

Study on the Fertility Intention of Wenzhou Residents and Its Influencing Factors under the Background of the Three-Child Policy

-- Taking Ou Hai District Empirical Research as an Example

Ziyue Cai

Wenzhou Polytechnic, Wenzhou, Zhejiang, China

Abstract: The continuing decline in fertility and population ageing are major social issues facing the world today. On the one hand, population aging leads to a decrease in the total workforce and a decline in productivity, and with the increase in the proportion of elderly people, the pressure on social security, such as pension insurance and medical resources, will gradually increase. On the other hand, the decline in fertility rate means that the supply of new labor force will be insufficient. Therefore, a large number of countries have implemented various fertility policies to encourage the public to increase the fertility rate, so as to solve the negative impacts of low fertility rate and population aging on social development. This paper stands on the background of the three-child policy and investigates the fertility intention of Wenzhou residents and its influencing factors. Taking Ou Hai District of Wenzhou as an example, this paper investigates the fertility situation of Ou Hai residents, fertility intention, and the influencing factors of fertility intention from 1980 to 2023, and puts forward the suggestions to promote the fertility intention of residents in Ou Hai District. It is expected that this paper can provide reference value for relevant government departments to effectively promote the three-child policy, so that more families are willing to continue to give birth, and effectively solve the problems of population aging and low fertility rate that China is currently facing.

Keywords: Three-child policy; Fertility situation; Fertility intention; Influencing factors.

1. Introduction

1.1. Problem orientation

In recent years, the trend of population aging in China has been intensifying, and the number of newborns has shown a precipitous decline since 2016. According to relevant statistics, the number of newborns in China in 2016 was 17.86 million, and in 2020 it fell to 12 million, and in 2023 it fell to 9.02 million. The continuous decline in the number of newborns will have a serious negative impact on social development. According to the National Bureau of Statistics at the beginning of 2024, the population of 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government totaled 140,967,000 people, a decline of 2.08 million compared to 2023, with a birth rate of 6.39%, 11.1 million deaths, a mortality rate of 7.87%, and a natural population growth rate of -1.48% in 2023. In terms of population aging, according to the data released by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2023, by the end of 2023, China's population aged 60 and above had accounted for 21.1% of the country's total population, about 297 million people, and it is expected that this figure will be more than 30% in 2025, which means that China has formally stepped into a moderately aging society. It can be seen that the declining fertility rate and the aggravation of the aging problem will seriously break China's demographic balance, resulting in insufficient innovation for social development, which will then have a negative impact on the comprehensive national strength. Although the implementation of China's two-child policy in 2015, so that a large number of families in China have more reproductive choices, and a large number of families have begun to give birth to a second child, but the

stimulus effect of the two-child policy on the fertility rate has not reached the expected level, China's newborn fertility rate is still in a state of persistent decline, coupled with China's population aging problem is becoming more and more serious, the social development of the potential employment force is gradually decreasing, and the pressure for economic growth is The pressure on economic growth continues to rise.

1.2. Macro policies

To address the above issues, in the report of the 20th Party Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward the idea of "establishing a system of fertility support policies and lowering the costs of childbearing, parenting and education". Policy to Promote the Long-term Balanced Development of Population, aiming to further reduce the costs of childbearing, parenting and education. In May 2021, the Central Government announced the implementation of the three-child policy, which further relaxed the birth restriction, aiming at encouraging families to have more children, effectively balancing the demographic structure of the country, and facilitating the implementation of the goal of sustainable development of the society on the basis of the increase in the number of young people. At the same time, the government has provided a series of policy support for families having three children, such as education support, housing support and medical support, while the government has continued to expand employment security and social security for women of childbearing age. Subsequently, in May 2022, the General Office of the State Council issued the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Health, which focuses on optimizing maternity services and guarantees, while calling for the improvement of supporting measures related to the implementation of the three-child policy, including maternity insurance, maternity

allowances, and guarantees for residual medical expenses for urban and rural residents' health insurance participants, with the aim of effectively reducing the remaining medical burden. In August 2022, 17 departments, including the Health Commission, jointly issued the "Guidance on Further Improving and Implementing Active Reproductive Support Measures," which served to further support and improve the implementation of the three-child policy.

1.3. Research Implications

Although China launched the three-child policy in 2021 in an attempt to increase the fertility rate through policy guidance, however, so far, the effect of the policy in increasing the fertility rate has never reached the expected level, and in contrast to the current situation, China's fertility rate is still at a historically low level. The field of sociology has pointed out that family reproductive decision-making is a complex issue that involves economic, social, cultural, and other factors. In China's current social environment, the high cost of raising children, the sacrifice of women's career development, and the strain on educational resources may all influence families' decision-making on childbearing. Therefore, conducting a survey on the fertility intentions and influencing factors of residents in the context of the three-child policy in a specific region will be an effective reference and impetus for the subsequent adjustment of the policy in other regions of China.

