

# A study on the influencing factors of childbearing intention of working-age women—A case study of Shanghai

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**Abstract:** In recent years, our country is facing the increasingly serious problem of low fertility, our country has been in the trap of low fertility, and the problem of population development is imminent. How to effectively improve the current situation of low fertility rate and alleviate the impact of low fertility rate is an important topic that we need to study urgently. As the central city of China, Shanghai's fast-paced living environment and the rapidly developing social status of high prices and high consumption have indirectly or directly led to the extremely obvious population aging trend and the social status of low fertility rate in Shanghai, which is a typical representative of the current situation of low fertility rate in China. Based on the above conclusions, this paper analyzes the reasons that may lead to the current low fertility rate from three perspectives: social environment, workplace environment and economic pressure. The paper also puts forward specific suggestions on the above problems which may lead to the decrease of fertility rate.

**Keywords:** Fertility rate; Fertility intention; Economic society; Fertility penalty; Fertility policy

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, according to the "2021 China Statistical Yearbook" data of the National Bureau of Statistics, since 2016, China's birth rate has shown a significant downward trend year by year, and has fallen to 7.5 per thousand by 2021. Unbalance of population structure and aging of population in our country are more and more serious, and the population development situation is becoming more and more severe, which will reduce the labor force, negatively affect the technological innovation <sup>[1]</sup> and inhibit economic growth <sup>[2]</sup>. The population issue has always been a basic, overall and strategic issue affecting China's economic and social development, and has always been attached great importance by the Party and the state. The report to the Party's 20th National Congress also proposed: "Optimize the population development strategy, establish a fertility support policy system, and reduce the cost of childbirth, parenting, and education." Therefore, what measures to take to improve the fertility rate will become one of the focus of social attention at present.

In order to further adapt to the new changes in the population situation and promote the new requirements of high-quality development, in 2021, China began to implement the "one couple can have three children policy and supporting measures" to encourage fertility and stimulate the growth of China's newborn population, but even if the state increased policy support, At present, many women of childbearing age still choose to delay their childbearing time or change their fertility attitude due to economic pressure, psychological burden, work pressure and other factors, resulting in China's fertility rate in the past two years is still in a depressed state. In order to have an in-depth understanding of the factors affecting the reproductive intention of women of appropriate age in Shanghai, members of the project team visited a number of social areas such as Fudan Software Park and Wujiaochang Business District in Yangpu District of Shanghai, and conducted in-depth investigations on women of childbearing age of different occupations and ages by means of questionnaires and field interviews.

## 2. Empirical Study On Childbearing Intention of Women of Appropriate Age in Shanghai

Fertility intention is people's attitude and view on fertility behavior, which mainly includes three aspects: fertility purpose, ideal number of children and child sex preference. <sup>[3]</sup> In order to understand the

fertility intention and its influencing factors of school-age women in Shanghai, this paper conducted a questionnaire survey on school-age women between 20 and 45 years old in Shanghai by a combination of online and offline questionnaires. Considering that a small part of students and unemployed people in the sample did not meet the requirements of this analysis, these 114 samples were excluded. Finally, 1562 valid samples were obtained. According to the data of the questionnaire survey, the childbearing intention of women of appropriate age in Shanghai has the following characteristics.

## 2.1. Logistic Regression Result

Table 1: Regression results of core variable "whether there is a desire to be promoted" model

Model	1	2	3
Var	Actual Number of Children	Actual Fertility	Whether Want to Continue to Have Children
Whether There is a Desire for Promotion	-0.128***	-0.367***	-0.437***
	(0.042)	(0.115)	(0.117)
Population Type	-0.027	0.037	0.778***
	(0.050)	(0.140)	(0.140)
Age	-0.002	0.010	0.118*
	(0.026)	(0.069)	(0.069)
Educational Background	0.020	0.066	0.060
	(0.025)	(0.068)	(0.069)
Personal Annual Income	0.040**	0.133***	0.022
	(0.016)	(0.044)	(0.044)
C	0.960***	-0.563*	0.977**
	(0.123)	(0.300)	(0.486)
R-squared	0.369	0.029	0.205

Table 2: Regression result of the core variable "whether it will reduce the assessment requirements"

Model	4	5	6
Var	Actual Number of Children	Actual Fertility	Whether Want to Continue to Have Children
Whether the Company will Lower the Assessment Requirements after Childbirth	0.161***	0.492***	0.689***
	(0.050)	(0.140)	(0.141)
Population Type	-0.051	-0.036	0.788***
	(0.061)	(0.174)	(0.173)
Age	-0.002	0.026	0.135
	(0.031)	(0.086)	(0.084)
Educational Background	0.037	0.105	0.050
	(0.029)	(0.081)	(0.084)
Personal Annual Income	0.063***	0.205***	0.001
	(0.019)	(0.053)	(0.054)
C	0.711***	-1.235***	0.380
	(0.138)	(0.327)	(0.558)
R-squared	0.361	0.051	0.252

Note: \*, \*\* and \*\*\* are significant at the levels of 10%, 5% and 1% respectively; The data in parentheses represent standard errors.

## 2.2. Result analysis

The following conclusions can be drawn from Table 1 and Table 2:

According to the regression results of models 1, 2 and 3, whether there is a desire to be promoted has passed the significance level test of 1%, and the regression coefficient is negative. This indicates that promotion intention has a significant inhibitory effect on fertility intention of women of appropriate age.

