

Research on Employment Discrimination Against Suburban Rural Youth in the Process of Urbanization: A Case Study of Hebei Province

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Abstract: With the acceleration of urbanization, the employment issues of suburban rural youth have become increasingly prominent. This study, using Hebei Province as an example, explores the discrimination faced by suburban rural youth in the employment process within the urbanization context through a questionnaire survey and empirical analysis. The study finds that suburban rural youth generally face discrimination in terms of education, household registration, and social relations during their job search, which not only affects their employment quality but also hinders rural economic development. The study further analyzes the main factors contributing to employment discrimination and proposes countermeasures at the levels of government, enterprises, social organizations, and the rural youth themselves, aiming to provide theoretical references for policymakers and related organizations.

Keywords: Urbanization process; Suburban rural youth; Employment discrimination; Hebei Province; Empirical analysis

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1. Introduction

Urbanization is an inevitable trend in modern society's development, driving rapid economic growth and bringing profound changes to social structures and employment patterns. However, with the acceleration of urbanization, suburban rural youth face numerous challenges in the job market. As a unique group located at the junction of urban and rural areas, they often encounter discrimination in education, household registration, and social relations during the job search process. Such employment discrimination not only impacts the personal development of rural youth but also negatively affects the coordinated development of urban and rural economies and social equity. Therefore, studying the current status and causes of employment discrimination against suburban rural youth in the process of urbanization is of significant theoretical and practical importance. Currently, scholars both domestically and internationally have conducted extensive research on employment

discrimination, covering the types of discrimination, the mechanisms behind it, and its impact on the labor market. However, there is relatively little research focusing on the employment discrimination of suburban rural youth, especially the in-depth analysis of this specific group in the context of urbanization. As one of the provinces with rapid urbanization in China, Hebei's suburban rural youth employment issues are typical. Therefore, using Hebei Province as a case study to examine the employment discrimination status of suburban rural youth can provide valuable insights for other regions. This study aims to explore the discrimination faced by suburban rural youth in Hebei Province during the employment process through a questionnaire survey and empirical analysis. It will also analyze the main causes of employment discrimination and propose corresponding countermeasures and suggestions from four levels: government, enterprises, social organizations, and individuals^[1].

2. Definition of employment discrimination and research status

Employment discrimination refers to the unfair treatment of job seekers or employees during the process of job searching, hiring, and promotion based on non-occupational factors such as race, gender, age, religion, or disability. **Figure 1** shows common types of discrimination at work, including racial, gender, age, religious, and disability discrimination. These forms of discrimination may manifest as biases in the hiring process, unequal treatment in career development, and exclusion of certain groups in the work environment^[2].