2. Survey Design

2.1. Target audience

Combined with the materials provided by the Ouhai District Bureau of Statistics, the average age of population fertility in Ouhai District from 1980 to 2022 is investigated. At the same time, in order to objectively understand the birth intention of our residents in the context of the implementation of the three-child policy, this paper on the three-child policy in the context of the birth intention of the residents and the factors affecting the survey activities, will be investigated in the region established as wenzhou ouhai district, the object of

the survey for the birth of the ouhai district of the age of the residents. The total number of survey respondents is 655, of which 366 are male and 289 are female, and the age of the survey respondents is mainly concentrated in 20-49 years old. Of these, 272 had given birth to one child, 104 had given birth to two children, 27 had given birth to three children, and 112 had not given birth.

2.2. Methodology of the survey

Random questionnaire interviews were conducted for the residents of Ouhai District, Wenzhou City, and the interviews were divided into four groups, and the interview areas were set up in front of the bank, in front of the government hall, in front of the hospital, and in the park of a large-scale enterprise. The interviews were conducted in the form of one-on-one interviews with the questionnaires for the residents, firstly, the survey of the residents' fertility intention, i.e., the fertility intention of having one child, two children and three children was conducted. Then, the respondents who had already given birth to one or two children were investigated in depth to understand their willingness to continue to give birth and the factors affecting their willingness to give birth. Finally, a visit was made to the statistics department of Ouhai District to check the fertility situation in Ouhai District from 1980 to 2023.

3. Findings and Recommendations

3.1. Fertility in Ouhai District, Wenzhou City, 1980-2022

In conjunction with materials from the Bureau of Statistics, a survey was conducted on the average age of mothers giving birth in Ouhai District from 1980 to 2022. The results of the survey show that the average age of women giving birth was 23 years old in 1980, and by 2010, the average age of giving birth was raised to 25 years old, and in 2022, the average age of women giving birth in Ouhai District has been raised to 30 years old. As shown in Figure 1:

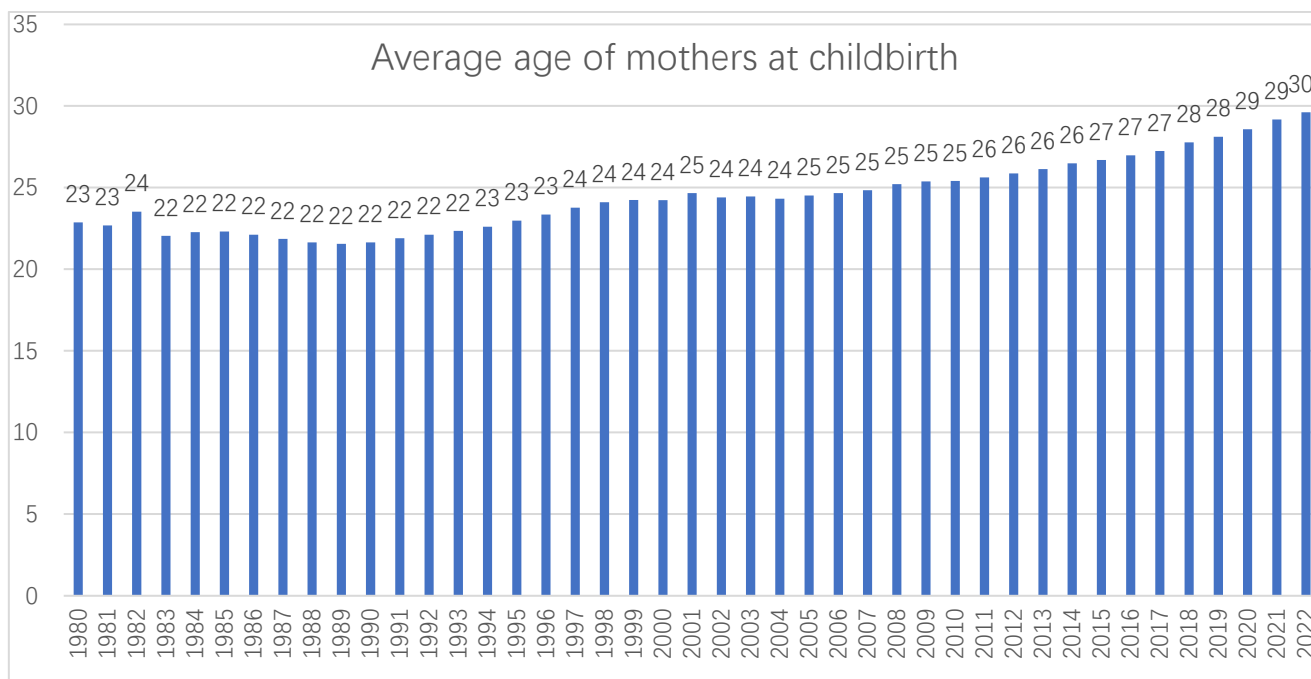


Figure 1. Average age of mothers at childbearing in Ouhai District, 1980-2022

In addition to the impact of the country's early one-child policy, this outcome is directly related to economic pressures, pressure on children to attend school, housing conditions and reproductive health issues.

