

Policy research on fertility change in China

Jinwen Song

Economics and Finance Hankou University, Wuhan, China

ErnestWhite8272@hotmail.com

Abstract. This article systematically reviews China's current fertility policy and organises it according to content characteristics and implementation methods to clarify the ever-changing research focus. In particular, this article focusses on the major changes in the orientation of China's fertility policy in recent years, from a restrictive family development model to a supportive model. Research shows that these policy adjustments can have a significant effect on countering the trend of contemporary population ageing, increasing the future labour supply, and improving the demographic structure. In order to further stimulate the increase in the fertility rate, the government has launched a set of adaptive measures to improve family life through maternity and paternity leave, childcare allowances, family tax incentives and expanding the availability of childcare. These efforts symbolise a critical shift towards increasing family support programs. However, population experience shows that raising fertility is not only a matter of short-term results of policies, but also indicates the need for precise and continuous long-term policy commitments. The policy shift will boost China's fertility rate, but ultimately it will be necessary to improve reproductive health services and expand social security protection and family support systems. The policy adjustment reflects the strategic response to the demographic transformation of one of the world's most populous countries, aiming to establish a sustainable demographic development path and change the balance between the quality of the population and the specific quantitative population requirements for the future population by addressing the immediate and long-term needs of these new citizens.

Keywords: China, fertility policy, policy research

1. Introduction

The background of changes in the world fertility rate is a multi-faceted topic with many influences. The sustained progress of the world economy - including economy, culture, education and health - has been complemented by the sustained development of the world economy, including economic and cultural progress, health and health infrastructure.

In terms of the historical background of changes in the global fertility rate, China's fertility policy has found the necessary policies and guidelines. In addition, there are a series of policies, including fertility-friendly policies, county customers, minority child policy sanctions, child-friendly policies and measures, to more stably formulate fertility policies based on policies and population, and even by expanding the country to achieve better results [1]. Reduce the burden on families by promoting and expanding maternity leave, while being compensated for early childcare and improving the national education and health care system. More importantly, more policies to encourage regular births focus on the elderly age group that meet the needs of children, or low-income families in a specific range of government subgroups, change the view of boundaries, and provide direct economic subsidies for pig safety by alleviating fertility, which is a springboard for education, which is better to some extent. Enrolment practice [2]. Advocate for better practises in the welfare State service environment of child birth, childcare, post-natal maternal health, etc. The resources mentioned are expanded teaching methods and welfare systems. The Chinese government's comprehensive policy proves a further way to achieve better fertility and poses more challenges on statistical issues, which helps to discuss the need to improve the safety net to support families to give birth and children over a long historical period of time. My research topic is on fertility rates.

2. Research methods

The author uses a standard search engine to conduct and review research by searching terms such as "fertility policy", "Chinese fertility policy and international fertility policy". The periodicals included in the search terms are: Chinese Journal of Fertility and Health, Population and Family Planning, and China's Reproductive Health. The search range of journal terms is 10,700

articles, which supports the 2020 articles in the past three years: 868 articles in 2022, 707 articles in 2023, 401 articles in 2024, and 44 articles in 2025. A total of 65 articles are included for further discussion.

3. Research results

China's fertility policy aims to optimize population structure, enhance population quality, and promote socioeconomic development. By implementing various policy measures, the government guides families and individuals to make reproductive decisions at appropriate times and under suitable conditions, thereby achieving a virtuous cycle between population growth and economic-social progress. Meanwhile, the government must continuously refine and adjust fertility policies to adapt to evolving social and economic conditions.

Although these policies face challenges in implementation, through ongoing reforms and improvements in policy frameworks, people can better achieve these objectives and advance China's population development endeavors.

3.1. Classification of the contents of the birth policy

Since the 1970s, fertility policies have undergone several adjustments, reflecting different considerations of targeted population growth, economic growth and social development. The author divides the policies by period and chronological order (see Table 1).

Table 1. Policy phase

Stage	Time	Policy Content
The initial stage of family planning policy	1978-1984	One-child policy
The period of adjustment of family planning policy	1984-2000	The family planning policy on childbirth and rural areas was relaxed
The period of full liberalization of the family planning policy	2000-2013	The one-child policy for both parents and the two-child policy for all, as well as the abolition of birth control measures, were fully implemented
one-child policy	2013-present	The three-child policy, improve the social security system, strengthen publicity and education, strengthen international cooperation

3.1.1. The initial stage of the family planning policy (1978-1984)

In 1978, China implemented its family planning policy, the strictest fertility regulation since the founding of the Peoples Republic. The policy, known as the "one-child policy", mandated that each couple could have only one child until 2013. Contraceptive measures including birth control devices and sterilization were widely promoted to curb population growth. Public education campaigns were conducted through various channels to raise awareness about family planning and improve reproductive health consciousness.