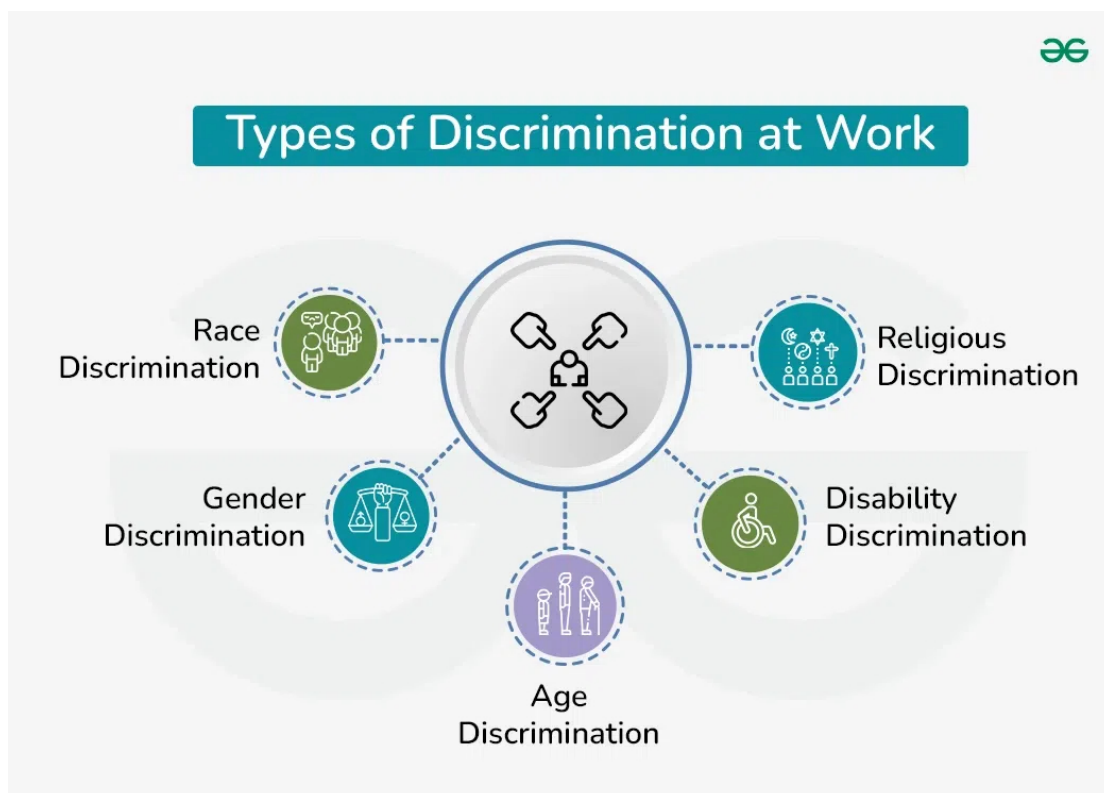


Figure 1. Types of discrimination at work.

In both domestic and international research, employment discrimination has been a widely discussed field. International scholars mainly focus on racial, gender, and age discrimination. Becker's theory of

discrimination suggests that employers may differentiate against specific groups based on personal biases or stereotypes, which not only affects individual employment opportunities but also exacerbates inequality in the labor market. Domestic research mainly concentrates on gender and household registration discrimination. Gender discrimination is prevalent in recruitment, salary, and career development, with women often being at a disadvantage in the job market. Household registration discrimination manifests primarily in the preferential treatment of urban household registration holders in employment, while rural household registration holders, especially those from suburban rural areas, often face unfair treatment in the job search process. Additionally, age discrimination is more pronounced in certain industries, where a job seeker's age often becomes a limiting factor for recruiters. There has been relatively little research on employment discrimination against suburban rural youth. With the acceleration of urbanization, the discrimination problem faced by suburban rural youth in employment is becoming increasingly serious. They are not only restricted in terms of education and household registration but may also be excluded from quality employment opportunities due to a lack of social relationship resources. The various types of employment discrimination shown in **Figure 1** are also likely to occur in the employment process of suburban rural youth, further exacerbating their disadvantaged position in the job market. Currently, research on employment discrimination mainly focuses on its types, manifestations, and impacts on the labor market. However, in-depth research on employment discrimination against suburban rural youth in the context of urbanization is still insufficient. Especially in the specific region of Hebei Province, the current status, causes, and countermeasures of employment discrimination against suburban rural youth require further exploration. This study aims to fill this research gap by investigating and analyzing employment discrimination against suburban rural youth in Hebei Province, providing a theoretical basis for relevant policy-making and proposing suggestions to improve the employment situation of this group.

3. Research design

3.1. Research subjects and data sources

The subjects of this study are suburban rural youth in Hebei Province, with a focus on the discrimination they face in the employment process. To comprehensively understand and analyze the employment status of this group, suburban rural areas of cities such as Shijiazhuang, Baoding, Handan, and Langfang in Hebei Province were chosen as the survey regions. These areas are representative and can reflect the employment characteristics of suburban rural youth in the process of urbanization. The data sources mainly include the following aspects, where this study designed a questionnaire on employment discrimination, covering respondents' basic information, job-seeking experiences, perceptions of employment discrimination, and employment outcomes. The questionnaire was distributed to suburban rural youth in the aforementioned cities, with an age range of 18–35 years. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed, and 450 valid responses were collected, resulting in a 90% effective response rate. Official data were collected from the “Hebei Provincial Statistical Yearbook” and the “Hebei Provincial Urban and Rural Employment Statistical Report” published by the Hebei Provincial Bureau of Statistics. This data helps understand the overall employment status and trends of suburban rural youth in the process of urbanization in Hebei Province. To gain an in-depth understanding of the practical issues suburban rural youth encounter in the employment process, 10 in-depth interviews were conducted. The interviewees included suburban rural youth, human resources managers of employers, and staff from government employment service departments. Research literature on employment discrimination, urbanization,

and rural youth employment from both domestic and international sources was collected to provide a theoretical foundation and reference for this study ^[2]. The specific data sources are summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Summary of data sources for employment discrimination study

