

Influencing Factors of Chinese Families' Fertility Desire under the Third-child Policy

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Abstract

People are the core element of economic development. As a country with a large population, China will inevitably face many ensuing problems, which can be said to influence the whole society of the country, after deliberating and issuing the new three-child policy. The long-term effects of population policies are often more certain and significant, so it is even more necessary to pave the way for such an important decision and make auxiliary preparations. This research serves to study about people's intention of fertility after the new three-child policy and its supporting measures issued by Chinese governments and find out the major factors that influence or change the people's intention.

Keywords

Three-child Policy; Fertility desire; Population; Families.

1. Introductions

As those people who were born at the rising peak of population in the early middle of the 20th century in China gradually entered old age, the early 21st century has become the period of greatest deterioration of China's population aging. At the same time, the decline in the proportion of the working-age population and the increase in alimony payment have become inevitable problems in China's social development at this stage. The direction of social resource allocation has also undergone a lot of changes under this circumstance, which weakened the momentum of economic growth.

At this time, the Three-child policy appeared. Three-child policy, whereby a couple can have three children, is a family planning policy in the People's Republic of China. The policy was announced on 31 May 2021 at a meeting of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), chaired by CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping, on population ageing. [1] Moreover, on 20th July, the policy and its supporting measures were finally passed by CCP.

Therefore, the deliberation and announcement of the three-child policy aroused plenty of discussion and thinking among the general public during this special time period with serious population aging problem. Why the policy is "Three"-child? Will this policy be effective enough and really alleviate the population aging problem? Though this policy may prevent the decline in China's population fertility rate and delay the population peak, will it really bring good economic benefits to the country? Will the three-child policy, and how will it change the family's propensity to consume and the family's financial situation? This kind of change is good or bad? Which kind of families will be willing to have a third child? How should the various national departments cooperate with the Three-child Fertility Policy to designate a new action plan? All of these questions are undoubtedly significant and instant, so it is excessively necessary to talk about them.

However, the existing studies rarely talked about this topic before, and there are several main points we need to conduct researches on. First of all, The existing literature has high regional

limitations, which are basically based on the province or city's investigation of family fertility willingness [2], but rarely consider that differences in culture and in the preservation of traditional concepts across the country will lead to variations in the factors affecting fertility desire to a large extent. Therefore, applying the survey of fertility willingness factors in small regions to the whole country will lead to certain deviations. Hence, this research will be based on a nationwide sample survey to obtain the most accurate factors that can reflect China's three-child policy, so as to predict the impact of the three-child policy on the family's willingness to bear. Secondary, most of the existing studies pay their attention on women to study parenting pressure, cost of childbirth, and fertility desire. Few investigations talk about the internal influences caused by other family members in the whole family. However, both parents of the couple and especially husbands should be included in the survey. If the opinions of them and other relatives of a female are all excluded in a survey, there will be a certain degree of deviation, and the result of the fertility desire survey will also be biased and mainly show the intention of the female in a family, rather than the intention of the whole family. [3] [4]. On contrast, this research will consider about how and why other family members influence the women's fertility desire by combining with existing data of the differences in the family's willingness to bear children. This kind of family-based research can offer a more specific and accurate prediction of the changes in the Chinese family's willingness to bear children under the three-child policy in the future. Finally, previous studies on the influencing factors of fertility desire often draw conclusions that the degree of policy implementation, education and medical costs, and childbearing costs have great impact on families' intentions of fertility, but there are few of them combining new supporting measures which come out with the current three-child policy (If do so, some solved problem can be excluded). [5] [6] [7]. Therefore, this research will combine the new plans for the three-child policy and its supporting measures that have been or are still under proposal or already have been promulgated to conduct researches and surveys on the families' fertility desire under the three-child policy, to ensure that the data obtained can virtually reflect how the three-child policy influence or change Chinese families' fertility desire.

1.1. Theoretical Basis and Hypothesis Research

Hypothesis 1: The Three-Child policy can increase Chinese families' fertility desire to some extent.

Basis: With the introduction of the three-child policy are its numerous auxiliary measures which were also successively announced, and many of them even have never been seen in previous fertility policies announced by Chinese government. For instance, in Panzhihua City, Sichuan Province, the new announced "Sixteen Points for Promoting Human Resources Concentration" policy has the latest subsidy policy to support bearing the second child and the third child. The families that bear the second or the third child after this policy will receive a childcare subsidy of 500 yuan per child per month until the child is 3 years old. According to the "Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Optimizing the Fertility Policy to Promote the Long-term Balanced Development of the Population" issued by the Chinese National Health Commission on July 29, social maintenance fees (Under the law, Chinese family may be liable to pay a "social maintenance fee" — essentially a fine — which the government levies to compensate the state for the cost of an "illegal" child's use of public services.) [8] may also be cancelled, and relevant penalties shall be abolished. Individual fertility status will also be completely decoupled with residence registration, school registration, and onboarding. At the same time, the government will also prepare well for linking up the restraint and punishment system before the implementation of the three-child policy with the rewards and support system after the implementation of the policy. The government's attitudes towards low birthrates and control measures are very

important and their significances are keeping increasing. On the other words, the government's effective plan is the only way to alleviate the terrible situation right now. Compared with the childbearing policies in past China, the three-child policy is undoubtedly optimized a lot; and to talk about the future, the Three-child policy is also an incomplete reform that still have enormous space to develop and be completed. [9] Therefore, expecting such a groundbreaking three-child policy to increase the willingness of Chinese families to bear children and slow down the population aging is reasonable.

