

A Study on the Fertility Willingness and Influencing Factors of Urban Women of Childbearing Age from an Individualized Perspective

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Abstract: With the rapid development of society, China's population growth rate continues to decline, and the problems of population aging and labor shortage are becoming increasingly serious. This article adopts the methods of questionnaire and interview, introducing an individualized perspective, focusing on the ideal number of children to be born, the purpose of childbirth, and the fertility policy. From the perspectives of individuals, families, and social support, it grasps the basic information of the sample population's fertility intention. Firstly, analyze the current situation of fertility intention from the perspectives of ideal number of children, ideal reproductive time, gender preference, fertility tendency in different age groups, and the transition between fertility intention and behavior. Secondly, from the perspectives of identity in marriage and childbirth, individual independence, and the relationship between individuals and society, it is found that the fertility intention of women of childbearing age is constrained by low maternal identity and high risk of marriage and childbirth, weak traditional gender role concepts and strong individual development awareness, and insufficient social formal and informal support. Finally, based on the influencing factors, suggestions are proposed to improve the marriage and childbirth security system, promote gender equality, and innovate fertility concepts from three perspectives: welfare policies, equal protection of labor rights and interests, and social concepts.

1. Introduction

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1.1. Research background

Under the invasion of modernization and the impact of globalization, China has experienced the transformation from a general society to an individual society[1]. Individualized people have gradually withdrawn from the traditional order. More women choose to develop themselves rather than invest in the traditional "motherhood" status. Women of child-bearing age have a generally reduced willingness to have children.

Nowadays, the concept of "fewer births and better births" is gradually accepted by people. The latest fertility policy cannot play its full role to make up for the fertility gap. China's aging population, the imbalance of the population's gender ratio, the increasing pressure on upbringing, labor shortage and other problems are all problems that people have to face with the growth of the population. Therefore, this article focuses on the forward-looking issue of reproductive willingness of women of childbearing age from the perspective of individualization, studies its influencing factors, explores the problems, and proposes corresponding suggestions, which is in line with the goal of long-term balanced population development in China. It is an important topic on how to build a childbearing friendly society in the era of individualization in China.

1.2. Journals reviewed

Zhao Menghan (2019) studied that women with lower or higher levels of education have a higher willingness to have children compared to women in the middle class, that is, women's education level and willingness to have children meet the U-shaped change model. Heys Jennifer, Jhangri Gian and Rubaale Tom used qualitative and quantitative analysis methods, and found that the personal factors affecting fertility willingness included: child birth cost, opportunity cost, female age and corresponding national and regional policies[2]. Tong Shuxu (2021) conducted a logistic analysis based on CGSS2015 survey data and found that household income status, family division of labor, recognition of elderly care responsibilities, and per capita housing area are the main factors affecting women's willingness to have children[3].

2. Current status of fertility intention among urban women of childbearing age

2.1. Generally low willingness to have children

According to the results of the questionnaire survey, it was found that among all urban women of childbearing age samples, 62.1% of them are unwilling to have children at present, and 37.9% are willing to have children. According to statistical data, it can be seen that urban women of childbearing age generally have a relatively negative desire to have children at this stage.

2.2. Most tend to have late childbearing

Among urban women of childbearing age, 16.7% are willing to have children within 0-1 years after marriage, 61.4% are willing to have children after, and 31.1% tend to have children after 5 years of marriage. It can be seen that women have a clear tendency towards late childbirth, which is not consistent with the traditional concept of "giving birth to a noble child early" and is a blessing. This also reflects the changes in the new era's fertility concept.

2.3. Fertility Intention is positively correlated with age

The overall fertility willingness of young women of childbearing age with stronger fertility and fertility potential is significantly lower than that of older women of childbearing age who face greater fertility risks. The fertility willingness of women of childbearing age is positively correlated with age as a whole.

2.4. There are Many Concerns about the conversion of fertility intention into fertility behavior

The economic situation has a significant impact on women's willingness to have children. With sufficient financial resources, their willingness to have children becomes stronger, indicating that most women are not unwilling to have children, but are concerned about future expenses, which suppresses their willingness to have children. Women have taken into account national policies when making fertility decisions, whether it is the "comprehensive second child" or the "free third child" policy, which is an incentive for women's fertility willingness. It can be seen that the implementation effect of fertility policies directly affects fertility willingness [4].