Data source	Content	Quantity (times)
Questionnaire data	Employment status and discrimination perceptions of suburban rural youth	450 valid questionnaires
Government Statistical data	“Hebei Provincial Statistical Yearbook,” “Hebei Provincial Urban and Rural Employment Statistical Report”	-
In-depth interview data	Suburban rural youth, employers, government staff	10 interviews
Literature data	Relevant research literature from both domestic and international sources	Over 50 articles

Through a comprehensive analysis of these data, this study aims to systematically explore the current status, causes, and coping strategies of employment discrimination among suburban rural youth in Hebei Province, providing a scientific basis for relevant policy-making ^[3].

3.2. Questionnaire design

To gain an in-depth understanding of the discrimination faced by suburban rural youth in Hebei Province during the employment process, this study designed a structured questionnaire, consisting of four parts: basic information, job-seeking experiences, perceptions of employment discrimination, and employment outcomes. The questionnaire was revised multiple times and reviewed by experts in the relevant field to ensure its scientific rigor and validity. Firstly, the basic information section mainly collects respondents’ demographic characteristics, including gender, age, education level, marital status, household registration type, and family economic status. This information helps analyze the degree and type of discrimination experienced by rural youth with different characteristics in the employment process, providing basic data for further research on the influencing factors of employment discrimination.

The second part is job-seeking experiences, which investigates the respondents’ actual experiences in the job search process, including job-seeking channels, the number of positions applied for, the number of interviews, and whether they were hired. These questions aim to understand the performance of suburban rural youth in the job market and the practical challenges they face during the job search. For example, by understanding the respondents’ job-seeking channels, the impact of different channels such as online recruitment and job fairs on the employment of suburban rural youth can be analyzed. Perceptions of employment discrimination form the core part of the questionnaire, aiming to assess the types and degrees of discrimination perceived by respondents in the job-seeking and employment process. Based on the common types of discrimination at work shown in **Figure 1**, this section sets up specific questions targeting various types of discrimination, such as racial, gender, age, religion, disability, education, and household registration ^[4]. For instance, the questionnaire asks respondents whether they were rejected due to household registration or education reasons or if they felt gender or age discrimination at work. Each question is measured using a Likert five-point scale, ranging from “not at all” to “very serious,” to assess the respondents’ perceptions of different types of discrimination ^[5]. This design helps quantify the extent of employment discrimination and identify the most common and severe types of discrimination among suburban rural youth.

Finally, the employment outcomes section mainly focuses on the respondents’ final outcomes in

the employment process, including current employment status, job satisfaction, salary level, and career development. This information will help analyze the impact of employment discrimination on the employment quality of suburban rural youth and its potential impact on career development and job satisfaction. By integrating these four sections, the questionnaire aims to systematically understand the discrimination faced by suburban rural youth in Hebei Province during the employment process. Through quantitative analysis of the data, the study aims to provide a scientific basis for relevant policy-making [6].

3.3. Data analysis methods

To deeply explore the discrimination faced by suburban rural youth in Hebei Province during the employment process, this study adopts various data analysis methods, including descriptive statistical analysis, factor analysis, and multiple regression analysis, to ensure a comprehensive understanding and accurate interpretation of the data. Firstly, descriptive statistical analysis will be used for the preliminary analysis of the questionnaire data, including indicators such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. By conducting descriptive statistics on respondents' basic information, job-seeking experiences, and perceptions of employment discrimination, the overall characteristics of suburban rural youth in the job market and the main types of discrimination they face during the job search can be understood [7]. Descriptive statistics are shown in Formula 1 and 2:

$$\text{Mean } (\mu) = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n X_i}{n} \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Standard deviation } (\sigma) = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (X_i - \mu)^2}{n}} \quad (2)$$