3.2. Fertility Intention of Residents in Ouhai District of Wenzhou City in the Context of Three-Child Policy

Combined with the results of the survey of 655 respondents of childbearing age in Wenzhou Ouhai District, it is concluded that among the 655 respondents, the proportion of willingness to have one child is 60.46%, the proportion of willingness to have two children is 26.41%, the proportion of willingness to have three children is 7.78%, and the proportion of unwillingness to have children is 1.35%. Based on the results of this survey, it is easy to see that, under the

background of the implementation of the current three-child policy, the residents of Wenzhou Ouhai District are still concentrated in the propensity to give birth to one child, a few residents tend to give birth to two children, and the proportion of three children is only higher than the proportion of unwillingness to give birth.

Based on the in-depth survey of residents who have already given birth to one child and two children, it can be found that 396 residents who have already given birth to one child and two children, the number of people who are willing to continue to give birth to children is 104, accounting for 26.3%, and the remaining residents who are unwilling to continue to give birth to 73.7%, said that the factors affecting their fertility intentions are concentrated in the economic pressure, the pressure of children's schooling, the conditions of residence, and the health of childbirth. The proportions of these factors are shown in Figure 2.

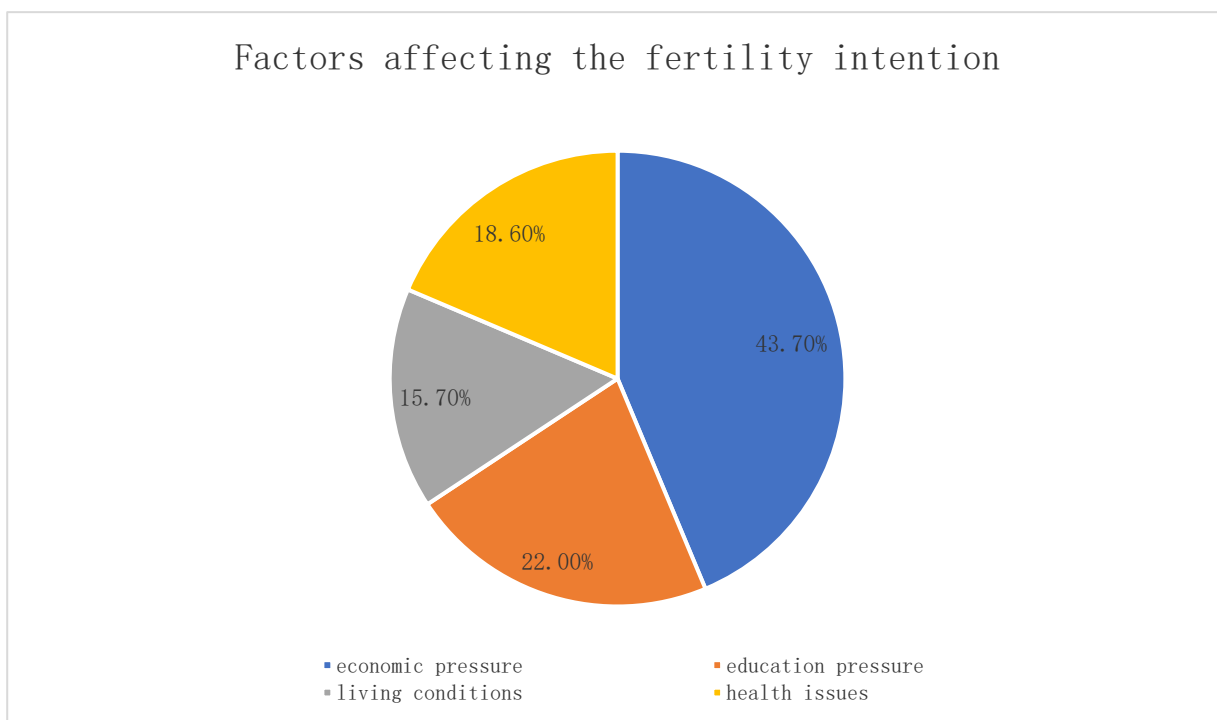


Figure 2. Percentage of factors influencing fertility intentions of 396 respondents

3.3. Factors affecting the fertility intention of residents in Ouhai District, Wenzhou City under the background of the three-child policy

3.3.1. Economic pressure

Economic pressure is the main factor affecting residents' willingness to have children. In the survey, most of the respondents indicated that the pressure of daily life and economic burden of families are already relatively large, and that they need to face higher housing prices, daily living costs and future pension problems for a long time in their lives. These issues have caused more families to worry about bearing the additional costs of childbearing. A large number of respondents who have already given birth to one or two children believe that childbearing is not only a matter of birth, but also needs to take into account the pressure of the costs of raising, educating and employing children in the later stages of their growth, which all require families to have the

appropriate financial strength. In the current socio-economic environment, more and more families prefer to provide a high-quality environment for the growth of one or two children, rather than expanding their family size.

