

# *Analysis of the Impact of Family Planning on Chinese Society*

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**Abstract:** In the 1980s, China implemented the one-child policy as a means to manage population growth during its reform and opening-up period. This policy not only contributed to a reduction in crime rates associated with overpopulation but also empowered women to enter the workforce, thereby stimulating economic development. By 2016, the two-child policy was introduced to address gender discrimination and further promote women's rights. The policy underwent another transformation in 2021 with the introduction of the three-child policy, aimed at tackling the growing issue of an aging population in China. This paper examines the impact of family planning policies on Chinese society and women's rights from both economic and sociological perspectives. Through an analysis of specific cases alongside historical context, this study illustrates the intrinsic connection between birth policies and China's economic development as well as women's social status. The discussion highlights how China's family planning initiatives have influenced societal dynamics and enhanced women's rights, demonstrating improvements in their social standing while concurrently reducing crime rates. The evolution of these policies—from one-child to two-child, and now three-child—reflects China's strategic response to demographic challenges, underscoring the relationship between fertility policies and women's empowerment.

**Keywords:** One-child policy, population, Chinese society, women's rights.

## 1. Introduction

The change in China's fertility policy is not only about controlling population, but also about improving the social status of women and promoting China's economic development. At present, the academic circle's research on the family planning policy mainly focuses on the policy itself but does not focus on its social impact on women's social status and the development of the social economy and market. So far, the policy as well as the status of women's lives to change, and the study of the effects of economic development is few. Therefore, by analyzing the method of research, this study explores the background reason for the different stages of family planning policy and the effects of policy on women's role in society and China's economic changes. The study also focuses on the social context in which the policies were announced and the markets in which the policies are going to stimulate the economy. At the same time, this study explores the reasons why China, the "most populous country" 20 years ago, enjoyed the "cheap labor" dividend for economic development, but now has a serious aging population. The newborn birth rate is declining year after year and the future social pension burden is extremely increasing, while the labor market is further shrinking. Fertility

policy not only is the population of China is under today's society to solve the problem but also can promote the economic development of China. Therefore, this will be a reference for the next change in China's fertility policy and the possible economic benefits and women's rights issues.

## **2. The One-child Policy**

### **2.1. Background**

In Chinese history, people have stereotypical ideas and generally prefer sons to daughters, and families generally believe that having more children is a good thing [1], and having more children is a blessing. Since China is a traditional agricultural country, having more children and grandchildren became a serious problem when the disaster struck. People had to face the problem of famine, and the food at home could not meet the needs of their families. Therefore, in 1982, China started the family planning policy, which is also known as the one-child policy. The one-child policy not only limited the number of children per family, it also freed women from being tied to the family and having children every day. Each couple can only have one child. Meanwhile, because of the food shortage in the society at that time, a family may have two workers but have to raise eight or ten people, so this also caused a lot of crime problems. For example, in 1879, a passenger car robbery occurred on the Yellow River Bridge in Luoyang, Henan Province. Basically, the reason why these criminals commit crimes is mostly because of economic reasons, and the family has a large population but little income, which leads to insufficient food and forces them to take this decision and embark on the road of crime. Simultaneously, a large population and low income will also lead to a lot of human trafficking cases. According to statistics, the problem of child trafficking in China has reached its peak since 1970, and even at that time, many parents took the initiative to contact human traffickers to sell their flesh and blood because they could not afford so many children, so as to reduce the economic burden of the family and obtain appropriate income to support the family. In such an era, a reasonable birth policy was crucial to the economic development of society and the solution of social crime problems. At that time, Chinese society also urgently needed a policy to solve the existing problems. In 1982, the family planning policy was officially promulgated by the State Council of China.

### **2.2. Impact on Women's Social Status**

When family planning limits the number of children women can produce, women are no longer tired of having children, so that they can devote themselves to family labor or work/life that they like and are interested in. Their status in the family has been significantly improved because they can contribute to the family or bring economic benefits to the family [2]. In addition, due to the backward development of the medical industry in China's rural areas in the 1980s, having too many children would also bring great harm to women's life expectancy. Therefore, controlling the number of children a woman can have greatly protects women's health and correspondingly prolongs women's lives [2].