At this stage, the family planning policy has been widely implemented nationwide and has effectively controlled population growth. However, due to the excessive restrictions, some social problems have gradually emerged, such as aging population and gender imbalance.

3.1.2. Period of adjustment of family planning policy (1984-2000)

With the implementation of the family planning policy, its social problems have gradually emerged. Therefore, the government began to adjust the family planning policy step by step to deal with these problems [3].

- Fertility interval policy: In 1984, the government proposed "advocating fertility interval", that is, couples should have at least four years between having their first child and having another child. This policy alleviated the population pressure to a certain extent, but did not change the core of the "one-child" policy.

- Relaxation of rural family planning policy: In rural areas, the government proposed a policy that "a rural couple can have two girls or one boy". This policy aims to balance the urban and rural population structure, but the actual effect is not ideal due to the influence of traditional concepts of valuing sons over daughters. The development and implementation of public policies to build reproductive health will benefit from keen insight and responsive expression of public will [4].

At this stage, the government tried to solve social problems while controlling population growth by gradually adjusting the family planning policy. However, due to the influence of traditional ideas and the difficulty of implementing the policy, the actual effect was not obvious.

3.1.3. The period of full liberalization of the family planning policy (2000-2013)

After entering the 21st century, the Chinese government began to gradually fully open the China's family planning policy.

The double child policy was completely cancelled: In 2011, the government introduced the "one-child policy" method; that is, as long as one party in the marriage is an only child, they can have a second child; the implementation of this policy is a major change in the family planning policy.

The universal two-child policy: In 2013, the government proposed a "universal two-child" policy; literally, this means that all couples can have a second child; the implementation of this policy is a new stage of family policy. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive policy framework aimed at supporting fertility, releasing fertility potential, cultivating fertility and increasing the birth rate to alleviate the decline in population dividends and population ageing [5].

Abolishment of Contraceptive Measures: With the widespread two-child policy in China, the government has phased out compulsory contraception, infertility and other procedures; therefore, the government has given people more independence than reproductive social responsibility. The continuous decline in the birth rate not only reduces China's population and exacerbates its ageing problems, but also weakens the "population dividend", which may lead to labour shortages and increased fiscal costs, and weakens consumer demand, which may kill real estate development investment, sales and additional real estate bubbles.

During this period, the Government sought to address population ageing and gender imbalance through formal relaxation of family planning policies, and also launched a public education initiative on population policy to raise awareness and normalisation of fertility. However, due to traditional beliefs and the burden of children's needs, the actual results are not effective.

3.1.4. Family planning policy (2013-present)

With the implementation of the second-child policy for all and the deepening of the ageing problem, the Chinese government has begun to further adjust its current family planning policy. The adjustment direction includes:

- Three-child policy: In view of the increasingly serious ageing problem and gender imbalance, the government has further implemented the "three-child" or more relaxation of fertility policies.
- Improve the social security system: The government can encourage the birth and upbringing of children by improving the level of the social security system. For example, policies and measures, including raising the level of child welfare and educational subsidies, can reduce the economic burden and reproductive costs of families.
- Strengthen publicity and education: The government will further strengthen the publicity and education of China's population policy to raise people's awareness of fertility and responsibility. Publicity and education will guide people on how to face fertility problems rationally and participate well in reproductive responsibilities.
- Strengthen international cooperation: In the context of globalisation, the population problem is closely related to the international community. It can be reasonably assumed that the government can strengthen international cooperation to jointly meet the challenges posed by the population problem. An example of this may be the use of international organisations and multilateral mechanisms to share experience, technology and resources. China's fertility policy has gone through three stages of evolution: the stage of strict restrictions, the stage of gradual relaxation, and the stage of possible revision. In this journey, it is necessary for the Government to work to balance population growth and social development in order to address the population situation. Future policy changes will require comprehensive consideration of many variables, including: economic, social and cultural, the changing international environment, and problems that may arise in dynamics.

3.2. Other policy measures

China's fertility policy also includes other types of policies and measures, including but not limited to family planning publicity and education, as well as family planning laws and regulations.

3.2.1. Maternity allowance policy

In order to improve the fertility rate, the Chinese government has formulated a maternity allowance policy. The policy stipulates that families who abide by the family planning policy can get maternity allowances and subsidies from the government. The quantity and scope vary from province to province. It usually includes medical expenses for childbirth, maternity leave allowance, etc.

3.2.2. Maternity leave policy

The Chinese government has stipulated maternity leave for women, including prenatal leave, maternity leave and breastfeeding leave. Maternity leave varies from province to province and company, but is usually not less than 98 days. The policy aims to

protect the legitimate rights and interests of female employees and support family care for newborns, etc.