Hypothesis 2: Under the Three-child policy, different kinds of dominant or recessive reproductive costs still play the main role of influencing the Chinese families' fertility desire.

Basis: Admittedly, since the factors influencing fertility desire are complicated, it is extremely hard to single out one of those factors for research. For instance, factors such as the number of siblings, childbearing environments, marriage culture, social values, reproductive costs, family income, family relationships, regions, ages, etc. undoubtedly affect the fertility factors of Chinese families [10]. Nevertheless, if check at it in detail, from ancient times to the present, whether it is the pressure of marriage or the multiple births based on the number of children for future retirement, the ever-changing case will eventually be classified as various economic pressures. Whether for rural families or urban families, various explicit and implicit economic factors are the main influencing factors for Chinese families' willingness to bear children. [11]

Hypothesis 3: Under the Three-child policy, the attitudes of other members of the family, except for the women who give birth, will have a great impact on the women's willingness to bear the children and ultimately influence the family's decision-making.

Basis: It has been already proved that before, after and during the process of childbirth, women have to always bear greater physical, mental, spiritual, and other continuous pressure. However, it does not mean that the relationship between other family members and the family fertility decision will be weak and women have an absolute influence on the family fertility decision. On the contrary, because women face various pressures before, during and after the childbirth, the care and support of other family members in today's families, which has a shrinking size, will have an unprecedented positive effect on women and the family's overall willingness to bear more children. [12]

1.2. Data sources and Research Analysis

Data sources: The data in this research comes from the Chinese National Bureau of Statistics and the questionnaire survey. According to the research content and research objects of this article, the author designed a set of questionnaires, by selecting couples and their family members of different regions, ages, economic conditions, and marriage and childbearing status, and then analyze the questionnaire data to understand the decisive factors that affect the willingness of Chinese families to have a second, third or even more children under the three-child policy, and put forward my own opinions on this basis.

Table 1. 2008-2020 Chinese birth rate, death rate and natural growth rate

Years	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Birth rate	12.74	11.95	11.9	11.93	12.1	12.08	12.37	12.07
Death rate	7.06	7.08	7.11	7.14	7.15	7.16	7.16	7.11
Natural growth	5.08	4.87	4.79	4.79	4.95	4.92	5.21	4.96

Years	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Birth rate	13.57	12.64	10.86	10.41	8.52
Death rate	7.04	7.06	7.08	7.09	7.07
Natural growth	6.53	5.58	3.78	3.32	1.45

Data source: Chinese National Bureau of Statistics

1.3. Analysis of Two-child Policy

In general, the birth rate, as the most common data used to measure the fertility level, can show the average population born in a particular region in a specific year. According to the table above, it is clear that the birth rate of China stably stays as low birth rate (the academia always considers 30‰ as the boundary between high birth rate and low birth rate) since the 21st century. Moreover, both the birth rate and the natural growth (The rate of natural increase refers to the difference between the number of live births and the number of deaths occurring in a year, divided by the mid-year population of that year, multiplied by a factor. It is equal to the difference between the crude birth rate and the crude death rate.) were gradually decreasing during 2008-2015, which show the decreasing of Chinese family fertility from the side. At this time, there was really a huge turn in 2016; while the death rate still hold steady, the birth rate increased by 1.5‰ and the natural growth increased by 1.57‰, which made both of these two kinds of data achieve a level that higher than those of all ten years before 2016. While other factor which might influence the birth rate kept stable, it is well-founded to say that it is Two-childbirth which had enormous impact on the Chinese families' fertility desire led to such a consequence. According to the situation happened in 2016, if we create a quantitative analysis to predict the future direction of the birth rate, the result will show that after 2030, "The comprehensive two-child policy is expected to set off a baby boom from 2016 to 2020, adding 2 to 3 million newborns each year. By then, the total number of newborns in my country will reach 18 to 20 million each year, and the total fertility rate will increase. Close to the replacement level. If family planning is successful, by 2050, my country will add more than 30 million people of working age, and the proportion of the elderly population will drop by 2%. It is estimated that this will have a positive impact on economic growth, with a growth rate of about 0.4 to 0.5 percentage points." [13]. Nonetheless, there was just a tremendous difference between the real situation and the prediction; the Two-child policy indeed increases the fertility rate for 2016 which is the year just after the announcement of the policy in October 2015, but the policy doesn't help slow down the rate of descent of the birth rate. On the contrary, the descent even speeded up to ten times faster than the policy was announced.

