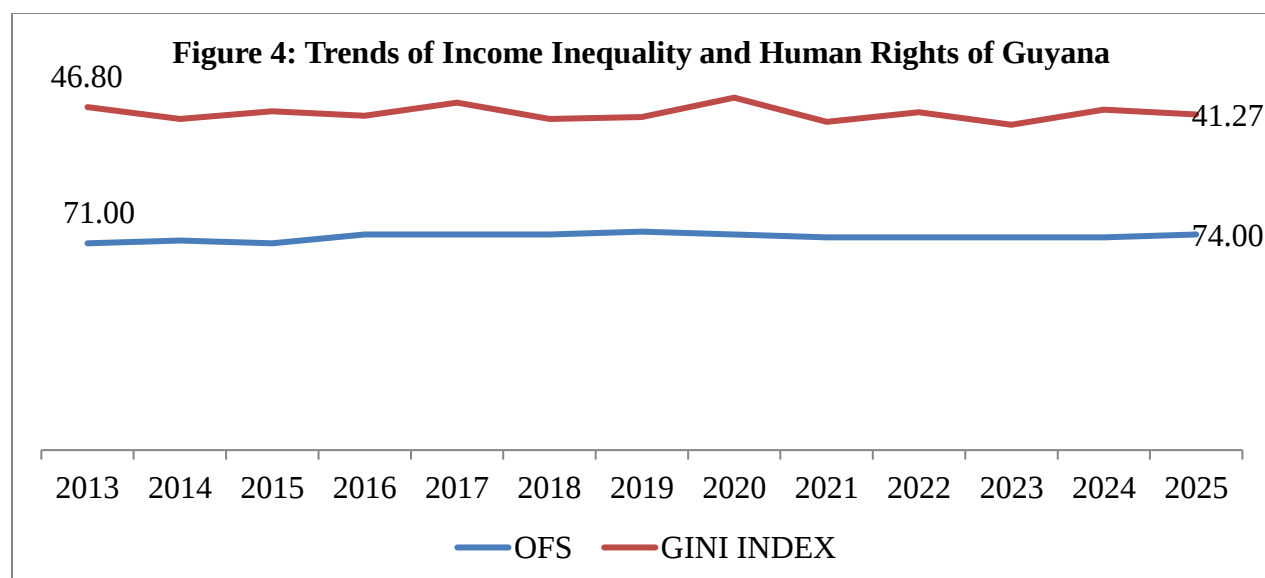
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In Seychelles, though the income inequality score is lower than what was in 2013, but it is also observed there is an increase in the income equality score after 2022. The same trend is observed in case of human rights violation score also.



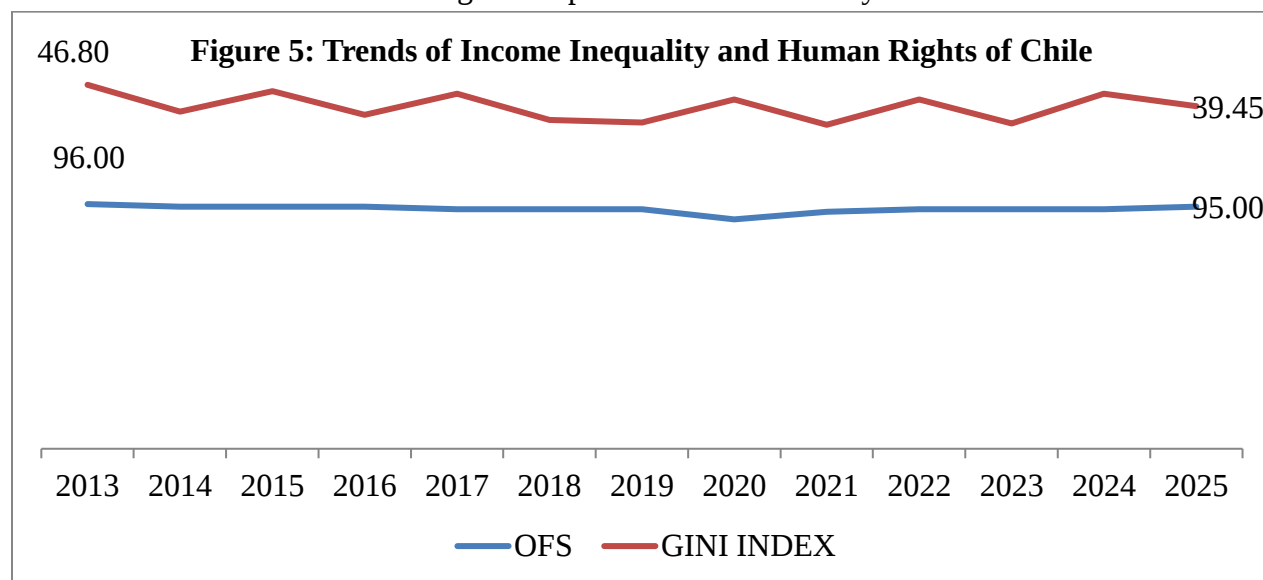
Source: Author's Calculation from Secondary data

The above diagram gives a picture of increasing trend in the income equality score during 2018 to 2021 and after 2021 there is a reduction in the GINI Index value which signifies a decreasing trend in the income equality position whereas the overall freedom value which is the indicator of human rights violation position is showing a stable position from the year 2021 onwards.



