

GENDER DISPARITIES IN SCHOOLING, LEARNING, AND LABOR MARKET

OUTCOMES IN THE PHILIPPINES

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SUMMARY

The Philippine education system continues to face challenges in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education. Such challenges include persistently low learning outcomes and gender disparities in school participation, learning achievements, and employment outcomes.

To support school participation, the Philippine government implemented free public and subsidized private secondary schooling in 1988 and 1989 through two major policies, namely R.A. 6655 (free secondary education) and R.A. 6728 (subsidized private schooling). The first analytical chapter investigates the long-run impacts of these two policies on schooling attainment, employment, and income using a regression discontinuity design (RDD) approach. RDD deals with the endogeneity problem of schooling in the employment and income functions. In this chapter, we report three main findings. First, younger cohorts, who are policy beneficiaries, have significantly higher educational attainment relative to non-beneficiaries. This is true for both genders. Women also exhibit higher schooling attainment than men. Second, an additional year of schooling increases the likelihood of formal employment and reduces the probability of informal employment. Third, an additional year of schooling significantly increases individual income. The analysis by subgroup shows significant returns to education among women in the informal sector and men in the formal sector. This indicates that women have fewer opportunities to participate and thrive in the formal sector and choose to settle in informal, vulnerable occupations.

The second analytical chapter explores the learning outcomes of Filipino children. It investigates the differences in cognitive skills of girls and boys, the household-related determinants of exam performance, and the downstream effect of test scores on the proportion of working age individuals who are employed, formally employed, and informally employed. The study utilizes individual-level and provincial-level data. It also employs ordinary least squares (OLS) and two-stage least squares (2SLS) regressions. The chapter shows that girls outperform boys in learning achievements. Moreover, household characteristics affect test scores. In particular, electrification, land assets, and mother's education are positively correlated with student performance, while the opposite is true for household ownership of TV and radio. In terms of employment, higher test scores tend to increase the proportion of workers who are formally employed. The correlations, however, are higher among men than among women. Also, test scores only minimally decrease the proportion of informally employed women. In contrast, they significantly lower the proportion of informally employed men. This goes to show that women's better academic performance does not necessarily lead to more opportunities in the formal work sector and lower participation in informal occupations.

This dissertation points to the importance of implementing policies that address gender differences in schooling, learning, and labor market outcomes. It recommends a 5-point policy strategy. First, the government could improve schooling policies that target the most disadvantaged groups (i.e., boys from poorest rural areas). Second, it could establish interventions for women workers (i.e., gender employment quotas in the formal sector and social protection in the informal sector). Third, schools and teachers should take creative solutions to enhance learning. Fourth, the government could initiate infrastructure improvements and other institutional changes (i.e., electrification and educational TV shows). Finally, the study recommends a multi-sectoral approach in addressing gender-based issues in the education and labor market sectors.