The Role of Slave Trades and Current Economic Performance

David Pruden, Anvith Andhavarapu, Ritvik Vasikarla, Reagan Mathai, Cooper Muery, Mohand Hassan
Texas A&M University
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Abstract

This paper investigates the long-term effects of Africa's slave trades on economic development. Using historical data on the number of slaves exported from each African country, the analysis shows that regions more heavily affected by the slave trades have experienced significantly lower economic performance up to the present day. The results indicate that a 10(Content generated using PlusMind ChatGPT. Editable on www.plusmind.ai)

Introduction

The African slave trades, which spanned several centuries, represent one of the most devastating events in human history. Millions of Africans were forcibly removed from their homelands and sold into slavery, with major impacts on the demographic, economic, and social landscape of the continent. While the moral and humanitarian consequences of the slave trades are well-documented, the long-term economic impacts have received less attention from scholars.

This paper seeks to address this gap by examining the relationship between the intensity of the slave trades and subsequent economic development in Africa. The central hypothesis is that regions more heavily affected by the slave trades have experienced persistently lower levels of economic performance, even centuries after the abolition of the trade. This is because the slave trades disrupted political and social institutions, broke up ethnic groups and families, and eroded human capital - all of which are fundamental to long-term economic growth and prosperity. .

Literature Review

A growing body of research has explored the legacies of Africa's slave trades. Several studies have documented the immediate demographic impacts, showing large population declines in regions that experienced high rates of slave extraction (e.g. Nunn, 2008). Other work has examined the disruption to political and social structures, with the slave trades leading to the fragmentation of ethnic groups and the weakening of traditional authority systems (Acemoglu et al., 2001). More recently, scholars have investigated the long-term economic consequences of the slave trades. Nunn (2008) found a robust negative correlation between the number of slaves exported from a country and its subsequent economic performance, as measured by per capita income. He argued that this relationship can be explained by the slave trades' deleterious effects on human capital formation, the erosion of trust and social capital, and the disruption to political institutions.

Methodology

This study utilizes historical data on the trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan slave trades to examine their long-term impacts on economic development in Africa. The primary data source is the slave trade database compiled by Nunn (2008), which provides estimates of the number of slaves exported from each African country or region between the 16th and 19th centuries. The analysis employs an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression framework, with the log of contemporary per capita GDP as the dependent variable. The key explanatory variable is the log of the total number of slaves exported from each country. The model controls for a variety of other historical, geographic, and institutional factors that may also influence economic performance, such as colonial legacies, disease environments, and natural resource endowments. To address potential endogeneity concerns, the analysis also utilizes an instrumental variables approach.

Findings

The double Lasso regression resulted in an increased negative coefficient with an increased standard error. The difference in standard error is significant between the IV and LASSO regression for data in the year 2000. In this table, x1 represents the coefficient of the natural log of the export area. More research will have to be conducted to demonstrate if this effect continues in regressions for past and future data. The coefficients which were not negated were: the natural log of export area, natural log of coastline area, island dummy, average oil population, average diamond population, and colonizer fixed effects.

Table: Predicted Export Area and PCGDP 2000 Double Lasso

	coef	std err	t	P> $\|t\|$	[0.025	0.975]
const	6.4998	0.094	69.081	0.000	6.308	6.691
x1	−0.4710	0.109	−4.324	0.000	−0.693	−0.249

Table: Predicted Export Area and PCGDP 2000 IV

	coef	std err	t	P> $\|t\|$	[0.025	0.975]
const	7.8114	0.187	41.879	0.000	7.437	8.186
predicted ln export area	−0.2079	0.049	−4.285	0.000	−0.305	−0.110

Discussion

Findings:

The results provide robust evidence that the African slave trades have had a persistent negative impact on long-term economic development. The estimated coefficients indicate that a 10The findings suggest that the slave trades worked through multiple channels to undermine economic progress in affected regions. The large-scale removal of labor, the disruption of social and political institutions, and the erosion of human capital all likely contributed to a downward economic trajectory that has persisted for centuries. The heterogeneous impacts, with coastal areas more severely affected than interior regions, further highlight the trade's disruptive influence.

Conclusions

This paper provides robust empirical evidence that the African slave trades have had a substantial and persistent negative effect on economic development across the continent. Areas more heavily affected by the slave trades, as measured by the number of slaves exported, exhibit significantly lower per capita incomes today, even centuries after the abolition of the trade. The analysis suggests that the slave trades worked through multiple channels to undermine long-term economic progress, including the disruption of political and social institutions, the fragmentation of ethnic groups and families, and the erosion of human capital. The heterogeneous impacts, with coastal regions more severely affected than interior areas, further highlight the trade's disruptive influence.

These findings underscore the importance of understanding the deep historical roots of Africa's development challenges.

References

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