
Social Class And Status: Surviving Amidst Inequalities

Introduction

The concept of Inequality can be viewed from different perspectives. While to some people, it could mean an economic imbalance in the society, where some people do enjoy an overall living condition greater than some other individuals owing to several factors within or beyond ones' control. Some other people see it as variety of rights and privileges, owing to some certain degrees of societal status or social class wielded by some individual over others.

Whether as an economic imbalance or deprivation of rights and privileges, it all boils down to the fact that our society is characterized with persistent disparities as a result of one's social class and status. These disparities have been in existence for ages. Hence, the individual social class or status tends to determine the extent at which one is opportune to access or enjoy scarce resources. This in turn, allows stratification in the society where some people have to live upon the goodwill of some other people as referenced by George Henderson. As such, this limits the belief that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities, under one nation.

Many scholars have devoted great energy to unravelling the concepts of social class and status in solving the problems of inequalities so as to ensure equal opportunities for all but yet, it is still hard to find a common balance. Hence, this paper attempts to describe the concept of social class and status, and make a link to George Henderson's view on human relation, in a bid to minimize inequalities within our society.

Discussions

(Guo et al., 2018) defines social class as the visible societal layers or classes of differing wealth, income, race, education or power. It is described as a system of ranking individuals or group of individuals in the society on the basis of factors like wealth acquired, income earned, race disparity, level of education, and power. This, however divides the society into different strata in a way that brings about inequality in the allocation of scarce resources. In this class system, very few people are concentrated at the top, and large number of people are at the bottom, leaving few struggling middle class in the middle. The few at the top controls the resources at the expense of the other classes.

In addition, (Ridgeway, 2013) described social status as an inherently multi-level form of inequality in that it involves hierarchies of esteem and influence between individual actors as well as hierarchies of social esteem between groups in society. An individual status in the society comes with some levels of authority, which could be used over some other minority groups in a way to acquire resources and create an undue advantage over these minority groups. This is another pattern of inequality existing in our society.

Inequality as a social concept, especially in income, race, status, rights, and opportunities is so endemic in our society. A society characterized with inequalities leaves its minority group to struggle and scamper to acquire limited resources. Survival then belongs to the fittest. George

Henderson in his memoir tied these inequalities to racial segregation and income disparity. He believed poverty did not know him personally, but because he belongs to people of colour and was born in a poverty stricken family then there seemed to be no way out. But through his beliefs, resilience, determination, self-confidence, and strong will, he was able to survive these hurdles amidst inequalities.

Conclusions and Implications

While we can say social class has brought unequal distribution of income and wealth among people in the society, it is important to note that this inequalities vary among countries as well in such a way that people within the lower class in the United State may be categorized under the middle or upper class in some other climes. However, the focus here is that, people live a different life and, social class and status have so much stratified our society that the larger chunks of the scarce resources is concentrated in the hands of the few. Our society is so social-economically stratified in such a way that the gaps between the upper and lower class keeps growing and poverty becoming pervasive.

George Henderson confirms this notion when he described that he did not only suffer food and material deprivation while growing up because of the colour of his skin, but also faced hardship and diminished life prospect owing to being born in a family that belongs to the lower-lower class segment. He struggled with upward mobility, but he was able to break this poverty jinx because of his beliefs, good behavioural ethic and also, his conducts with the cooperative efforts of his mother and teachers.

In the context of human relation, American society is meritocratic; lower class and status can change momentarily and of course, minimize inequalities with hard work, courage, determination and as well by creating a network of interactions with people who can provide knowledge and social resources and opportunities. So, to understand how inequality can be minimized, it is also important for government to implement policies that will reduce the effect of persistent a pattern of social class and status in our society. With this analysis, further research can be done on how to build a diverse society in such a way to avoid discriminating against the minority groups or lower class.