

INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THREE-CHILD POLICY

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Abstract

To overcome the aging population problem and promote balanced population development, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council held a meeting on May 31, 2021, and issued the decision on optimizing fertility policies to promote long-term balanced population development. The conference put forward a significant decision on implementing the three-child birth policy and supporting measures. Subsequently, a series of three-child birth implementation policies were introduced to promote long-term balanced population development. The three-child policy has been implemented for nearly two years. What is the current state of fertility? For this, we in this paper survey the status of three-child births in Hunan and Fujian Province, analyze some factors that affect people's willingness to have children and provide optimized implementation plans for the three-child policy.

Keywords: three-child policy; fertility willingness; population aging; questionnaire

INTRODUCTION

The **aging population problem** is one of the most critical issues in our demographic structure. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Party Central Committee has successively put forward significant decisions and deployments, such as a separate "second child" and a comprehensive "second child" to alleviate aging. From October 2015, China fully implemented the policy that couples can have two children. In 2016, the birth rate of the Chinese reached 13.57, which shows that the implementation of the two-child policy has achieved temporary positive results. However, as the effect of the two-child birth policy cooled, the birth rate fell back to 12.67 in 2017, and since then, the birth rate has continued to decline. In 2021, the birth rate fell to 7.52, forming a negative growth. It indicates that the open and comprehensive two-child birth policy has yet to fundamentally solve the problems in the current population development. Therefore, the three-child policy is an effective measure to further alleviate the pain of the population structure based on the two-child policy. In 2021 the Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Optimizing Fertility Policies to Promote Long-term Balanced Population Development officially announced the advent of the three-child policy. However, more is needed to open the three-child policy, which has not significantly increased China's birth rate. The

problem of low fertility and population aging can only be solved partially. It is more necessary to study what influencing factors cause the masses to change their willingness to have children so that the population's birth rate has been decreasing year by year and how to carry out effective measures to stop the continuous decline of the birth rate. The investigation of family fertility intention and influencing factors is the main content of this study, based on existing research. By exploring China's sociodemographic characteristics and future social development trends, we can understand the fertility desires of different groups. By investigating the family's willingness to have children and the factors that affect them, there are different potential fertility drivers by sex and region, further adjusting the birth policy and enhancing the compatibility, systematization, and openness of birth policies. Build a childbirth-friendly social environment, actively improve the willingness of the masses to have children, alleviate the problems of an aging population and labor shortage, and provide conditions for future social development to create a stable and good population environment.

As the birth rate of our population decreases year by year, it has begun to enter a low fertility level. To solve the population problem, scholars have carried out relevant surveys on fertility

through the fertility intention and childbearing behavior of people of childbearing age. Findings from the sixth national census conducted in 2010, different population age structures have led to economic changes, so we have focused on exploring the positive economic effects brought about by population age structure changes **Error! Reference source not found.** Accurately sorting out the relationship between fertility intention, fertility behavior, and fertility level is essential to promote the change in population age structure **Error! Reference source not found.** However, based on the 2013 survey of urban and rural residents' fertility intentions, it was found that the fertility intentions of people who meet the fertility conditions in China showed a gradual downward trend, and the problem of population aging is also increasing more seriously **Error! Reference source not found.** The aging of the population will hurt China's labor market, social and economic development, pension and social security, and other fields. To this end, China needs to adjust its family planning policy gradually **Error! Reference source not found.** Implementing the approach of having two children alone so that families with a strong willingness to have children can give birth can effectively alleviate the negative growth trend of China's total population, alleviate the aging of the population, and increase the labor force **Error! Reference source not found.** Subsequently, implementing the comprehensive two-child birth policy slowed down the disappearance of the total population and the working population to a certain extent. Still, the growth trend of the total population in the future did not have a positive effect **Error! Reference source not found.** It shows that China's fertility rate is affected by the delay of female marriage, and after the impact of the short-term two-child birth policy retreats, the fertility rate decreases rapidly, and the fertility policy has to be significantly adjusted again from a comprehensive two-child birth policy to a three-child birth policy. It provides space for pursuing moderate fertility, adjusting regional population development, and meeting the diverse fertility needs of different populations **Error! Reference source not found.** Then, the reasons for the evolution of fertility policy are analyzed from the perspectives of social structure change, population impact on the economy, and change in fertility concept, actively responding to social needs, promoting long-term balanced population development, and promoting the implementation of fertility policies **Error! Reference source not found.** The three-child birth policy is an additional consideration for the poor effect of adjusting the previous birth policy. It is constrained by various factors, such as the decline in the scale of women of childbearing age, the delay in marriage and childbearing age, and the decrease in the willingness to have children. The implementation of the three-child birth policy is complex **Error! Reference source not found.** Correctly understand and grasp the fertility intention of the masses, and conduct an in-depth analysis of the causes and shaping mechanisms of low fertility intention, formulate accurate and effective public policies to promote the enhancement of people's willingness to have children **Error! Reference source not found.**