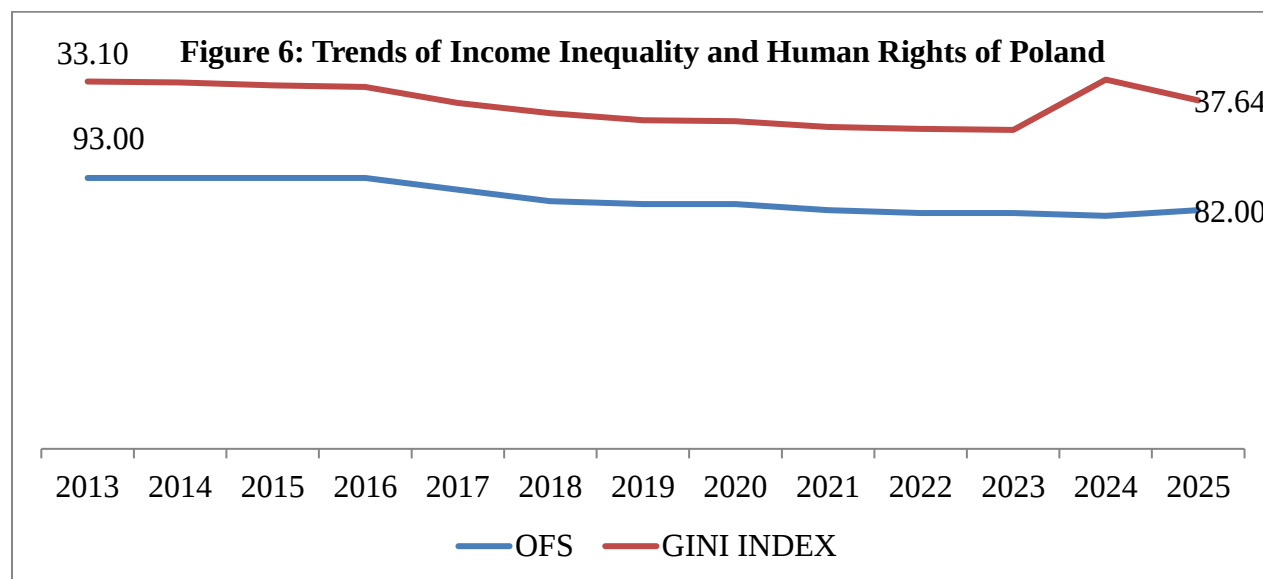
Source: Author's Calculation from Secondary data

In Guyana the income equality position is showing moderate to high volatility in its trend whereas the overall freedom score is moving in an upward direction steadily.



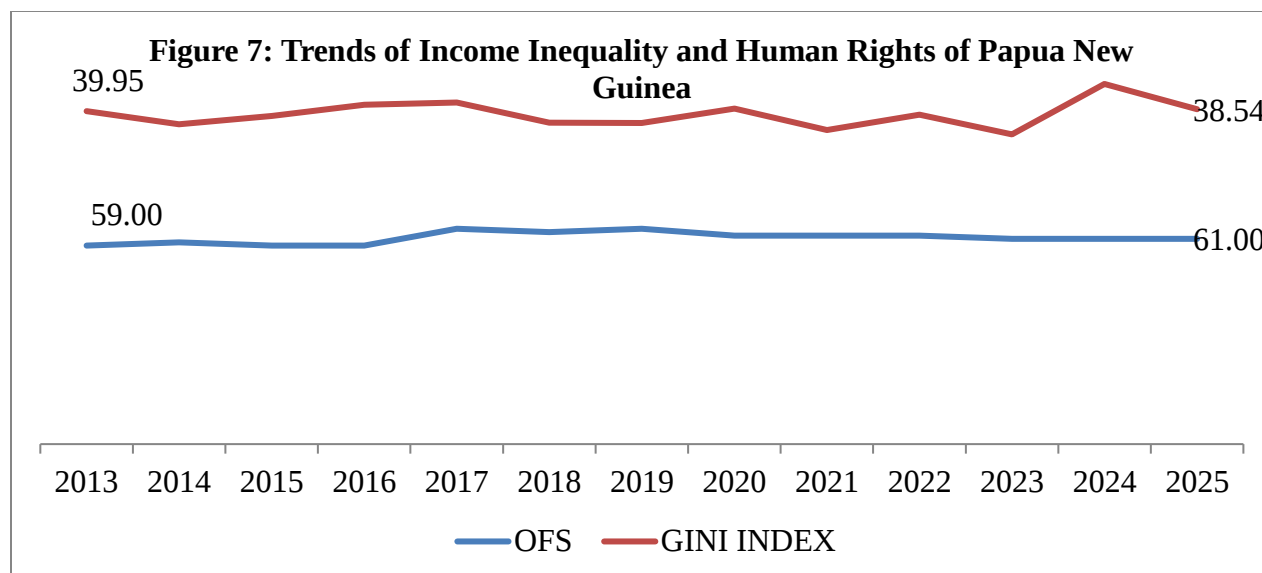
Source: Author's Calculation from Secondary data

Though the Gini index value is showing wave form of movement, but overall trend is downward moving and the human rights score showing a steady trend.