Where X_i represents the i -th sample value, and n represents the number of samples. Next, factor analysis will be used to identify potential factors in perceptions of employment discrimination. By conducting factor analysis on the questionnaire data regarding perceptions of employment discrimination, the main dimensions affecting the perceptions of employment discrimination among suburban rural youth can be extracted, providing a basis for subsequent multiple regression analysis. Factor analysis is shown in Formula 3:

$$X_i = \lambda_{i1}F_1 + \lambda_{i2}F_2 + \dots + \lambda_{im}F_m + \epsilon_i \quad (3)$$

Where X_i represents the observed variable, λ_{ij} represents the factor loading, F_j represents the common factor, and ϵ_i represents the unique factor. Finally, multiple regression analysis will be used to explore the impact of perceptions of employment discrimination on employment outcomes. Taking the respondents' employment outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, salary level) as dependent variables and different dimensions of perceptions of employment discrimination as independent variables, a multiple regression model will be constructed to analyze the impact of employment discrimination on the employment quality of suburban rural youth. The basic form of the multiple regression analysis model is shown in Formula 4:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \dots + \beta_nX_n + \epsilon \quad (4)$$

Where Y represents the dependent variable (e.g., job satisfaction, salary level), X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n represent the independent variables (different dimensions of perceptions of employment discrimination), β_0 represents the intercept, $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_n$ represent the regression coefficients, and ϵ represents the random error term. Through the above analysis methods, this study can comprehensively reveal the discrimination problems faced by suburban rural

youth in Hebei Province during the employment process and quantify the impact of employment discrimination on their employment outcomes. This will provide strong theoretical support for relevant policy-making and the improvement of the employment environment for rural youth ^[7].

4. Analysis of employment discrimination among suburban rural youth in Hebei Province

This section aims to delve into the employment discrimination faced by suburban rural youth in Hebei Province through questionnaire surveys and data analysis, revealing the prevalence and impact of different types of employment discrimination within this group. To obtain comprehensive data support, we conducted a survey of 450 suburban rural youths in areas such as Shijiazhuang, Baoding, Handan, and Langfang in Hebei Province, followed by a detailed data analysis. In the survey process, we distributed 500 questionnaires and collected 450 valid responses. The survey participants were suburban rural youth aged 18–35, including both males and females, with educational levels ranging from junior high school to undergraduate. The questionnaire collected data on the respondents’ basic information, job-seeking experiences, perceptions of employment discrimination, and employment outcomes. Before data analysis, the questionnaire data were preprocessed, including handling missing values, detecting outliers, and data standardization. Questionnaires with a high proportion of missing values were excluded to ensure data quality. A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted on the perceptions of employment discrimination data, calculating metrics such as mean and standard deviation to gain an initial understanding of the extent of different types of discrimination experienced by respondents during the job search process. Factor analysis was then performed on the perceptions of employment discrimination data to identify the main dimensions affecting perceptions of employment discrimination, such as education discrimination, household registration discrimination, and gender discrimination. A multiple regression model was constructed, with different dimensions of perceptions of employment discrimination as independent variables and employment outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, salary level) as dependent variables, to analyze the impact of employment discrimination on employment outcomes.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of perceptions of employment discrimination

Type of discrimination	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)
Education discrimination	3.8	0.95
Household registration discrimination	4.2	0.85
Gender discrimination	3.5	1.02
Age discrimination	3.3	0.89
Relationship discrimination	3.9	1.10

As shown in **Table 2**, household registration discrimination (mean = 4.2) is the most prevalent among suburban rural youth, followed by relationship discrimination (mean = 3.9) and education discrimination (mean = 3.8). This indicates that in the job-seeking process, suburban rural youth often face significant employment discrimination due to disadvantages in household registration and social relationships.

Table 3. Factor analysis results of perceptions of employment discrimination

Factor name	Variable loadings	Percentage of variance explained
Education and household registration discrimination	0.78	32%
Gender and age discrimination	0.72	25%
Relationship discrimination	0.68	18%
Overall perceptions of discrimination	0.82	25%

As shown in **Table 3**, the factor analysis results indicate that education and household registration discrimination are the main dimensions affecting perceptions of employment discrimination, explaining 32% of the variance. This suggests that education and household registration have the most significant impact on suburban rural youth in the employment process.

