

The Long-Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades (Nathan Nunn, 2008)

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Abstract

The study examines how the slave trades continue to affect Africa's economy. By analyzing historical shipping records and slave data, it reveals that countries exporting more slaves now experience weaker economies. It suggests that the slave trades disrupted economic growth by fracturing communities and political structures.

Introduction

Africa's economic struggles in the late 20th century stem from exploitation via slavery and colonialism. Previous studies connect colonialism to underdevelopment but lack empirical research on Africa's slave trades. This paper aims to bridge this gap by estimating exported slaves from Africa and studying their impact on current economic development.

Literature Review

This paper discusses how Africa's underdevelopment is influenced by slavery and colonialism, citing Bairoch (1993) and Manning (1990). It connects previous colonial research with a new empirical analysis of the slave trades' direct economic impacts, revealing a gap in understanding their lasting consequences.

Methodology

It utilizes shipping records and historical documents to estimate the number of slaves exported from each African country during the slave trades. Combining this with contemporary economic data, it examines the correlation between historical slave exports and current economic performance. To assess causality, it employs IV based on geographic distances from major slave markets, ensuring a robust analytical framework for exploring the slave trades' long-term economic effects.

Findings

The findings reveal a significant negative relationship between the number of slaves exported from African countries during the slave trades and their current economic development. Those demonstrate that regions most affected by the slave trades are among the poorest today.

Table: Regression Results Summary

Independent Variable	Coefficient	SE
ln(exports/area)	-0.112***	0.024
SS ln(exports/area)	-0.208***	0.053
FS Atlantic Distance	-1.31***	0.357
FS Indian Distance	-1.10***	0.380
FS Saharan Distance	-2.43***	0.823
FS Red Sea Distance	-0.002	0.710

Discussion

The paper stresses the lasting economic impact of Africa's slave trades, suggesting they directly contribute to current underdevelopment. It argues that the negative link between slave exports and economic performance is causal. The study underscores the need to acknowledge historical injustices like the slave trades in understanding present economic disparities in African countries.

Conclusions

This study concludes that Africa's slave trades have left a deep, lasting scar on the continent's economic development. It provides empirical evidence linking the historical export of slaves to current economic underperformance. This analysis underscores the need to recognize the enduring impact of the slave trades on Africa's economic landscape, suggesting historical exploitation plays a significant role in contemporary economic disparities.

References

Nunn, N. (2008). The Long-Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades. The Quarterly Journal of Economics Vol. 123, No. 1 (Feb., 2008), 139-176 .