1.3.1. Why the Two-child Policy Is Not Effective and Why Third-child Policy Might Be Successful

The reason that the Two-child policy did not achieve the predicted goal is that the policy before was not the main factor which influence the Chinese families' fertility desire. At the first, some families might have strong fertility desire because of the policy, but their real fertility motivation was just so insufficient. When the Two-child policy was checked again, the shortage inside just appeared. In the policy, the government only relaxed the one-child policy and extended maternity leave, so these kinds of measures only cause the family who had already wanted to have the second child to implement their opinion, and it didn't help change the idea of those families who initially didn't want to bear a child and the second child. By contrast, the supporting measures of Three-child policy might really change the family's willingness. First of all, the mandatory age for retirement in China were planned to be delayed, and the government also actively promote pooling of old-age insurance, which decreased the families' worries about providing for the ages. Secondary, the intensity of financial input will also be increased a lot to make sure the education, fertility, aging industry are all implemented. Thirdly, the government pay some of their attention to guide the outlook on love and marriage and the family view of teenagers to potentially increase the future Chinese families' fertility desire. Likewise, since there are still some terrible marriage customs such as the high bride price in China, the government also make effort to diminish and finally completely eliminate them to alleviate the marriageable populations' pressure. Fourthly, the government has already carried out with the

plan of lowering the cost of family education, and they forbidden nearly all the cram schools to both reduce the students' stress and the family finance pressure. Finally, the maternity insurance system is also strengthened, and the women's employment rights are also guaranteed to protect women when they are paying effort to bear and look after children. Based on all of those items clarified above, most reason that lead to a low fertility desire of the family are solved, so it is hopeful that to a certain extent, the Third-child policy can intensify families' wiliness to bear more children.

1.3.2. What Are the Main Factors Influence the Families' Fertility Desire

A total of 4533 valid questionnaires were recovered in the questionnaire survey that is outgived before the promulgation of the Three-child policy. When the survey recipients are asked to talk about if the Three-child policy be effective, about 69.54% choose "noneffective". Furthermore, when they are asked to finish a multiple choice question to answer why their answer is "noneffective", the choices "There is no subsidy and the fertility cost is to high" and "Parents don't have enough time and vigor to both take care of their jobs and children" respectively occupy 78.37% and 74.39%, and there are only 3.31% of answers choose that the reason is "Existing children disagree their parents to bear more children" and 0.88% say that "Couple or parents disagree with bearing more children". As a result, we can easily get that why nearly 56.73% of answers choose to keep status quo instead of bearing more children, because while those policies and supporting measures are not implemented completely, most families still have to consider about their jobs, spare time, and family financial situation. Consequently, most of them rather to wait and see what is going to happen after the policy is fully implemented.

Under the Three-child policy, are other members except the woman who gave birth really related to the female's final decision:

In the questionnaire survey, when the recipients are asked what is the meaning of bear 2, 3 or even more children, 49.01% choose that "Want the existing child in the family to have a sibling to accompany with each other", and when the married women recipients are asked if their relatives will influence their decision about bearing children, 27.82% choose "little influence, but won't change my mind", 10.56% choose "relatively large impact, I will think about that decision again", and 14.08% choose "Definitely huge influence and I will talk with them to get the final determination of the whole family". According to the data get from the questionnaire, existing children, husbands, and parents of both spouses all have certain influence on the woman's willingness of bearing more children. Likewise, in the research Family Supporting or Individual Choice——Research on the Influencing Factors of Urban Career Women's Second Childbearing Intention[14], when the researchers are researching if the Career Woman are willing to bear their second child, the result also shows that though the society is turning from traditional to modern and the families' impacts on females are changing, we are still sure that the family's supporting before, during and after the childbirth will drastically influence the female's willingness to bear more children.

2. Conclusion

The result of the research indicates that there is still a long way to go to complete the population. While the families nowadays consider much more about the fertility cost and family members' opinions, the local government should extremely pay attention to step up the publicity, since most families are still wait to see if there are some measure with high quality which can really help them reduce their pressure. Otherwise, though the implementation of the Three-child policy is perfect, the Chinese families' fertility desire will not change consequently. Moreover, the overall planning is needed to be practicable as soon as possible, the country still need to create a well marriage, fertility atmosphere to make sure all the members in the family can have further more willingness to bear the children, which is the highest-efficiency way to influence

the reproductive decisions of families. The research done still have limitation in choosing data and we need a more authoritative data about families' desire nowadays. Since the Three-child Policy was just passed and announced, people still need to make further analyzation according to furthermore supplementary measures.

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