

The Role of Non-cognitive Traits in Higher Education Achievement among Economically Disadvantaged Taiwanese Youths

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ABSTRACT

Despite the profound impact of poverty on individual development, empirical research on this issue has been scanty in Taiwan. Youths from economically disadvantaged families tend to have lower academic achievement than their peers from middle-class families. Yet recent studies have shown that positive non-cognitive traits often mediate and moderate the negative developmental outcomes among poor children. This study aims to use both the 7th and 9th grade samples (N=3,544) from the Taiwan Youth Project to examine how non-cognitive traits (using both subjective and objective measures) affect the higher education outcomes of youths who experienced economic hardship in adolescence. The results show that for both the younger and older cohorts, positive personality traits are positively associated with higher odds of entering a top university. However, limited evidence is found for the protective effects of personality. For the younger cohort, among youths who were exposed to late economic disadvantage, scoring high on the subjective positive self-image measure has a marginal effect on raising the likelihood of entering a good university. For the older cohort, being more conscientious has a marginal positive effect on increasing the likelihood of attending a top university for those who were exposed to chronic economic hardship, when compared to their peers who never experienced economic disadvantage. The implications of these findings and the impact of the 2000 educational reforms for the high school entrance requirements are discussed.

Key Words: poverty, economic disadvantage, youth development, non-cognitive traits, personality, resilience, educational achievement

人格特質對高等教育成就之影響： 臺灣經濟弱勢青少年的發展

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摘 要

儘管貧窮與經濟弱勢對個人發展有長遠的影響，臺灣在相關議題上累積的實證研究仍相當有限。文獻普遍顯示經濟弱勢青少年的教育成就較中產階級家庭青少年為低。然而，近年有關人類發展與社會不平等的研究顯示，正面人格特質對教育成就具正向影響，甚至可帶來「扭轉命運」的保護效果。本文運用臺灣青少年成長歷程研究資料庫國一與國三兩組樣本約三千五百人，試圖檢驗一個實證問題：人格特質如何影響高等教育成就，以及其是否真具有復原力效應可扭轉經濟弱勢青少年的高等教育成就？分析結果顯示：正面人格特質確實可提高進入國立大學的機會，但其對經濟弱勢青少年的復原力效應則較有限。文末一併探討民國八十九年高中多元入學方案對加深教育不平等之可能影響。

關鍵字：貧窮、經濟弱勢、青少年發展、非認知特質、人格特質、復原力、教育成就