Through a questionnaire survey, this paper analyzes the attitude of the masses toward the three-child birth policy after it implements the three-child birth policy. It will provide a practical reference for implementing China's fertility policy in the future.

RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

To understand the implementation status of the three-child policy, questionnaires were generated via the Internet and randomly distributed to some people in Fujian and Hunan areas. Through the attitude and views of the masses on the comprehensive opening of the three-child birth policy, explore the masses' fertility intentions and the main factors affecting the masses' fertility intentions, and compile the collected information into independent analysis reports.

The survey was conducted in questionnaires with 200 families of different ages from the Fujian and Hunan regions. Based on the questionnaire survey results, some representative questions will be selected as critical questions for accurate analysis. Through the progression of problems, research the public's views on the three-child birth policy, find out the shortcomings after the implementation of the policy, and correct and further improve the policy in the future. A total of 164 people participated in the questionnaire, of which 48.8% were women and 51.2% were men.

Question 1: Average income per person in the family?

Response to Question 1: In a family, the per capita monthly income is less than 3,000 yuan for 13%, the per capita monthly income is 3,000-5,000 yuan for 37.7%, the per capita monthly income is 5,000-8,000 yuan for 26.4%, and the per capita monthly income is more than 8,000 yuan for 24.5%. It can be seen that the economic level of most of the masses is relatively good, and the solid financial foundation is whether the family can afford to raise children. With better economic strength as support, having children will increase the pressure on the family's life.

Question 2: How many older adults in the family need to be supported?

Response to Question 2: 28.6% chose to have two older adults in the family who need support, 14.3% chose to have three older adults who need help, and 57.1% chose to have more than three older adults in the family who need support. It can be seen that the proportion of more than three older adults in the family who needs help is as high as 57%, indicating that China's elderly population is now large and is accelerating into a period of deep aging. Affecting potential economic growth and the ability of social innovation to expand government spending on public property and health care, the financial burden on people is further increased.

Question 3: After the opening of the three-child policy, do you have any plans to have three children?

Response to Question 3: 6.9% have plans to have three children, 76.1% have no plans to have three children, and 17% are still determining whether to have three children. It can be seen that with the promulgation of the three-child birth policy, 76% of people still have no intention of having three children, so it is urgent to increase the family's willingness to have children. The desire to have three children is comprehensively considered, including family economic and personal factors and the encouragement and support of social fertility policies. The implementation of practical fertility support policies by the state increases the willingness of families to have three children, promotes the increase of fertility,

and solves the problems of labor shortage and the aging population caused by the decline in the birth rate.

Question 4: Why do you decide to have three children (multiple choices)?

Response to Question 4: 13.2% of people think that having three children can have better security for their future pension, 10.7% of people have three children just because they like children, 4.4% of people have three children because of the requirements of both parents, 29.6% think that giving birth to three children can make children support and accompany each other in the future, 8.2% of people have three children to be able to give birth to boys to continue the incense, and 58.5% choose other reasons. It can be seen that most of the reasons why a family has multiple children are to let the children have a companion and be able to grow together, accompany and support each other in the future. The concept of fertility in the new era differs from the traditional concept of childbirth, and most people no longer pursue the traditional ideological "preference for sons". Then, due to the severe aging of China's population, the country's pension system has gradually formed a good institutional system after continuous improvement. The concept of raising children and preventing aging in contemporary families of childbearing age has slowly faded.

Question 5: Why you don't want to have three children (multiple choices)?

