
NEWSLETTER

Gender Bias in Educational Investment among Chinese Rural Families: An Analysis Based on Data of Rural Multi-Child Households

By Yan, J. & Xiao, T.

Correspondence to: Tong Xiao, Capital University of Economics and Business, China. E-mail: xiao2011tong@126.com

CHINESE WOMEN have traditionally had fewer educational opportunities than their male counterparts, which has resulted in measurable gender disparities in socioeconomic status (SES) between the two groups. Despite that China's implementation of the Compulsory Education Law and family planning policy have effectively mitigated its gender inequality in education, educational expenses remain a heavy burden for multi-child households in rural areas, where gender differences in educational input persist due to financial constraints and traditional bias. This study seeks to investigate the gender gaps in investment in education among Chinese rural families with multiple children and the underlying reasons, using data from the China Household Income Project (CHIP) 2018.

Research Findings:

- There were significant gender gaps in educational investment among Chinese rural households, and the gaps are heterogeneous in relation to birth order, with the largest ones occurring between the investment for the eldest sons and the eldest daughters. Compared to the eldest son, the eldest daughter was more likely to be deprived of educational opportunities in order to ensure the educational needs of her younger siblings. Yet, no significant difference in educational access existed between the youngest son and the youngest daughter.
- The gender issue in educational investment was significantly more pronounced in regions with lower levels of public education expenditure and among rural families with low household incomes.
- More noticeable gender disparities in educational investment existed in the regions with higher sex ratios at birth and stronger clan culture and among rural households with low-SES mothers, where the girls' access to educational resources are more likely to be affected by birth order.

The study' findings have implications for educational policies on alleviation of gender disparities by highlighting the importance of: (i) formulating more targeted educational subsidy strategies to ensure the rights to education of all rural children, regardless of their birth order; (ii) prioritizing funding for public education in underserved regions and providing low-cost, high-quality local schooling for rural families, particularly those impoverished ones; (iii) fostering legitimate values on education in the rural population to eliminate sextual discrimination in education and encouraging the establishment of girls' schools in underdeveloped areas to counteract the influence of local traditions.

Source: Consumer Economics, 2025; 2025(01):1-16.