Research on the Influence of Education on Improving the Social Justice of Residents - Empirical Data Based on Chinese General Social Survey 2015

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Abstract: This study used data from the Chinese General Social Survey (2015) to analyze the impact of education on individual social justice. The study found that: (1) The proportion of the sample data that considered the society to be fairer or very fair was 49.84%, while the proportion that felt more unfair or very unfair was 27.84%; (2) the social justice of residents in the sample data has differences in regions, education, gender, ethnicity, and census; and (3) education has a significant positive effect on social justice. Improving the level of education can increase residents' sense of social justice.

Keywords: education; social justice; multiple linear regression

0 Research background and issues

Fairness is an important goal pursued by human society[1], and social justice is an emotional experience generated by citizens on the basis of value judgment[2]. It can not only promote the improvement of production efficiency but also contribute to the improvement of residents' happiness[3]. However, with the deepening of China's reform and opening up and the continuous development of the economy, the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing. In 2017, China's Gini coefficient is about 0.467, far exceeding the international warning line of 0.4[4]. There are only 2 years left to complete the goal of building a well-off society in 2020. To reduce the Engel coefficient to below 40% is one of its basic goals. To achieve common development and common prosperity, we must narrow the development gap and achieve social equity. However, as an important means of investing in human capital today, education has its political, economic, and cultural functions. Does the improvement of educational, cultural literacy help to improve the sense of social justice of residents? Current researchers have debated this issue. For example, some studies have found that the higher the level of education, the stronger the sense of social justice[5]. Some studies also believe that the higher the level of education, the weaker the sense of social justice[6]. However, there is still a lack of empirical research on how the current Chinese residents feel about social justice and whether education can improve residents' sense of social justice.

Therefore, the questions in this study are: (1) What is the current state of social justice among Chinese residents? (2) Does education have a significant impact on the sense of social justice of residents?

1 Research samples and variables

1.1 Research sample

The data sample for this study was derived from the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), a public data resource collected by the People's University of China. This study uses cross-sectional data for 2015. The 2015 CGSS project survey covers 478 villages in 28 provinces/cities/autonomous regions across the country. According to statistics, 10,968 valid questionnaires were completed. Among them, urban population accounted for 58.99%; rural population accounted for 41.01%, male accounted for 46.81%, and female

accounted for 53.19%, eastern, central, and western regions accounted for 49.62%, 25.62%, and 24.76%, respectively.

1.2 Variable description

The dependent variable of this paper is the sense of social justice of residents, which is measured by "very unfair" to "very fair" 5-point integration method; the independent variable is the education level of the residents. It takes two forms, one is the age of education of the residents, which is a numerical variable, and the other is a dummy variable with a graduate degree; control variables include individual factors (gender, age, ethnicity, belief, political appearance, economic income, and physical condition), family factors (registered residence, marital status, and number of children), and social factors (area). The specific variables are described in Table 1.

2 Research methods and results

2.1 Descriptive analysis

2.1.1 Overall situation

As can be seen from Table 2, among the 10,904 observations of the effective investigation, 617 people think that the society is very unfair, 2,419 people think it is more unfair, 2,433 people remain neutral, 5,067

people think it is fairer, and 368 people think it is very fair, accounting for 5.66%, 22.18%, 22.31%, 46.47%, and 3.37% of the total sample, respectively. Overall, nearly half of the sample residents believe that society is fairer or very fair, but the proportion of people who feel unfair or very unfair is also 27.84%, while 22.31% of residents are neutral.

2.1.2 Regional and educational level status

As can be seen from Figure 1, on the one hand, from the educational level, the higher the degree of education, the higher the score of social justice. The average score of social justice for residents with junior high school education and above is 3.13, while the average social justice score for residents with high school education and above is 3.14, both of which are lower than the average score of 3.17 for residents with social education and above. On the other hand, from the perspective of regional distribution, social justice in the eastern region has the highest score, followed by the middle and the lowest in the west. The average score of social justice of the western provinces is 3.15. The average score of social justice of the central provinces is 3.12, which is also much lower than the average score of 3.28 in the eastern provinces.