Response to Question 5: 73% of people believe that economic conditions do not allow to have three children, 23.3% of people are physically unable to have three children, 32.7% choose not to have three children because no one in the family can take care of the children, 13.8% are afraid that having three children will affect their work prospects, 23.9% do not want to have three children due to the instability of family conditions, and 37.7% give up because of the specific risks of having three children because they are older. It can be seen that economic, physical, and family conditions affect the family's willingness to have three children, which seriously limits people's desire to have children for the third time. The rapid pace of social renewal makes work precarious, indirectly leading to the lack of economic income security and the inability to maintain an everyday life for a family. In addition, social "involution" is becoming increasingly severe, and the work and mental pressure in the workplace is undoubtedly immense. People work hard, and irregular life makes the body too burdened, challenging to give birth, and unable to generate more energy while balancing family and work. Having three children can only increase the pressure of family life.

Question 6: Do you think having three children is essential for families?

Response to Question 6: 84.3% of people believe that having three children is an unbearable burden for families, and only 15.7% have the financial means to support having three children. Due to the aging of the Chinese population, every family has more or less the obligation to help older adults, coupled with soaring housing prices and prices, sober housing and car loans, water and electricity bills,

rice, oil, salt, etc., making it more difficult for a family to bear the enormous costs of giving birth and raising children.

Question 7: What factors do you think are not conducive to implementing the three-child policy?

Response to Question 7: 45.3% of people believe that the cost of raising children is high, and it is difficult to afford this factor is not conducive to the implementation of the three-child policy, 44% believe that due to the increased work pressure of both parties, there is not enough time and energy to accompany and teach children, which is not conducive to the implementation of the three-child policy, 0.6% believe that there are no disadvantages, and 10.1% choose others. It can be seen that the main reason affecting a family's willingness to have children is the cost of having children. In a high-pressure workplace environment, family members cannot take care of their family and career simultaneously, and a rapidly developing society can only force most people to give up their families and choose careers. Secondly, to make their children better and more competitive in the future, parents will find ways to cultivate their children, such as participating in many cram schools and interest classes. The cost of this "cultivation" method is difficult for the family to bear.

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Reliability analysis is used to test the reliability and reasonableness of the data collected in the questionnaire and genuinely reflect the stability of the data. The reliability evaluation calculation of the questionnaire can ensure the accuracy of the survey data and draw scientific and accurate statistical conclusions. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is mainly used to evaluate the consistency between the options in the scale and is suitable for attitude-type questionnaires. We in this paper use Cronbach's alpha coefficient to assess whether or not the questionnaire data is trustworthy.

$$\alpha = \frac{N}{N-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N S_i^2}{S_x^2} \right)$$

where N is the number of questions in the questionnaire, S_x^2 is the total sample variance, and S_i^2 is the observed sample variance.

Since the questionnaire mentioned above contains both multiple-choice and multiple-choice questions, multiple responses are used to understand the factors that influence a family's willingness to have children.

- (1) Split the options of the multiple-choice question into multiple independent variables so that the value of the selected option is equal to 1 and the value of the unselected option is 0.
- (2) Create multiple corresponding sets to group multiple-choice questions to form a new variable set.
- (3) Questions 4 and 5 in the questionnaire are multiple-choice questions, and the reliability analysis of two multiple-choice questions is carried out.

In Table 1, we list the corresponding Cronbach's reliability criteria.

Table 1 Cronbach's reliability criteria

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Reliability coefficient α | $\alpha > 0.8$ | $0.7 < \alpha \leq 0.8$ | $0.6 < \alpha \leq 0.7$ | $\alpha < 0.6$ |
| Reliability | high | good | acceptable | poor |

The reliability of the questionnaire data was verified by SPSS software. The original data of the seven questions in the questionnaire were selected for reliability analysis to obtain the alpha coefficient, and the test results are shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**

Table 2. The alpha coefficient for reliability analysis

| | | |
|------------------|---|---------------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha based on standardization items | The number of items |
| 0.515 | 0.562 | 13 |

From Table 2, Cronbach's alpha coefficient is more significant than 0.5. It indicates that the questionnaire is designed to accurately measure the information collected in advance, and the multiple-choice question regarding implementing the three-child birth policy is credible. Thus, the questionnaire can meet the needs of data analysis and ensure the consistency of the survey data.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Based on the statistics and analysis of the data generated by the questionnaire survey, the attitudes and views of the family after the implementation of the three-child birth policy were obtained. After finding the corresponding information, we understand that promulgating the three-child birth policy provides a space for pursuing and achieving appropriate fertility rates, adjusting population development in different regions, and meeting the fertility needs of people of different ages.

