Eurasian Research Unit
Eurasian Campus - Sri Lanka

Journal of Eurasian Social Sciences (JESS)

Bridging inequality in a changing world: pathways to justice, resilience, and sustainable futures

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History
Received: 8th Aug 2026
Revised: 1st Oct 2026
Published Online: 23rd Oct 2026
DOI: 10.68283/jess.v1.i2.a18

Keywords:
Social Justice; Resilience; Sustainability; Global Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the complex relationships between social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities in order to identify integrated approaches toward justice, resilience, and sustainable development. In addition to traditional redistributive measures, a mixed-methods design was employed, which included a critical literature review, a comparative policy analysis between industrialized and Global South countries, and an empirical quantitative survey of a local community sample (N=39) using structured questionnaires with Liker-scale and categorical questions. Descriptive statistics and a Chi-Square test of independence were used to assess the data. The study indicates that there is no statistically significant correlation between community views of equitable service access and the inclusion of participatory governance concepts ($\chi 2 = 6.65$, df = 8, $p > 0.05$). This implies that citizens see institutional governance and day-to-day service delivery as two different areas of experience. As a result, the paper promotes a split policy approach that combines independent institutional democracy with localized service reform. However, a localized emphasis and a small sample size (N=39) restrict the empirical scope, making it difficult to generalize the statistical results to broader regional or national settings. This emphasizes the need for bigger, more varied samples and longitudinal strategies in future studies. Additionally, policymakers should carefully consider how overlapping socioeconomic obstacles often affect local results. Building strong collaborative frameworks that connect grassroots involvement with macro-level administrative institutions is ultimately necessary to handle these complicated difficulties.

1. Introduction

In an era of fast rising global changes, addressing structural inequality has emerged as a critical global concern. These intricate problems don't operate in a vacuum; rather, inequalities in one domain be it social, economic, or environmental systematically make vulnerabilities in other domains worse. For marginalized people, who are disproportionately affected by these ecological and economic shocks, the pursuit of inclusive and sustainable development is not only an aspirational goal but also a necessary condition for long-term resilience and survival.

Recent empirical findings from local community surveys emphasize the severe impact of these interlocking crises. Grassroots research reveals that 64% of persons asked feel that economic instability is the key source of social vulnerability. This financial precarity is closely followed by the consequences of climate change, with 84% of families reporting that they are at least occasionally affected by natural disasters including floods, droughts, and erratic weather patterns. Even if these hazards are interlinked, interconnected, structural, interconnected, interconnected, structural, structural existence, structural existence, structural existence. The results of the study indicate that only a privileged few has fully equal access, with 40% of community members believing that access to fundamental services such as wealth, health, and education is certainly unequal and another 38% being indifferent.

The "implementation gap" the stark discrepancy between high-level policy commitments and the lived reality of marginalized populations remains a crucial research gap despite the rising worldwide understanding that socioeconomic and ecological problems are intricately linked. Although "participatory governance," "environmental ethics," and "transformative

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resilience" are increasingly promoted by international frameworks and national policies as remedies for structural inequality, current literature and institutional practices often fall short of converting these ideas into successful, inclusive action.

In particular, macroeconomic development is still given precedence above social justice in contemporary governance structures. Grassroots data demonstrates that over half (46%) of citizens believe essential participatory governance concepts are absent from current government structures, while proactive resilience methods remain heavily underutilized (e.g., only 6% of local communities regularly participate in community-led climate action programs, and 50% remain ambivalent about universal health coverage).

The idea that institutional policy processes and everyday community-level service access function as a single, integrated domain is a deeper, understudied theoretical and empirical gap. Conventional models make the implicit assumption that bottom-up vulnerabilities are directly correlated with and mitigated by top-down participatory frameworks. Nonetheless, institutional function. The inability of the existing literature to take this decoupling into account is, therefore, the research gap. Addressing this gap requires moving beyond generalized, "one-size-fits-all" policy models to understand why structural policy conversations remain detached from everyday struggles, thereby necessitating a bifurcated analytical and practical approach that bridges localized service reform with independent institutional democratization.

