

Degrees for Daughters, Jobs for Sons: Generational and Gender Gaps in Qatari Views of Higher Education

Woohyang Sim

Waseda University, Japan

ABSTRACT

Funded by its natural resource wealth, Qatar has expanded its domestic higher education at a pace rarely matched elsewhere, offering tuition free study and generous scholarships to qualified students. Yet, this surge is sharply gendered: young women are more likely to fill lecture halls, while men gravitate more towards well paid police and military posts that do not necessitate higher education credentials. To illuminate the social logic underlying this trend, this study uses multivariate regressions on a 2022 nationwide survey of 1,298 Qataris aged 18 and above to compare how men and women across generations evaluate the value of higher education. First, results show that younger Qatari men are least likely to value higher education among all demographic groups, while Qatari women across generations consistently place high value on higher education. In addition, respondents with higher household incomes—regardless of age or gender—tend to assign greater value to university education. Second, older Qataris view women's participation in higher education positively, believing it enhances women's ability to fulfill expected family responsibilities. Lastly, older Qataris—especially men—tend toward a more pessimistic outlook, believing that a degree alone no longer confers a competitive edge. The results underscore the nuanced value of higher education in the Gulf, where diverse incentives for earning a degree intersect to create a complex educational landscape. This layered context advances debates on Gulf higher education and highlights the policy challenge of aligning male educational aspirations with Qatar's shift toward a knowledge-based economy.

Keywords: Higher education in the Gulf; Family roles; Knowledge economy; Labor market; Rentier state; Reversed gender gap