In the survey results, most families expressed anxiety and worry about having children. Factors such as the family's economic situation and self-physical condition contradicted the three-child birth policy provided by the state. The changes of the times have prompted people to have a lower willingness to have children, considering that childbirth may adversely affect future development, and they prefer not to have children. The current promulgated fertility policy cannot be well connected with people's fertility concerns, resulting in poor fertility improvement after the implementation of the policy. Therefore, after the promulgation of the three-child birth policy, it is followed by the three-child birth incentive policy issued by the state to promote the improvement of people's desire for childbirth, the state implemented various incentives and support systems and preferential policies through the establishment of and modification of land, housing, finance, talent, and other economic support strategies, alleviate financial pressure, reduce the cost of childbirth for ordinary families. It is not enough to solve the financial problems. There are still hidden

contradictions that have not yet been solved, including the issue of parenting after childbirth and the issue of women's career development after birth. As the main body of delivery, the reasons for the decrease in women's willingness to have children mainly include the physiological pressure generated by women when giving birth and the psychological stress caused by women's inability to clarify the future career development direction after giving birth. The physical and mental injuries suffered during pregnancy, the obligation to take care of children after childbirth, the job instability caused by fierce competition in the labor market, and the concerns of some employers when hiring married female employees indirectly lead to employment discrimination against women giving birth and put female employees at a disadvantage in the labor market. These invisible contradictions put women in a dilemma of whether to have children.

COUNTERMEASURE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the survey results, we give some recommendations as follows:

(1) Reduce the cost of raising children

To implement the three-child birth support policy and enhance the public's willingness to give birth, the state should implement the continuity of the encouragement policy and establish a corresponding management system. The acceleration of modern social and economic development has dramatically promoted China's industrialization and urbanization, prompting fierce job competition. The increasing economic costs of parenting and the absence of care after the birth of children make it impossible for families to bear the increasing financial and mental pressures. Therefore, it is inevitable to establish a birth incentive policy and an effective connection with the family, expand the scope of birth services, and improve the quality of birth services. According to the situation of different regions, formulate supporting programs and implement plans to carry out subsidies and benefits in childcare, education, housing, and other aspects, to reduce the cost of family childbirth, parenting, and education. At the same time, the state should continue to implement a sustained and effective birth policy, continue to apply or further optimize, improve the monitoring system of fertility intention and birth cost, and promptly discovers and help groups with fertility difficulties and family economic difficulties.

(2) Increase investment in essential public services

Accelerate investment in essential public services, ensure the medical health of older adults and children in the family, and solve the problem of children's care, to ease the burden of family life and increase the family's willingness to have children. Adopt eugenics and childbirth services in hospitals, implement risk screening and assessment before, during, and after pregnancy, make up for the shortcomings of public services related to childbirth, and ensure the health of pregnant women and children about to be born accordingly. Increase children's health and parenting services, increase the professional level of training practitioners, optimize and improve infant care, promote the healthy and sustainable development of infant and child care services, and reduce parents' troubles in caring for their children. Effectively guarantee the safety of the masses in childbirth, reduce the cost of childbirth

medical treatment and increase the maternity allowance, and further reduce the economic pressure on families to take care of their children. Ensure the coordination and fairness of the birth policy, meet the diversified fertility needs of the masses, effectively solve the worries of the groups, release the fertility potential, and promote the harmony and happiness of the family.

(3) Protecting women's rights

Guarantee women's employment rights, increase women's reproductive benefits, and increase women's willingness to have children. As social development leads to a labor surplus, some units begin to discriminate against women in employment to reduce the company's operating capital costs. Most women refuse to have children for stable jobs and future development. To improve women's willingness to have children, it is necessary to improve the maternity leave and maternity insurance system by safeguarding equal employment rights and interests, reducing the opportunity cost of childbirth, achieving a balance between delivery and employment, and strengthening women's employment security. Set up public service windows to provide information on the popularization of labor law knowledge, including how to effectively protect your rights and interests when your legitimate rights and interests are infringed.

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