2.1.3 Gender, ethnicity, and census status

As can be seen from Figure 2, first of all, from the perspective of gender, the average score of male

Table 1: Variable description

Variable	Mean	Min	Max	Standard deviation	n
Social justice (1=Min;5=Max)	3.197	1	5	1.005	10,904
Years of education (Unit: Year)	8.618	0	19	4.645	10,939
High school graduation (0=No; 1=Yes)	0.333	0	1	0.471	10,968
College graduation (0=No; 1=Yes)	0.164	0	1	0.371	10,968
Area (1=East;2=Central;3=West)	1.751	1	3	0.826	10,968
Urban residence (0=No; 1=Yes)	0.590	0	1	0.492	10,968
Male (0=No;1=Yes)	0.468	0	1	0.499	10,968
Age (Unit: Year old)	50.397	18	95	16.898	10,968
Han nationality (0=No;1=Yes)	0.921	0	1	0.27	10,968
Believe in religion (0=No;1=Yes)	0.121	0	1	0.326	10,968
A member of the CPC (0=No;1=Yes)	0.103	0	1	0.304	10,968
First married and have a spouse (0= 否 1= 是)	0.756	0	1	0.43	10,968
Personal annual occupational income (Unit: Ten thousand) yuan	2.355	0	500	7.287	10,094
Physical health (1=Min;5=Max)	3.608	1	5	1.075	10,961
Number of sons (Unit: Number)	0.938	0	8	0.887	10,954
Number of daughters (Unit: Number)	0.794	0	10	0.927	10,952

Table 2. Residents' sense of social justice

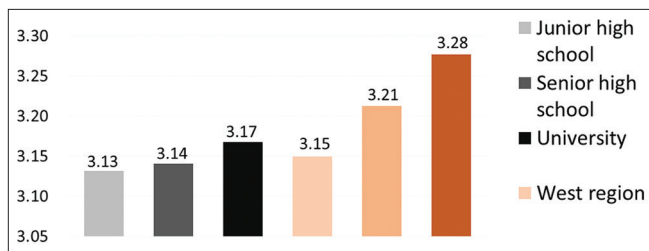| Subjective sense of fairness	n (%)	Cumulative (%)
Very unfair	617 (5.66)	5.66
More unfair	2,419 (22.18)	27.84
Neutral	2,433 (22.31)	50.16
Fairer	5,067 (46.47)	96.63
Very fair	368 (3.37)	100

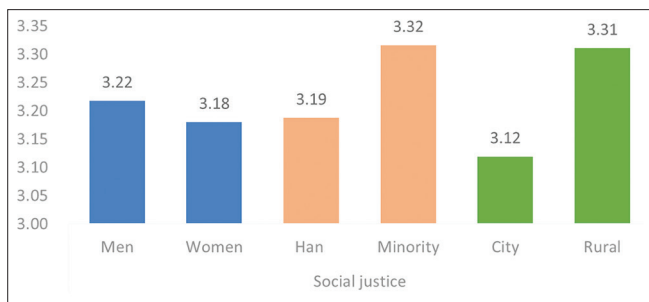**Figure 1.** Residents' sense of social justice

Figure 2. Residents' sense of social justice

social justice is 3.22, while the female is 3.18. Men feel socially fairer than women. Second, from the perspective of ethnic groups, the average score of the sense of social justice of the Han nationality is 3.19, while the score of the sense of social justice of ethnic minorities is 3.32. Minority people feel socially fair compared to Han. Third, from the perspective of the census, the average score of the social justice of urban residents is 3.12, while the score of the social justice of rural residents is 3.31. Rural residents feel socially fair compared with urban residents.

2.2 Regression analysis

In this study, OLS multiple linear regression analysis was used to analyze the direct influence of education on social justice. Therefore, the five-point score of social justice was standardized. Considering the many factors affecting social justice, according to previous research, it controls other major factors besides education, including personal factors (gender, age, ethnicity, belief, political appearance, economic income, and physical condition), family factors (census, marital status, and number of children), and social factors (area). The regression model is as follows:

$$Y=\alpha+\beta X+\gamma Con+\varepsilon$$

Among them, γ is the dependent variable, that is, the result variable, which is the standard of social justice of the residents; X is the independent variable, that is, the explanatory variable, that is, the educational level, there are two forms, one is the years of education, the other is a dichotomous variable of the level of education; Con is a control variable, including the gender, age, and ethnicity of the residents; β is the regression coefficient of education level; γ is the regression coefficients of various control variables; α is intercept term, and ε is error term.

The regression results are shown in Table 3, education has a significant positive effect on the residents' sense of social justice. Each year of improvement in education will help to increase the standard score of 0.5% of social equity, and as the level of education increases, the impact will be more obvious. Among them, high school education can increase the standard score of 5.4% of social justice, while the university education can improve the standard score of 11.6% of social justice.

