

The Influence of Mothers' Education Level on Children's Awareness of Gender Equality

- Based on the Questionnaire of Intergenerational Transmission of Gender Equality Awareness in Families

Wenyu Shi^{1,a,*}

¹Department of English, Normal College, Beijing Union University, 97 North Fourth Ring Road East, Chaoyang District, Beijing, China

a. 2020020308009@bnu.edu.cn

*corresponding author

Abstract: With the improvement of the social system and the development of the times, the view of men and women should have equal rights has become to the mainstream view. However, in today's Chinese society, there is still a preference for men over women and many people still not have the awareness of the gender equality. This paper analyses questionnaire data on the intergenerational transmission of gender equality awareness in families, based on exposure theory and the multi-layered theory of gender equality awareness. The study found that fathers and mothers have different influences on their children's awareness of gender equality, and that the influence of mothers is greater than that of fathers. The higher the level of education of the mother, the greater the awareness of gender equality of the children. The above findings suggest that guaranteeing women's right to higher education and eliminating gender-based inequalities in educational opportunities can, to a certain extent, raise people's awareness of gender equality.

Keywords: gender equality awareness, mothers, educational attainment, intergenerational influence

1. Introduction

The World Economic Forum (hereinafter referred to as WEF) released the 2022 Global Gender Equality Index, which shows that East Asia is not ranked well, and China is still ranked relatively low, although it has moved up 5 compared with last year to 102nd place. The report predicts that it will be at least 132 years before the world fully achieves gender equality.

Data from the fourth China Women's Social Status Survey conducted by the All-China Women's Federation and the National Bureau of Statistics in 2020 indicate that women's education levels have increased significantly in the last decade and that gender equality perceptions have increased. Based on existing studies, we can find that women's education level has different effects on women's identity and willingness to have children, childcare division of labor, income level, social status, children's years of education, and physical health. Changes in women's gender perceptions have

benefited more from the increase in women's educational attainment as a result of the modernization of society [1].

In view of this, this paper argues that the level of education of mothers has an impact on the gender equality awareness of their children. This paper will further investigate the influence of mothers' high or low education level on their children's awareness of gender equality through data related to the questionnaire on the intergenerational transmission of gender equality awareness in the family.

2. Literature Review

Gender equality awareness mainly refers to respect for the equal rights of men and women in all areas and aspects of social, family and personal life. It recognizes that men and women should have equal opportunities to enjoy political, economic, social, cultural and health resources.

An analysis of the literature shows that scholars have conducted many theoretical explorations and practices on "gender equality awareness" and related issues. Early researchers focused more on equal opportunities for adult men and women in labor, education, politics, and monogamous marriage. With the development and change of social and economic systems, the emphasis on gender equality awareness has gradually increased, and the direction of gender equality awareness research has gradually shifted from the previous aspects of equal opportunities for both sexes in labor, education, and politics to the influencing factors and methods of cultivating gender equality awareness [2].

Studies based on intergenerational perspectives have already shown that there is a gender division of labor difference between parents in the family parenting process, and this difference is increasing [3]. Mothers invest more cultural resources and are directly involved in the education of their children. Highly educated mothers generally have their good educational methods in terms of material giving, psychological counseling, and inculcation of ideological and moral concepts [4]. However, previous studies on gender equality awareness lack specific research on the influence of mothers' education level on their children's gender equality awareness.

In "A Gender Comparative Study on Gender Equality Consciousness - A Case Study of Southern Fujian Province", Bao-Rong Lin and Wen-Zhen Ye proposed a multi-layer theory on gender equality consciousness and pointed out that the mother's education level among family factors is the independent variable that has a significant effect on gender equality consciousness of women in Southern Fujian [2]. However, because the study population is only women in southern Fujian, China, the study is relatively single and has certain limitations. Therefore, this study plans to conduct an in-depth study on the question of how mothers' educational attainment affects children's gender equality awareness based on exposure theory and the multilayer theory of gender equality awareness proposed by Bao-Rong Lin and Wen-Zhen Ye.

3. Theoretical Analysis and Research Hypothesis

3.1. Multi-level Theory of Gender Equality Consciousness

The multi-level theory of gender equality consciousness proposed by Baorong Lin and Wenzhen Ye believes that gender equality consciousness mainly depends on factors related to the individual, family and society at three levels. From the family level, the more educated the mother is and the higher the economic level of the family of origin, the more likely the individual has gender equality consciousness [2].

3.2. Exposure Theory

Exposure theory corresponds to the cultural perspective of attitude development research and is also known as exposure theory, learning theory, or socialization theory. This theory suggests that

traditional gender role attitudes are rooted in stereotypes about the abilities and temperaments of both genders and that equal gender role attitudes will be promoted when individuals are exposed to situations that conform to the ideals of gender equality [5, 6]. Exposure can take the form of, but is not limited to, educational, social, or other types of personal experiences. Due to differences in the early socialization processes of the sexes, the dominance of patriarchy may cause men to lack attention to gender inequality issues [7]. Mothers, on the other hand, may have already experienced gender-induced inequality during their formative years [8], and therefore may invest more energy in the development of gender equality awareness in their children.

Therefore, this paper proposes the following hypotheses based on the above theories. Fathers and mothers have different influences on their children's awareness of gender equality, and the influence of mothers is greater than that of fathers. The higher the education level of mothers, the stronger the gender equality awareness of children.

4. Study Design

4.1. Data Source

The data of this paper comes from the online questionnaire. A total of 106 questionnaires were distributed, and a total of 105 valid questionnaires were collected, with a recovery rate of 99%, which proves that this survey is real and effective, and the research results are highly researchable.

