Heterogenous Reponses to Children's Endowments and Early Developments: Evidence from Chinese Siblings

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How parents differentially respond to children's endowment, often measured by genetics or birth weights, are central to the sociological theories of parental investments. Nevertheless, few Chinese studies took a causal approach to examine the effects of low birth weight (LBW) on parental investments, and the impacts developmental delays (EDD) are hardly discussed in Chinese or western literature. Drawing on differential investment theory and the parental goal theory, the present paper hypothesised that parental responses may vary by both the type of early disadvantage and family socioeconomic status. Using sibling fixed-effects models with the China Family Panel Study (CFPS) data, the analysis compares siblings within the same parental pair to account for unobserved family-level heterogeneity. The results suggest no overall association between LBW or EDD and later educational expenditure, challenging the previous cross-sectional results. However, heterogeneity analyses show that LBW reduces educational expenditure among children of the least educated parents, while EDD reduces expenditure among children of highly educated parents. These findings highlight complex child-driven processes in educational investment and social reproduction.