3.3.2. Education pressure

The pressure of children's schooling is also an important factor influencing the low willingness of Ouhai residents to give birth. In the current education environment in China, "famous school", "school district housing" concept prevails, directly affecting the cost of education, this process directly increases the pressure on both parents and children. In addition, some survey respondents believe that children's schooling is also directly linked to economic pressures, and that the high cost of education will further increase the economic pressures on families, while the increasing pressures of life will also drag down the level of investment in resources for children's education.

3.3.3. Living conditions

Living conditions are a problem that every family needs to

face, which directly affects the activity space and quality of life of family members. The complex living environment has a direct impact on the family's willingness to give birth, especially in the Ouhai District, where housing prices are high and land is scarce. For many respondent families, continuing to have children and increasing the number of family members directly implies the need to use a larger living space, which, whether purchasing a new house or renting one, will cause greater economic pressure on the family.

3.3.4. Health issues

For women of childbearing age, especially older women of childbearing age, reproductive health is an issue that cannot be ignored. As women age, their fertility declines and the probability of complications during the reproductive stage rises, and the physical quality of the mother directly affects the healthy development of the fetus. Therefore, a large number of respondents chose not to have children, taking into account the health of both the women themselves and the fetus.

3.4. Suggestions for promoting the birth of three children among the residents of Ouhai District, Wenzhou City

3.4.1. Providing economic policy support

The economic pressure of raising children is a major consideration for many families in choosing their fertility intentions. In the face of the constraints of economic pressure on fertility intentions, the Ouhai District government should establish a reasonable financial compensation policy, such as providing a specific tax relief policy for families with three children, or adding a targeted fertility subsidy system, and at the same time, increasing the survey of fertility in Ouhai District to implement precise policy support for families with two or three children, so as to alleviate the economic pressure, and at the same time, help to encourage more families to be willing to. At the same time, this will help encourage more families to bear the costs of having a second or third child.

3.4.2. Optimization of educational resources

In the face of the shortage of educational resources and the rising competitiveness of compulsory education, local education authorities should focus on increasing investment in education, optimizing the allocation of educational resources, increasing the educational opportunities for children of families with two or three children, relaxing the policy of access to high-quality educational resources for children of two or three children, and flexibly adjusting the policy of "school-zone housing". At the same time, the Government can, in the light of its financial situation and within reasonable limits, provide education subsidies to families with two or three children.

3.4.3. Providing housing subsidies and increasing supply

Housing is one of the main reasons why many families limit their fertility. In order to address the constraints of housing pressure on fertility, the government of Ouhai District can reduce this pressure through housing subsidies and increased supply. For example, it can provide housing subsidies to eligible second- and third-child families, or prioritize the housing needs of second- and third-child families in the supply of public housing. In addition, the government can encourage real estate companies to provide a certain amount of housing preferences for multi-child families through the form of policy subsidies, and provide policy dividends to real estate companies based on other

dimensional policies to reduce the pressure of multi-child families to purchase housing.

3.4.4. Provision of comprehensive maternal health management and medical support

With regard to the constraints on reproductive health issues geared towards the willingness to give birth, on the one hand, the Government can establish and improve maternal health records, and jointly with medical institutions, regularly carry out health education lectures to raise awareness of maternal health during pregnancy, childbirth, the postpartum period, and neonatal health care, so as to effectively improve the level of maternal health management. On the other hand, local medical and health institutions should strengthen the level of community postpartum care, child health service provision, while eligible families with two or three children in the medical insurance level to provide appropriate medical preferences, policy preferences, and then play an effective encouragement for the Ouhai District residents to have children.

4. Conclusion

In summary, based on the survey work, it can be understood that from 1980 to 2022, the average age of female fertility in Ouhai District has been increasing, and the fertility intention of residents is generally low, and the main factors affecting the fertility intention are concentrated in the economy, education, housing and reproductive health. Therefore, the relevant departments can draw on this paper to formulate policies in the dimensions of economy, education, housing and reproductive health, in order to effectively solve the fertility pressure of the residents of Ouhai District, to promote their willingness to continue to give birth to children, and to promote the implementation of the three-child policy, so that the macro-effective reversal of the problem of declining fertility rate and population aging.

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