1.1. Research Problem

The distance between high-level policy pledges and the lived reality of marginalized people is rising, despite the growing realization on a global scale that socioeconomic and ecological crises are intricately linked. Although social justice, resilience, and sustainable development are presented as crucial concerns, the current study shows a significant institutional and societal failure to convert these ideas into inclusive, successful action.

1.2. Research Objective

This study's main goal is to examine how social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities overlap and create an integrated framework that connects grassroots community resilience with top-down policy design.

To achieve this primary objective, the study pursues the following specific sub-objectives:

Examine Current Perceptions of Inequality: To determine the precise socioeconomic factors such as financial instability and environmental impact that contribute to community members' susceptibility, as well as how they see access to basic services (health, education, and wealth).

Examine the Policy-Practice Gap: To assess the degree to which existing policies successfully enable communities to take part in local decision-making, as well as the gap between governmental frameworks of "participatory governance" and individuals' actual experiences.

Evaluate the Status of Resilience Initiatives: To ascertain the effectiveness and scope of community-driven social welfare and climate change programs (such Universal Health Coverage), as well as to pinpoint the obstacles to public knowledge and active participation.

Offer Collaborative Pathways for Sustainable Development: Using a mixed-methods analysis, develop practical plans that encourage cross-sector cooperation between governments, academic institutions, and civil society. This will change the emphasis from merely surviving to creating resilient, moral, and sustainable futures.

1.3. Research Question

How can policies based on equity, environmental ethics, and participatory governance be successfully put into practice to support inclusive development and resilience among marginalized groups dealing with interrelated environmental, social, and economic crises?

1.4. Purpose of Study

The study's goal is to investigate and pinpoint integrated strategies that promote justice, resilience, and sustainable development in order to close the growing disparities in global inequality. In a world where economic instability, climate change, and unequal access to wealth and health are all compounding pressures, the research is predicated on the idea that these issues are not isolated; rather, injustices in one area social, economic, or environmental systematically exacerbate vulnerabilities in other areas.

This study's main goal is to go beyond traditional redistributive strategies, which the author contends are insufficient to address systemic disparity's underlying causes. Rather, the study aims to find and advance inclusive development solutions that particularly address the needs of marginalized groups who are disproportionately affected by current economic and ecological problems. The research attempts to synthesize global trends with context-specific insights by utilizing a mixed-methods approach that incorporates a critical literature assessment, comparative policy analysis, and a variety of case studies from both the Global South and industrialized nations.

Evaluating how policies based on three distinct pillars equity, environmental ethics, and participatory governance can operationalize revolutionary change is a fundamental aspect of the study's goal. The researcher hopes to show that resilience is more than just surviving crises by examining effective, real-world examples, such as community-led climate action initiatives, inclusive public health programs, and equitable policy reforms that balance economic growth with ecological stewardship. Instead, the study suggests that genuine resilience is the deliberate development of institutional, social, and cultural frameworks that enable communities to prosper despite persistent global volatility.

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Ultimately, the research tries to make a wider normative argument: that the path toward a sustainable future demands a fundamental cultural revolution. The researcher makes the case for a change in emphasis toward intergenerational fairness, ethical responsibility, and group unity. Thus, promoting a multi-stakeholder model of progress is a major goal of the study. The research aims to offer a path for creating a more equitable and sustainable global future by advocating for cross-sector cooperation between governments, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and grassroots movements. In order to ensure that the structures of the future are founded on fairness and long-term environmental stewardship, the research intends to change how societies approach inequality through these suggested routes.

2. Literature Review

The fragile status of present global systems is defined by what modern scholars refer to as the "polyresins" the compounding convergence of growing health and welfare gaps, ongoing financial instability, and rising climatic impacts. Recent empirical and theoretical work pushes beyond understanding these variables as discrete policy silos, highlighting instead that structural disparities act as important force multipliers that enhance vulnerability across ecological and economic domains.

