

Gender Bias in Household Expenditure on Education: An Empirical Study

Amit K. Bhandari

Household spending on education depends on the parent's preference for equality among children, which affects how the resources are allocated for children's education with different expected returns. This study examines the factors underlying household decisions to spend on children's education and compares the magnitude of gender disparity in education expenditure in rural areas of West Bengal state of India. The study found a pro-male bias in household spending on education. The results of this study show that household income is the key to determining the level of household expenditure on education. Level of education attained by parents, household size, mothers' education strongly influence household spending on education. Contrary to expectations, women's participation in labour force has a negative influence on girls' education expenditure. Decomposing the spending gap in education reveals that the difference in human capital endowment explains only a minuscule percentage of gaps in spending, and the almost entire portion of the gap is due to discriminatory behaviour of parents.

I Introduction

Education is considered as an investment in the future of society and economies. The household decision to invest in education depends on its expected benefits (Kambhampati 2008). The rate of return to education is gender-specific. The amount of investment depends on the parent's preference for equality among children, which affects how the investment in education is allocated for children. The difference exists in parental preference for intra-household equality between sons and daughters. Discrimination in household spending on education that manifests in how parents discriminate between boys and girls within a household.

In terms of education expenditure, girls are less favoured than boys. Indian parents treat the male child differently than girls in providing education. They are less likely to educate girls than boys and far more likely to pull out girls from schools to involve them in household work, get married early or due to fear of violence. There are two approaches to identifying gender bias in the allocation of

Amit K. Bhandari, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Rishi Bankim Chandra, Evening College, Naihati 743165, West Bengal, Email: amit.kumar.bhandari@gmail.com

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