### **2.3. The Impact of One-child Policy on Social Economy**

At the same time, the introduction of the family planning policy coincided with the initial stage of China's reform and opening up, when women were liberated from the family, so women had the opportunity to work in production. In addition, light industry and service industry developed rapidly after the reform and opening up. At this time, women who were liberated from the family and were more skilled than men were favored by most factories [2]. These factories provided a large number of employment opportunities for women, and women's labor in factories also made great

contributions to China's economic development after the reform and opening up. While women's family pressure is slowly released, they are also more able to go to school to learn what they are interested in and like, among which the most representative is Ms. Tu Youyou, a female scientist in China. It is because the concept of social dogma has been changed that she was able to devote herself to the cause she is interested in and contribute her share to the development of science and technology in China.

### 3. Two-child Policy

#### 3.1. Background

In 2016, China's population has been effectively controlled, and along with the development of the economy, China's population aging problem has been exposed. As shown in Figure 1, with the decrease of the birth population in China, the death rate in China keeps rising, which brings about problems such as the decrease of labor force and the increasing burden of social pension. In recent decades, the fundamental reason for China's rapid economic development is the cheap labor brought by the demographic dividend. However, as time goes by, the sustainable development of China's economy needs more population support. However, the decrease of the labor force population and the continuous aging of the backbone brought by the one-child policy have hindered China's economic development. This policy has gradually transformed China from a surplus labor force to a shortage [3]. Therefore, in 2016, the Chinese government began to implement the two-child policy in an effort to alleviate China's labor shortage problem and the excessive burden of elderly care.

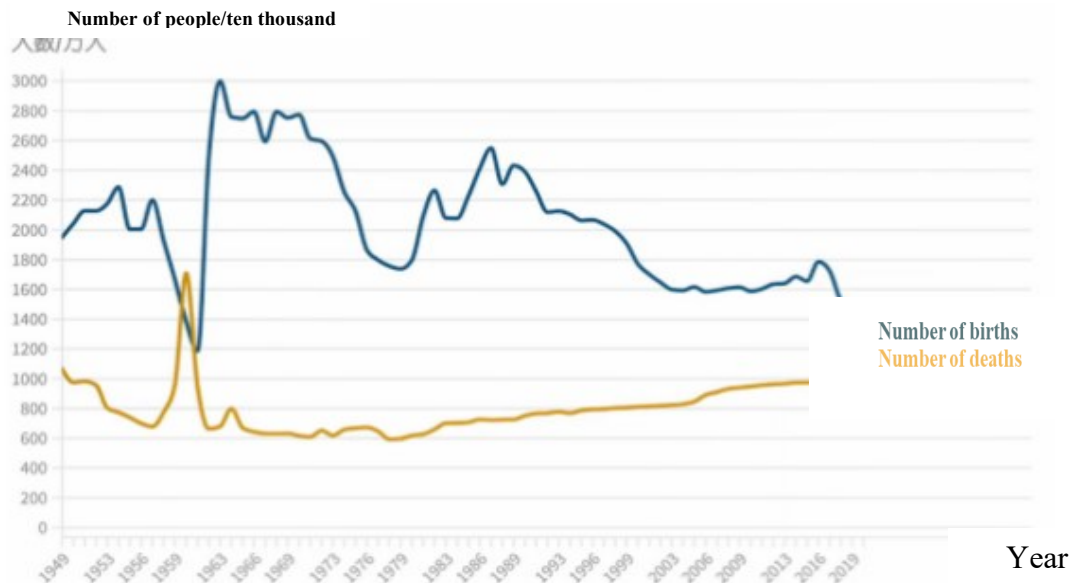


Figure 1: the death and birth rate in China from 1949 to 2019.

#### 3.2. Influence of the Two-child Policy on Women's Social Status

The implementation of the two-child policy has once again highlighted the status of women in the workplace. Many unmarried or married childless women encounter significant challenges when selecting employment opportunities. Currently, numerous companies are hesitant to assume the risks associated with providing paid maternity leave for new female employees. Since the introduction of the two-child policy, organizations have become increasingly cautious in their recruitment of female staff, which complicates career choices for many women. In some cases, women are even required to

sign unequal agreements regarding their reproductive plans prior to employment. This trend markedly reflects a decline in women's status within professional environments and hinders their mobility within the labor market. Consequently, it has become imperative for the government to enact additional legislation aimed at safeguarding women's legal rights [4].