2.1. Theoretical Relationships between Crisis and Inequality

Social, economic, and environmental issues have always been handled as distinct sectors in traditional development models. However, recent empirical research highlights an integrated "Vulnerability Framework," demonstrating how marginalized populations throughout the world are disproportionately affected by overlapping shocks. Reducing inequality is a fundamental requirement for systemic resilience rather than a secondary welfare benefit, since recent econometric analyses have confirmed that wealth and income disparities significantly impair society ability to absorb geopolitical and climatic shocks.

2.2. Rethinking Resilience: Going Beyond Survival

Traditional notions of resilience as the ability to bounce back passively have given way to ideas of transformational adaptation in scholarly discourse. Modern studies reveal that survival-oriented healing mechanisms fail under ongoing systemic instability. Rather, the deliberate development of institutional, social, and cultural frameworks that empower local actors is necessary for real resilience. As long as grassroots actors have true agency, decentralized, community-led actions typically outperform centralized bureaucratic administration during ecological crises, according to empirical research on urban and rural adaptation.

2.3. The Function of Policy Reform and Participatory Governance

An increasing corpus of research challenges macroeconomic theories that place a higher priority on distributive justice than aggregate growth, pointing to this disparity as the main cause of structural inequality. While participatory governance is widely pushed to overcome this divide, new studies demonstrate a persisting implementation gap: top-down institutional designs usually fail to resonate with ordinary citizen reality.

Environmental Ethics in Policy: Including moral responsibility in climate planning to prevent disadvantaged groups from bearing a disproportionate share of ecological costs.

Coordinating multi-stakeholder initiatives across governments, civic scientists, and grassroots networks to strike a balance between social justice and ecological stewardship is known as cross-sector collaboration.

2.4. Social Justice via Sustainability

Intergenerational justice and ecological limits are closely linked in contemporary sustainability rhetoric. Frameworks like as "doughnut economics" contend that an ecological overrun system is fundamentally unfair, taking advantage of future well-being for immediate benefits. Consequently, modern literature highlights that technical breakthroughs (such as green tech) remain insufficient until detached from exploitative systemic mechanisms that initially caused inequality.

2.5. Comparative Study: Industrialized and Global South Countries

Comparative analyses show that although the structural causes of inequality differ, from post-colonial legacies in the Global South to post-industrial stagnation in northern nations, the ensuing socio-ecological vulnerabilities are very similar. Successful policy approaches are inclusive, regionally adapted, and supported by strong social contracts that put the welfare of the group ahead of disparate individual interests, as cross-national studies show.

2.6. Future Research Directions Future Directions

Recent research highlights a persistent "implementation gap" despite theoretical agreement on the need for radical change. Future empirical research must extend beyond generalized models to carefully understand why institutional policy frameworks and daily community-level experiences remain disconnected, suggesting scalable approaches to integrate top-down governance with grassroots realities.

3. Methodology

In order to fully examine the intricate relationships between social inequality, ecological fragility, and governance efficacy, this study uses a convergent parallel mixed-methods

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methodology. In order to construct macro-level theoretical frameworks and global trends, the qualitative component consists of a critical literature survey, a comparative policy analysis between industrialized and Global South contexts, and multi-sector case studies. In order to gather micro-level empirical data on lived experiences, public views of basic service equality, and attitudes toward participatory governance, the quantitative component employs a structured, cross-sectional community survey. In order to compare high-level policy frameworks with grassroots realities and highlight the structural policy-practice divide, these qualitative and quantitative strands are combined during the interpretation phase.

The adults are vulnerable, susceptible, susceptible, susceptible, susceptible, and susceptible, and susceptible, ecological, floods, and ecological, and ecological, and ecological, and ecological, floods, floods, and ecological, and ecological, and ecological, and ecological, and ecological. The study collected data from an initial pool of 50 administered questionnaires using a purposive and convenience sampling technique, yielding a completed and verified sample of 39 respondents (N = 39). Despite its small size, this sample size provides an experimental baseline for evaluating local perception gaps about service accessibility and institutional governance in particular vulnerable locations.

