Review of: "Who Belongs to the Middle Class? Identifying Them Using Monthly Family Income"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The paper presents a method for classifying social classes based on monthly family income, which is both practical and applicable across different countries. However, there are several methodological concerns that need to be addressed to enhance the study's robustness and applicability.

- The method does not account for significant regional variations within a country. Differences in the cost of living, economic conditions, and family sizes across different regions can impact the accuracy of the classification. It is essential to consider these factors to ensure that the classification is representative of the entire country.

- The reliance on income data alone may not fully capture the complexity of social class. Factors such as education, occupation, and wealth (assets and debts) play a crucial role in determining social class. The methodology should incorporate these variables to provide a more comprehensive classification.

- The paper uses publicly available data, which is commendable. However, the potential inaccuracies or biases in self-reported income data are not addressed. Underreporting or non-reporting of income can significantly skew the results and affect the validity of the class thresholds.

- While the paper provides a detailed explanation of adjusting income thresholds for inflation, the methodology does not discuss the frequency of these adjustments. Rapidly changing economic conditions can impact the accuracy of the classifications. A more explicit discussion on how often these adjustments should be made would be beneficial.

- The paper briefly mentions alternative methods like the wealth index approach but does not provide a thorough comparative analysis. Comparing the proposed income-based method with other stratification approaches regarding their advantages, disadvantages, and practical applicability would strengthen the study.

- The formula for adjusting for inflation is well-explained, but it assumes a uniform inflation rate across all goods and services. Inflation can vary significantly between different sectors, which can affect the real value of income. A discussion on sector-specific inflation rates and their impact on the methodology would add depth to the analysis.

- The methodology should address the temporal stability of the classification thresholds. Economic conditions can change rapidly, and the thresholds defined today may not be relevant in the near future. Providing guidelines on how to periodically review and update the thresholds would enhance the method's long-term applicability.

- The paper does not perform a sensitivity analysis to test the robustness of the proposed classification thresholds. Conducting such an analysis would help identify the sensitivity of the results to changes in key parameters and assumptions, providing insights into the reliability of the methodology.