Table 4. Multiple regression analysis of employment discrimination on employment outcomes

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Regression coefficient (β)	Standard error	<i>P</i> -value
Job satisfaction	Household registration discrimination	-0.45	0.12	0.001
Job satisfaction	Education discrimination	-0.30	0.11	0.005
Salary level	Relationship discrimination	-0.40	0.13	0.002

As shown in **Table 4**, the multiple regression analysis results indicate that household registration discrimination and education discrimination have a significant negative impact on job satisfaction, with regression coefficients of -0.45 and -0.30, respectively, and *P*-values less than 0.01, indicating that their impact on job satisfaction is statistically significant. Additionally, relationship discrimination has a significant negative impact on salary level, with a regression coefficient of -0.40 and a *P*-value less than 0.01. This suggests that the discrimination experienced by suburban rural youth in the employment process not only affects their employment opportunities but also has an adverse impact on their job satisfaction and salary level. The experimental results show that suburban rural youth in Hebei Province generally face discrimination in terms of education, household registration, and relationships during the employment process. Household registration discrimination and education discrimination have the most significant negative impact on employment outcomes, especially on job satisfaction. Relationship discrimination significantly affects salary levels, indicating that in the current job market, social relationship resources to some extent determine employment quality. These findings provide important references for the government and society in formulating relevant employment policies, emphasizing the importance of eliminating employment discrimination to achieve a more equitable employment environment ^[8].

5. Countermeasures and recommendations

To address the employment discrimination faced by suburban rural youth in Hebei Province, the study recommends several countermeasures to improve their employment environment and quality. At the government level, enhancing laws and regulations on employment equality is crucial. Given the prevalence of household

registration and education discrimination, policies should mandate fair treatment of all job applicants regardless of background. Specifically, the government can introduce regulations prohibiting terms like “household registration restriction” in job ads and establish mechanisms for reporting discrimination. Strengthening vocational training and employment guidance is also vital. The government should offer targeted vocational skills training and entrepreneurship support to enhance the competitiveness of rural youth. Establishing a public employment service platform would provide more accessible and personalized employment opportunities for youth with lower household registration and education levels. Enterprises and social organizations also play a key role. Companies should establish fair recruitment standards, excluding irrelevant factors like household registration and education. They should foster a diverse and inclusive work environment through diversity management and employee care programs, reducing internal discrimination. Social organizations, such as trade unions and NGOs, can bridge gaps by providing employment support and rights protection ^[9]. They can organize vocational training, legal consultations, and actively monitor the job market for discriminatory practices, promoting awareness of employment equality. On a personal level, suburban rural youth must enhance their skills and market competitiveness. They should engage in vocational training and employment guidance provided by the government and social organizations, focusing on improving their professional skills and overall quality. Increasing legal awareness to protect their rights is equally important. Rural youth should expand job-seeking channels, using platforms like the Internet and social networks to find more opportunities. They should also focus on self-development, honing professional abilities and communication skills to present a proactive image in the job market. In the long term, addressing discrimination requires changes in education and social attitudes. The government and educational institutions should invest more in rural education to improve the overall education level of rural youth, narrowing the gap with urban youth and reducing discrimination in the job market. Society should advocate for employment equality, eliminate biases against rural youth, and foster a culture that respects labor and talent. Collaborative efforts will gradually improve the employment environment for suburban rural youth, leading to a more equitable and harmonious job market ^[10].

6. Conclusion

This study investigates employment discrimination against suburban rural youth in Hebei Province, highlighting education, household registration, and relationship discrimination as key obstacles. These forms of discrimination significantly affect job satisfaction and salary levels, indicating systemic issues in the job market that hinder the employment development of rural youth during urbanization. To address these issues, the study proposes multi-level countermeasures. The government should enhance laws and regulations to combat employment discrimination and provide targeted vocational training. Enterprises should foster inclusive recruitment practices, while social organizations can offer support and advocacy. Rural youth themselves should focus on improving their skills and rights awareness. While this study provides insights into the challenges faced by suburban rural youth, its findings are mainly based on data from Hebei Province, which may limit their applicability to other regions. Future research should include objective data from various areas to build a more comprehensive understanding. Joint efforts from governments, enterprises, social organizations, and individuals are crucial to reducing employment discrimination and promoting equal opportunities for rural and urban youth alike.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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