A standardized survey instrument that measured both subjective lived experiences and more general institutional evaluations was used to collect the data. In addition to Likert-scale items gauging respondents' opinions of fair access to essential services such as wealth, health, and education and satisfaction with participatory governance principles and universal health coverage, the questionnaire included categorical questions to record demographic variables and baseline exposure to ecological shocks.

Strict adherence to ethical guidelines was upheld during the whole research procedure, including obtaining informed permission from each participant explaining the study's voluntary nature and anonymity and making sure that responses were securely archived for academic purpose only. Statistical software was used to handle both descriptive and inferential statistical methods for data analysis. While inferential analysis used a Chi-Square test for independence at a 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$) across eight degrees of freedom to assess whether a statistically significant relationship exists between perceived participatory governance and service access, descriptive analysis summarized sample characteristics, frequencies, and central tendencies regarding community perceptions of economic volatility and service equity.

4. Analyzing

The findings of a Chi-Square test that was performed to ascertain if there is a statistically significant correlation between the perception of participatory governance principles and the perception of equitable access to critical services are shown in this document.

The following shows the "participatory governance" (allowing citizens to have a say in decisions)

Table 1: Contingency Table (Observed Frequencies)

Access / Governance	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree
Equal	7	3	1	1
Neutral	10	3	1	0
Unequal	5	5	0	3

Statistical Test Results

Calculated Chi-Square Statistic (χ^2): 6.6469

Degrees of Freedom: 6

Critical Value ($\alpha = 0.05$): 15.51

6.6469 is the computed Chi-Square statistic. We are unable to reject the null hypothesis since this is below the crucial threshold of 15.51. The analysis shows no statistically significant correlation between the perception of participatory governance principles and the perception of equitable access to services.

5. Results

5.1. Descriptive Analysis

The empirical findings are based on a verified sample of thirty-nine respondents (N = 39) out of fifty initially conducted surveys, with the remaining questionnaires eliminated owing to incomplete data. There are a variety, institutional, moderate, moderate, institutional governance, perceptions, moderate, and perceptions, institutional governance, and perceptions, institutional governance, institutional governance, institutional governance, perceptions. The majority of respondents gave moderate assessments when asked about fair access to basic services (such as wealth, health, and education), while satisfaction levels with the participatory governance principles of current government policies showed significant variation, reflecting different community experiences with policy implementation.

5.2. Chi-Square Test for Independence in Inferential Statistical Analysis

A Chi-Square test for independence was used to see if there is a statistically significant correlation between the perceived inclusion of participatory governance concepts and the perceived equality of access to essential services. A 3 X 4 contingency table was used in the analysis to combine governance perception categories (Agree, Disagree, Strongly

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Agree, Strongly Disagree) with service accessibility categories (Equal, Neutral, Unequal) across the entire sample of N = 39.

6. Findings

The statistical test yielded the following parameters yielded the statistical test yielded the following parameters:

- Chi-Square statistic (χ^2) calculated: 6.65
- Degrees of Freedom (df): 6 (calculated as (r-1)(c-1) = (3-1) x (4-1))
- Level of Significance (α): 0.05
- 15.51 is the critical value.
- p-value: $p > 0.05$ (0.355)

Comparing the estimated statistic ($\chi^2 = 6.65$) to the crucial value (15.51), the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, it is impossible to reject the null hypothesis, which holds that perceived participatory government and fair service access are unrelated.

6.1. Interpretation of Results of Findings of Findings of Interpretation

According to these inferential findings, community members' assessments of institutional participatory governance and equitable service access function as separate domains within this sample. The absence of statistical association implies that people do not always immediately connect high-level national conversations about participatory governance to their actual, day-to-day experiences of obtaining fundamental public services. This indicates that future policy interventions and reform strategies must address these different areas through multifaceted, parallel approaches rather than relying on a single, cohesive solution. This highlights a complex, decoupled relationship between institutional governance frameworks and grassroots service delivery.

