

The Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Citizens' Perceptions of Social Justice in China

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Abstract : The Gini coefficient indicates that the inequality of income distribution is rising in China. How individuals viewing the equality of current society is an important predictor of social turbulence. Perceptions of social justice may vary according to the social stratification. People usually use socioeconomic status to identify divisions between social stratifications. The objective of this study is to explore the potential influence of socioeconomic status on citizens' perceptions of social justice in China. Socioeconomic status (SES) is usually reflected by either an SES indicator or a composite of three core dimensions: education, income and occupation. With data collected in the 2010 Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), this study uses OLS regression analyses to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and citizens' perceptions of social justice. This study finds that most Chinese citizens believe that the current society is fair or more than fair. Socioeconomic status (SES) has a positive impact on citizens' perceptions of social justice, which means individuals with higher indicator of socioeconomic status prefer to believe current society is fair. However, the three core dimensions which are used to measure socioeconomic status (SES) have different influences on perceptions of social justice: First, income helps enhance citizens' sense of social justice. Second, education weakens citizens' sense of social justice. Third, compared to the middle occupational status, people of both higher occupational status and lower occupational status have higher levels of perceptions of social justice. Though education creates a negative influence on perceptions of social justice, its effect is much weaker than that of income, which indicates income is a determining factor for enhancing people's perceptions of social justice in China's market society. Policy implications are discussed.

Keywords : education, income, occupation, perceptions of social justice, social stratification, socioeconomic status

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