3.2.3. Maternity insurance policy

In order to protect women's reproductive rights, the Chinese government has implemented a maternity insurance policy. The policy stipulates that female employees who meet the standards can get insurance on leave to cover prenatal examinations, childbirth expenses and maternity leave allowances. Some local governments have even extended these benefits to male employees to encourage participation in home care.

3.2.4. Maternity and medical service policy

In order to promote high-quality reproductive health services, the Chinese government has formulated a series of policies to improve the health care service system, improve the capacity of medical services, and improve the training of medical practitioners. These measures will address and help improve access to high-quality reproductive health services and ultimately improve maternal and child health.

The development of these policies and measures will help to clearly understand and take action to address fertility issues and support the coordinated development of population, economy and society.

4. Discussions

Low fertility rates contribute to optimizing population structure, reducing social burdens, and boosting economic development. Moreover, they help increase per capita resource availability. In recent years, China's low birth rates have led the country into a phase of negative population growth.

In developed countries, low fertility rates tend to remain relatively low, but they are still a positive factor, maintaining an optimised demographic structure, reducing the social burden and enhancing the potential for economic development. In addition, the low birth rate helps to improve the per capita resource pool and living standard. In developing countries, higher order rates increase labour resources to promote rapid economic development and social stability. Nevertheless, excessive birth orders may increase the number of social population and strain resources and environmental capacity. Balancing economic development and population development remains a challenge for developing countries. China's fertility policy is constantly optimised to meet the needs of national development and the needs of the people, and is closer to the organisational design with a scientific and rational basis. The current policy shows positive development in the following aspects. Improving prenatal and postnatal care services is a vital initiative for achieving high-quality demographic development [6].

First of all, on the basis of respecting family preferences, fertility policies are committed to providing more institutionalised support for different types of families. This includes national support measures to improve fertility and parenting, including extending maternity leave, establishing paternal mountain ranges and strengthening maternal and child health services to alleviate many concerns about fertility, parenting and education. The "three-child policy" is also being steadily promoted, and various regions are introducing corresponding support measures to promote the formation of a permanent social foundation and favourable support measures for fertility policies. The implementation of the policy should also mark a turning point, at which the number of mobile populations began to decline from the highest point.

The pre- and post-care of any reproductive health policy must be improved in order to achieve a high-quality reform of population development [7].

Secondly, in the process of policy implementation, management and service guarantee have been continuously improved, reasonably and unifiedly implemented, and the coordination of supporting policy efforts has been realised. The relevant authorities will continuously improve the supervision and guidance of relevant support policies to ensure the fairness and commonality of action and supervision, and strive to "provide the same benefits for eligible families" to greatly increase the public's trust and satisfaction with the implementation of the policies [8].

Finally, as a policy choice for national layout, the country attaches great importance to the differences (and gaps) between regions and groups, and actively coordinates and promotes the implementation of policies in different fields. The intention of promoting implementation, recognising different realities and regional differences between groups and families is to ensure relevance, contextual applicability, and improve effectiveness when using the "context and category" guidance method to implement the canvas. Reproductive rights are fundamentally connected to both the continuation of individual life and the sustenance of the social community [9].

In summary, the fertility policy has successfully guided the optimisation of the demographic structure, promoted family development, and alternated the expected path of social/social harmony. In the future, the state will continue to monitor the impact of economic development, social policies, cultural traditions, and other factors on fertility levels, continually refining the relevant policy system to provide a scientific basis and practical support for achieving long-term balanced population

development. Objective: Describe and analyse the fertility intention of married women in China and Guangxi at childbearing age and its influencing factors [10].

5. Conclusion

The overall trend of global fertility is declining. With economic development and social progress, the global fertility rate is declining. The fertility rate in most developed countries is low, while the fertility rate in some developing countries is still high.

The study found that economic factors, social welfare policies, cultural traditions and education level are the key factors affecting fertility. Among them, economic development level and female employment opportunities have a particularly significant impact on fertility.

Fertility rates vary widely across countries or regions, mainly due to economic, cultural and social factors. For example, fertility rates are generally low in European countries, while some African and Asian countries still have high fertility rates.

Changes in the fertility rate will lead to changes in the demographic structure, which will affect all aspects of social and economic development. Low fertility rate may lead to problems such as aging population and labor shortage, while high fertility rate may lead to problems such as overpopulation and resource tension.

Fertility rate has shown a downward trend, resulting from the combined effects of economic, social, and policy factors. This trend has profoundly impacted population structure, and family dynamics. Moving forward, China must continue monitoring fertility patterns and formulate population policies tailored to new circumstances to ensure coordinated development between population growth and economic progress.

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