In addition, among the control variables, the region, census, age, age square, ethnicity, religious belief, political appearance, personal income, physical health status, and the number of daughters also have a significant impact on social justice. Among them, the eastern region, rural area, low age, ethnic minorities, non-religious beliefs, members of the Communist Party of China, high income, good health, and many daughters have positive and significant positive effects on social justice.

3 Research conclusions and discussion

3.1 Conclusions

First, the current sense of social justice among Chinese residents is not high. According to the sample data, only 49.84% of the residents think that the current society is fairer or very fair, less than half of the sample data. Even 22.18% of the residents feel that the society is more unfair and 5.66% of the residents think that the current society is very unfair. In some respects, this can also reflect the current imbalance in China's economic and social development. In particular, there is still a certain gap between the living conditions and fairness of the residents in the poor areas of the west and the developed areas in the east.

Table 3. Multiple linear regression analysis

Variable	Model (1)	Model (2)	Model (3)
	Social justice		
Years of schooling	0.005* (1.79)		
High school graduation		0.054** (2.17)	
University graduation			0.116*** (3.77)
Area	0.039*** (3.04)	0.036*** (2.83)	0.037*** (2.88)
Census	−0.186*** (−8.23)	−0.184*** (−8.24)	−0.186*** (−8.50)
Gender	0.001 (0.03)	0.004 (0.18)	0.007 (0.32)
Age	−0.013*** (−3.60)	−0.013*** (−3.53)	−0.011*** (−3.11)
Square of age	0.000*** (6.62)	0.000*** (6.45)	0.000*** (6.10)
Nationality	−0.115*** (−2.98)	−0.117*** (−3.03)	−0.115*** (−2.99)
Faith	−0.061* (−1.94)	−0.065** (−2.09)	−0.065** (−2.09)
Political status	0.064* (1.86)	0.059* (1.74)	0.041 (1.19)
Marital status	−0.006 (−0.23)	−0.004 (−0.17)	−0.002 (−0.09)
Personal income	0.003**	0.003**	0.002*
	(2.18)	(2.13)	(1.80)
Physical conditions	0.084*** (8.42)	0.084*** (8.47)	0.085*** (8.56)
Number of sons	−0.010 (−0.74)	−0.009 (−0.63)	−0.008 (−0.60)
Number of daughters	0.026** (2.10)	0.026** (2.15)	0.027** (2.20)
Constant term	−0.211* (−1.85)	−0.181* (−1.66)	−0.228** (−2.08)
n	10003	10025	10025

t statistics in parentheses, *$P<0.10$, **$P<0.05$, ***$P<0.01$

Second, there are differences in the social justice of residents in the sample, such as region, education, gender, ethnicity, and census. The eastern region has a higher sense of social justice than the western region. University graduates have a higher sense of social justice than junior high school graduates. Men have a higher sense of social justice than women. Ethnic minorities have a higher sense of social justice than Hans. Rural area is more socially fair than an urban area high. The performance of these characteristics is closely related to China's current policy and economic development.

Third, education has a positive effect on the sense of social justice of residents. Each increase in the number of years of education helps to increase the standard score of 0.5% of social justice. The influence of high school education and university education on social justice is 5.4% and 11.6% standard scores, respectively, which indicates that with the improvement of education level, its influence effect also increases. In addition, through other control variables, we can find that residents living in eastern China, with census as a rural area, ethnic minorities, non-religious CCP members, better health, higher incomes, and more daughters, are also it is easy to have a high sense of social justice.

3.2 Discussion

This study used a multiple linear regression model and added a large number of control variables, but there are still many variables that are not controlled. The direct impact of education on residents' sense of social justice needs further exploration. However, the impact of education on residents' sense of social justice, whether it is direct or indirect, should increase the level of education of residents, increase their human capital, and promote further fairness in society. In addition, we also found that in addition to personal income and physical health have a positive impact on social justice, families with more daughters will feel social justice, which is related to China's traditional social concept. In the traditional Chinese concept of "heavy patriarchal," the current gender ratio in China is unbalanced. The more the number of sons, the more often the family has to pay economic pressure because buying a house, buying a car, getting married, etc., are basically the responsibility of the man. On the contrary, families with a large number of daughters will have

much less economic pressure, which will also affect their subjective well-being and social justice.

Although the social justice of residents in the sample data differs in regions, education, gender, ethnicity, and census, it is still unbalanced and uneven. In short, the Chinese economy has now entered the "new normal," and the government is also making continuous reforms to achieve a well-off society in an all-around way. I believe that in future China, economic development will be more balanced, the income gap of the people will continue to shrink, and the sense of social justice among residents will become higher and higher.

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