The questionnaire mainly includes the following aspects: basic information of the research subjects: gender, age, education, family structure, and whether they think they have gender equality awareness. Judgment on the gender equality consciousness of the research subjects through scale questions, and basic information on the people who have the most influence on their gender equality consciousness among family members.

4.2. Analysis of Data Results

The questionnaires were distributed randomly, and the analysis of the feedback from the questionnaires showed that the ratio of men to women among the respondents was basically equal. 105 valid questionnaires had 54 men and 53 women. Among them, 60% were between 18-25 years old, 21.9% were between 26-35 years old, 16.2% were between 36-45 years old, and 1.9% were over 45 years old.

In response to the question about the influence of family members on gender equality awareness, a total of 70 people chose their parents as the family members who have the most influence on them, accounting for 66.7% of the total survey respondents. This means that parents have a greater influence on their children's awareness of gender equality.

Among the 70 people who chose their parents as the family members who have the greatest influence on them, 57.1% thought their mothers had more influence on them than their fathers, and 42.9% thought their fathers had more influence on them than their mothers. Fifty-five percent of those who considered their mothers to have a greater influence on them were female and 45% were male males, while 43.3% of those who considered their fathers to have a greater influence on them were female and 56.7% were difficult. Based on this data it is clear that mothers have a greater influence on their children's awareness of gender equality than fathers, but the degree of influence varies by gender.

Previous studies have shown that the higher the mother's education level the more equal the gender role division perceptions in the family tend to be and the stronger the gender equality perceptions of children in the family [9]. The results of the questionnaire show that children who are more influenced by their mothers tend to have a stronger sense of gender equality. Ten percent of the respondents who chose mothers as more influential had a maximum education of high school or less, 20% had a

specialist, 27.5% had a bachelor's degree, 27.5% had a master's degree, and 15% had a Ph.D. The division of labor between parents in the family tends to be more equal type as the mother's education increases, and the mother also has a higher awareness of gender equality. Women are the main demonstrators of interpersonal culture in the family, and the development of a personality as well as cognition mainly comes from the influence of the mother [10], so it can be seen that the more educated mothers have a more equal gender equality awareness in the division of labor in the family, and also have an impact on the gender equality awareness of their children.

5. Conclusions

Based on the exposure theory and the multi-level theory of gender equality awareness proposed by Bao-Rong Lin and Wen-Zhen Ye, this study analyzed the questionnaire results and came to the following conclusions. Fathers and mothers have different influences on their children's gender equality consciousness, and the influence of mothers is greater than that of fathers. The higher the mother's education level is, the stronger the children's awareness of gender equality is.

There are still three limitations of this study as follows. First, because of the limited source of data acquisition, the age of the research subjects in this paper is mainly between 18-25 years old, so it is impossible to exclude that there are differences in people's understanding of the factors influencing their awareness of gender equality at different ages. Because of the changing times, people's education level has generally increased, so people's education level may be influenced by the background of the times. Future research can follow the analysis strategy of this paper and combine different backgrounds of the times to further understand the influence of mothers' education level on their children's awareness of gender equality. Third, this study focuses on China, and the social background and culture of different countries may have an impact on the findings of this paper. Therefore, future researchers can collect samples from different countries based on this study to verify the relationship between mothers' education level and children's awareness of gender equality.

References

- [1] Liu Aiyu, Tong Xin. *The current situation of gender perception and its influencing factors - based on the third national survey on the status of women*[J]. *China Social Science*, 2014(02): 116-129+206-207.
- [2] Lin Baorong, Ye Wenzhen. *A comparative study of gender equality consciousness among men and women: the case of Fujian Minnan region*[J]. *Journal of the Party School of Fujian Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China*, 2015(11): 66-73. DOI: 10.15993/j.cnki.cn35-1198/c.2015.11.011.
- [3] Zhu B, Shang Qiaoqiong. *Synergistic effects of parental influence and gender differences in intergenerational transmission of education*[J]. *Youth Studies*, 2022, No. 446(05): 14-31+94.
- [4] Xu Qi. *The impact of women's education on the division of childcare: An empirical study based on data from the Third China Women's Social Status Survey*[J]. *Women's Studies Series*, 2021, No. 168(06): 58-71.
- [5] Kong Zeyu. *The influence of children's gender on parents' gender role attitudes--an empirical analysis based on CGSS 2017*[J]. *Journal of Taiyuan College (Social Science Edition)*, 2023, 24(01): 16-28. DOI: 10.13710/j.cnki.cn14-1294/g.2023.01.011.
- [6] Catherine I. Bolzendahl, Daniel J. Myers. *Feminist Attitudes and Support for Gender Equality: Opinion Change in Women and Men, 1974-1998*[J]. *Social Forces*, 2004, 83(2).
- [7] WARNER R L. *Does the Sex of Your Children Matter? Support for Feminism among Women and Men in the United States and Canada*[J]. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 1991(4): 1051-1-56.
- [8] Rebecca L. Warner, Brent S. Steel. *Child Rearing as a Mechanism for Social Change: The Relationship of Child Gender to Parents' Commitment to Gender Equity*[J]. *Gender and Society*, 1999, 13(4).
- [9] He Jianhua, Wu Xiwei. *A study on Chinese children's gender role perceptions and their gender differences*[J]. *Journal of Shandong Women's College*, 2014, No. 113(01): 20-32.
- [10] Hu Jingchao, Zhang Hao. *On the role of women in building family culture*[J]. *Industry and Technology Forum*, 2020, 19(22): 71-72. [10] WARNER R L. *Does the Sex of Your Children Matter? Support for Feminism among Women and Men in the United States and Canada*[J]. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 1991(4): 1051-1-56.