3. Analysis on the influencing factors of reproductive willingness among urban women of childbearing age

Therefore, this article focuses on the impact of personal factors on the fertility intention of urban women of childbearing age. The study found that the lower fertility intention of women is related to the following factors: the coexistence of low maternal identity and high risk of marriage and childbirth, the coexistence of weak traditional role concepts and strong individual development awareness, and the lack of formal and informal social support.

3.1. Coexistence of low maternal identity and high risk of marriage and childbirth

With the development of the times, women's sense of independence has gradually increased, and "having children" is no longer a truth that constrains women's development. Women with lower maternal identity have more experiences of maternal punishment [5]. In the workplace, having children means investing more energy in the family to achieve a balance between work and family, which directly affects women's career development and even puts them in a dilemma between the workplace and family.

3.2. Decreased gender awareness and enhanced individual awareness

The enhancement of women's individual development awareness and the weakening of traditional gender role concepts have led to a decrease in their own fertility willingness. Women who think more about their own values have lower fertility willingness, indicating that in today's situation, the value created by childbirth for women is lower than the value of women's individual development. In today's society, women need to create value through childbirth. Therefore, in order to achieve stable social development, it is necessary to pay more attention to women's personal needs, add value to women's childbirth, reduce the loss of other values caused by childbirth, and fundamentally attract women to invest in childbirth.

3.3. Lack of formal and informal social support

3.3.1. Formal social support

Formal support in society generally refers to the social support provided by national administrative units or institutions, formal social service organizations, and plays a leading role in social support.

3.3.2. Informal social support

The informal social support that women of childbearing age receive mainly comes from family, friends, and informal organizations, which plays an important role in social support and often has a more direct and profound impact on women's reproductive willingness. Through investigation, it was found that a large proportion of family members of women of childbearing age have stubborn ideas that can hinder their development [6]. Society has not created a favorable environment for respecting and caring for women, and in this environment, women are more likely to develop stronger resistance and even a sense of distrust towards fear of childbirth. The improvement of reproductive willingness among women of childbearing age is also difficult to overcome.

4. Suggestions on Improving the Fertility Willingness of Urban Women of Childbearing Age

4.1. Improve the marriage and childbirth security system to fill the gap in protecting the personal rights and interests of women in marriage and childbirth

The government should clarify the role of policy intervention and provide a comprehensive social support system for women. In terms of public service support, we will improve the maternity insurance system, provide high-quality and targeted policies and services related to women's reproductive processes, and improve women's satisfaction with the reproductive process. [7]

4.2. Promoting the concept of gender equality and effectively safeguarding women's personal development rights and interests

Emphasizing the positive role of gender equality in women's reproductive behavior, providing a fair and harmonious social environment for women, and the suppression of women's reproductive willingness by gender discrimination in the labor market should be taken seriously.

4.3. Innovating the concept of friendly childbirth and effectively improving the effectiveness of women's social support

From a spiritual perspective, it is necessary to establish the concept of harmonious childbirth.

Abandoning and cracking down on feudal and backward fertility culture, avoiding its negative impact on women's fertility intentions, and increasing publicity for fertility policies and supporting welfare. Society as a whole should help women establish a correct outlook on childbirth, not equate female values with reproductive values, affirm the value brought by female childbirth, clarify the fact that women as individuals can independently create many social values, support individual development of women, and guide them to have a healthy outlook on childbirth instead of imposing reproductive responsibilities on women, guiding society to form a harmonious and healthy new reproductive concept.

5. Conclusion

In terms of countermeasures and suggestions, the first step is to propose a comprehensive marriage and childbirth security system based on the factors that affect the coexistence of low maternal identity and high risk of marriage and childbirth. Secondly, in response to the fact that gender awareness has been weakened and personal awareness has been enhanced, suggestions are proposed to promote the concept of gender equality and effectively protect women's personal rights and interests; Finally, based on the factors that both formal and informal social support lack, and guided by improving the utilization of social support for women of childbearing age, suggestions for innovative and friendly reproductive concepts are proposed in response to the constantly developing reproductive concepts amidst conflicts.

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