### **3.3. The Impact of the Two-child Policy on China's Economic Development**

The "universal two-child" policy will help restore China's demographic dividend in the long run. Under this policy, there will be a significant increase in China's fertility rate, so it will help China to realize the increase in labor force population in the future and realize the demographic dividend again, so as to promote China's economic growth.

In addition, the universal two-child policy will also ease the pressure on elderly care in China. Under the influence of the one-child policy, one child needs to raise two elderly people, which is quite different from the multiple children raising two elderly people before the implementation of the policy, and also greatly increases the pressure of the future Chinese people. In terms of the simplest insurance, the future population reduction will reduce the future social security fund contribution, so the social security fund paid by the labor force will not meet the future pension needs of the elderly. Therefore, under the one-child policy, China's pension pressure will continue to rise [5]. The economic dividend brought by the comprehensive two-child policy is not only limited to the expansion of the labor market in the future, but also will drive the development of relevant industries in today's society, such as baby products or infant education industries will make progress with the implementation of the two-child policy. With the growth of the infant population, the team of related entertainment, food and service industries will also grow, and the embodiment of economic growth driven by related industries will become more and more significant. This provides many jobs and related personnel training, which from a long-term point of view, is vital for the development of the Chinese economy [3].

## **4. The Three-child Policy**

### **4.1. Social Background**

After the issuance of the two-child policy, according to the survey, more and more young people choose to have children out of their love for children. However, due to various factors such as economy, employment and family structure, more and more young people choose "Dink", that is, not to have children. Young people who choose to have children also choose to have only one child for various reasons, as mentioned above. Therefore, this paper concludes that the opening of the three-child policy is probably due to the fact that the fertility limitations brought about by young people's economic/work factors lead to more second children being born to those who can afford middle-aged couples, so the fertility rate has not been significantly increased. So the government has introduced a three-child policy, which encourages young people to have children and also encourages capable families to choose to have more children, in order to promote population growth.

### **4.2. Social and Economic Impact of the Three-child Policy**

Similar to the two-child policy, the three-child policy will bring more economic dividends to related industries, such as service/education/food, and create a larger market for related industries. According to statistics, with the opening of the three-child policy, some families may even have three children and two pairs of elderly people, in this case, it will greatly stimulate the demand for housekeeping businesses. China's maternal and child market is a good reflection of the positive intentions brought about by the multi-child policy. China's maternal and infant industry increased from 1 trillion yuan

in 2010 to 4.09 trillion yuan in 2020, with an average annual growth rate of 15.06%, and it is predicted that the future growth rate of the maternal and infant market will continue to increase year by year.

At the same time, the opening of the three-child policy will further increase China's labor force. Although this increase will not significantly increase in the short term, in the future, the increase in labor force will help China reduce the aging problem and the burden of pension. At the same time, it can also alleviate problems such as talent reserve in China in the future [6].

## 5. Conclusion

China's fertility policies have undergone significant evolution in response to demographic challenges, transitioning from a one-child policy to a multi-child policy aimed at addressing the issues of an aging population and strains on social security. Despite these policy adaptations, younger generations increasingly prioritize personal freedom and quality of life over larger family sizes, which presents a challenge to the effectiveness of these policies.

To improve outcomes, the government is implementing measures such as public education campaigns, financial incentives, and enhanced childcare support. However, economic pressures and workplace-related issues continue to act as deterrents. For future enhancements, initiatives should focus on expanding economic support for families, developing community-based childcare solutions, enforcing workplace protections for parents, and reshaping societal attitudes towards family size. Promoting gender equality in both childcare responsibilities and domestic duties is essential to alleviate the burden placed on women. Furthermore, preparing for an aging population through the establishment of public nursing homes and long-term care services is crucial.

This paper also has some limitations in the research. It did not conduct extensive research during the research, but chose to base on the data investigated by the predecessor. Therefore, the research results have limitations, which should be corrected in the next research. Future research will assess the effectiveness of current policies while exploring how work-life balance influences fertility rates. Additionally, examining technology's role in both childcare and eldercare could provide valuable insights. Interdisciplinary studies may offer deeper understanding into the complex interplay between economic development, gender equality initiatives, and demographic policies.

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