Source: Author's Calculation from Secondary data

The graph indicates that for the year 2023 and 2024 there was stiff rise in the income equality score but prior to that it is observed that the GINI index was following a downward trend. The diagram also shows that overall freedom score is decreasing.



Source: Author's Calculation from Secondary data

Papua New Guinea follows a stable overall freedom score 2022 onwards but the income equality score is not stable, and volatility is observed in the trend.

II Policy measures for attaining inclusive growth and safeguarding human rights.

- Enhance Educational Accessibility:

The government should ensure that each and every child has received quality education irrespective of their caste, gender, income or place of residence. Higher public expenditure should be made in public educational institutions and online learning facilities. Better education increases employment opportunities, minimizes income disparity and facilitates the enjoyment of socio-economic rights of individuals.

- Upgrade Health care Facilities:

Cost –effective health care should be provided to the people particularly those are living in rural and suburban areas. The govt. should increase expenditure on public health care institutions, health insurance schemes, health promotion and diseases prevention etc. Sound health increases productivity, decline productivity and promote the right to health.

- Promote Employment:

The govt. should foster labor-intensive industries like manufacturing, agriculture, small-scale enterprises etc. Govt. also promotes entrepreneurship, start-ups ad skill development in order to create formal employment. Formal employment raises income which in turn removes poverty and uneven distribution of income.

- Fair wages and Safe workplaces:

Workers should be ensured fair remunerations, safe working conditions and social welfare benefits. Labour laws should be strictly enforced, particularly for those who are working in informal workplace. Wage equality and prevention of exploitation help to safeguard labour rights and upgrade living standards.

- **Social welfare Programmes:**
Social safety Programmes should include under privileged groups, incorporating women, old age persons, individuals with disabilities and out-of-work individuals. Extending pensions, food security and income assistance can decline economic distress and foster social justice.
- **Reduce Regional Imbalances:**
More investment should be allocated in backward states and rural areas through upgrading roads, educational institutions, internet connectivity, hospitals, factories and electricity etc. Balanced growth creates fair opportunities and ensures that economic growth should promote inclusive prosperity.
- **Gender Equality and Social Integration:**
The government should fortify programmes and policies that foster fair opportunities for women and marginalized groups. Steps should incorporate fair access to education, employment, political participation, ownership of property, banking services etc. Eradicating discrimination leads to inclusive growth and safeguarding human rights.
- **Bolster Human Rights Institutions:**
Institutions answerable for safeguarding human rights should be given with adequate resources and independence. Legal aid facilities should be extended so that poor and marginalized people can easily get justice. Robust institutions upgrade the execution of fundamental rights and safeguard individuals from unfair treatment and exploitation.
- **Strengthening Governance and Curb Corruption:**
Honesty and responsibility should be enhanced in the execution of government programmes. Applications of advanced technology, continuous monitoring and firm action against corruption can assure that the beneficiaries get the benefits of the welfare programmes and minimize the unauthorized use of government funds.
- **Foster Financial Inclusion:**
For a lay man, financial inclusion means including everyone into the financial net. Financial Inclusion promotes saving, investment, encourages people to start new businesses and upgrade their standard of living.
- **Promote Skill Development:**
The government should upgrade skill development programmes on daily basis in order to align changing work needs. Skill-based training should be given to youth, women in order to enhance employability and raise the level of income.
- **Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of income disparity and human rights:**

The government should consistently collect and release data on the distribution of income, employment, educational and health care, poverty and human right indicators. Empirically informed policy making detects current gaps and helps prompts policy reforms to promote inclusive growth and safeguarding human rights.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the connection between income disparity and human rights in emerging developing economies. The results highlight that higher income disparity leads to more human rights violations. The study also shows significance of minimizing income inequality to attain sustainable and inclusive growth. The study also stresses that economic growth is meaningful only when its benefits are distributed fairly by all the sections of society. Government should implement programmes and policies that foster inclusive growth by upgrading access to better education and health care facilities, formal employment, social security and fair economic opportunities. Bolstering sound governance, transparency, responsibility and proper implementation of rules and regulations can further help to remove income inequality and safeguarding human rights. Overall, the findings suggest that minimizing income disparity and protecting human rights are closely linked and should go hand in hand.

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