7. Discussion

The junction of the empirical governance of the empirical findings of the empirical governance of the empirical governance of the empirical findings of the institutional perceptions of the empirical governance of the empirical findings of the empirical governance of the empirical findings of the empirical findings of the empirical governance. Our results show a more nuanced reality ($\chi^2 = 6.65$, $df = 6$, $p > 0.05$), despite the fact that traditional theoretical frameworks often provide a straight, inverse link implying that bad service delivery is an instant sign of governance problems or a lack of participation procedures. In particular, the absence of a statistically significant association suggests that community people see regular service delivery and institutional participatory governance as completely distinct areas of experience.

This dissociation is consistent with more general academic debates over the "implementation gap" in public policy. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2023), high-level policy pledges to global sustainability and fairness frequently fall short of local reality, leaving marginalized groups to deal with structural injustices on their own. Furthermore, our findings align with the "Vulnerability Framework" presented by Adger (2000), which underlines how economic volatility and ecological shocks exacerbate vulnerabilities at the local level independent of macro-level governance arrangements. National discourses on participatory governance may seem abstract or detached from urgent survival demands when families are dealing with concurrent constraints like financial precarity and climate-related calamities.

Additionally, as well as well as well as well as well as well as well as well as well as well as well as well as well. Sen expands. A "one-size-fits-all" governance paradigm appears to be insufficient given the observed gap in service access and governance perceptions. Instead, resolving the present "polyresins" the compounded combination of climate change, economic instability, and social inequality requires a divided policy strategy.

The conversation emphasizes that resilience requires proactive, localized institutional support and community-led climate action, in keeping with transformational resilience models (Adger, 2000; Jayasooriya, 2021). Governance mechanisms need to move beyond tokenistic involvement in order to close the gap between policy design and grassroots lived realities. According to recent sustainability literature (Raworth, 2017; UN, 2015), real progress necessitates combining deep institutional democratization and a cultural shift toward intergenerational justice and ethical responsibility with localized service reforms (addressing immediate gaps in health, education, and wealth).

8. Conclusion and Policy Implications

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between the implementation of participatory governance and the perception of equitable access to essential services among marginalized communities dealing with exacerbated global crises. The statistical analysis using a Chi-Square test for independence shows no significant correlation between perceived institutional participatory governance and service accessibility ($\chi^2 = 6.65$, $df = 6$, $p > 0.05$), revealing a more complex reality than conventional theoretical frameworks suggest. This keeps the null hypothesis from being rejected, proving that community people view regular service delivery and government institutional processes as separate, independent areas of experience.

Going beyond a "one-size-fits-all" approach to governance and policy is necessary to address systemic inequality. Because citizens are introns intrinsically connected as a whole.

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- Localized Service Reform: Quick, direct actions to improve fair access to essential public services and reduce vulnerability at the local level.
- Institutional Democratization: Independent, persistent initiatives to firmly establish democratic ideals in policy-making and institutionalize participatory governance, independent of present variations in service delivery.

In the end, overcoming inequality necessitates a deep cultural shift toward intergenerational justice, solidarity, and ethical responsibility that is backed by multi-stakeholder cross-sector cooperation as opposed to flimsy redistributive policies.

9. Study Limitations

Although the results provide significant empirical insights, it is important to recognize a few limitations:

- The study is based on a bigger statistics' statistical population.
- Geographic Scope: Because the study concentrates on particular geographical contexts, opinions about governance and service fairness may vary in various post-industrial, cultural, or economic contexts.
- Cross-Sectional Design: The use of cross-sectional data collects perceptions at a specific point in time, restricting the potential to demonstrate causal pathways between governance reforms and long-term community resilience.

10. Future Research Directions

Building on these discoveries, the following directions should be investigated in future studies:

- Expanded Sample Studies: Replicating the survey across larger, multi-region demographic samples to test if the decoupling of government attitudes and service access holds on a national scale.
- Longitudinal Research: Monitoring the long-term effects of institutional improvements on local resilience and community trust.
- Qualitative Deep Dives: Making use of qualitative techniques, such focus groups and in-depth interviews, to investigate the reasons behind community members' continued disconnection between national governance discussions and regular service experiences.

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