This may be due to the fact that pregnancy or having too many children can alter the productivity and hours of many working-age women, making it difficult for them to effectively balance work and childcare. At the same time, most of the companies are promoted according to the performance level and work performance, so the current working-age women who are willing to promote will tend to have no children or only one child.

According to the regression results of models 4, 5 and 6, "Whether the company will reduce the assessment requirements after childbirth" have all passed the significance level test of 1%, and the regression coefficient is positive. This indicates that if women return to work after giving birth, the company will appropriately reduce the requirements in performance appraisal or job indicators, so that their fertility willingness and continue to have children will be improved. It is proved that the failure of the company to help female employees balance work and childcare in a timely and effective manner after giving birth is an important reason for the reluctance of some women of appropriate age to give birth.

In Model 3 and Model 6, population type plays a significant role in the promotion, indicating that Shanghai resident women who already have children have a higher desire to continue to have children. Compared with non-resident population, the mobility of permanent residents is low, and most of them have stable jobs and housing in the local area, and the economic and life pressure is less. They can bear the economic expenses brought about by having more children, and their ability to bear risks such as lower wages and unemployment is also relatively high. At the same time, because of the high degree of urbanization in Shanghai in the past, the high rate of couples and double workers, and the high degree of implementation of the local family planning period, many women of the right age are now the only child, out of the hope that the child can have a partner in the growth process not like their lonely consideration, they will tend to have a second child.

In models 1, 2, 4 and 5, personal annual income all passed the significance level test of 5% or 1%, and the regression coefficient was positive. It shows that each level of personal annual income increases, the number of their actual children will also increase, which also shows from the side that their fertility will be higher. Working-age women with high personal income have better living conditions, less job promotion pressure, and less economic and work pressure due to raising and educating children. Therefore, the higher the personal annual income of women of appropriate age, the more sufficient the "confidence" to have children.

### **3. Summary and Analysis of The Causes of Low Fertility Willingness of Women of Appropriate Age in Shanghai**

According to the existing research findings, overtime work may not have a significant impact on reproductive intention, but it will increase women's reproductive pressure and significantly inhibit reproductive behavior. Compared with voluntary overtime and paid overtime, involuntary overtime and unpaid overtime have more obvious inhibitory effect on reproductive behavior. Due to the current policy constraints, men are less affected than women in all aspects during pregnancy, and women in the workplace are at a disadvantage compared to men. The single subjectivized family parenting model of "male master outside, female master inside" is no longer suitable for the current social environment, and the current society needs more male and female dual subjectivized family parenting model, so it is necessary to increase the educational obligations of men in the upbringing of offspring.

Women often encounter some resistance and obstacles when they are promoted, which is known as the "glass ceiling effect". For the reasons, it can be attributed to some reasons. For example, in the current society, most employers assess the promotion requirements of employees mainly based on performance level and work performance. If women of childbearing age give birth in the workplace, their work efficiency and working time will inevitably be reduced, which will affect the promotion opportunities. Even if women are able to return to work quickly after giving birth, they tend to be distracted by the need to care for a family or raise children, and they often lag behind other colleagues. In addition, because mothers often need to take care of their babies and cannot work long hours or travel for long periods of time, they miss some key development opportunities, which will greatly limit the opportunities and possibilities of career development for women after childbirth. Few employers can deal with these problems well, which will reduce women's willingness to have children to a certain extent.

According to the theoretical framework of "new family economics", the balance between income effect and substitution effect of people's reproductive demand determines the level of fertility. Its theory divides child-rearing cost into direct cost and indirect cost. For working women, they will use the valuable resource of "time" to take care of children, which will increase the indirect cost of women having

children, so there is a substitution effect between female employment and fertility. Based on this theory, the increase of women's labor participation and the increase of women's wages have increased the shadow price of childbearing, which has led to the frequent occurrence of the phenomenon of "being able to afford but not being able to support".

#### 4. Relevant Measures

In order to improve the consciousness of male responsibility to achieve the effect of reducing maternal fertility pressure, male reproductive rights need to be better protected. The Population and Family Planning Law stipulates that it is an authorized norm, not a mandatory norm, and lacks punitive measures and compensation when men's reproductive rights are ignored. <sup>[4]</sup> The National Human Resources and Social Security Administration shall formulate departmental regulations related to men's nursing leave, and the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress shall stipulate them as compulsory norms, apply prohibitions, and explicitly prohibit acts that ignore men's reproductive rights and interests. <sup>[5]</sup> Male nursing leave only stays at the level of local regulations, without the support of administrative regulations of The State Council or the legal support of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. Therefore, it is necessary to uniformly transform the local family planning regulations on male nursing leave into legal measures. The minimum number of nursing leave days shall be determined and local regulations shall be formulated by local people's congresses to extend male nursing leave appropriately. Maternity insurance fund for employers to bear part of the wages of men during leave as maternity allowances, reduce the economic burden of enterprises, break the "government treats, employers pay" situation.

People with insufficient fertility can be divided into elderly parturients, parturients with diseases themselves, and infertile families. For the first two types of women, the birth risk is greater, more auxiliary medical means are needed to ensure the smooth birth process, and the cost of postpartum care is relatively higher than that of normal women. The government can allow such maternity insurance to reimburse more tests and types of medical drugs. For infertile families, couples who use assistive technologies ("test tube babies") to have children have a heavier financial burden. The Human Resources and Social Security Bureau can include the cost of physical examination, the cost of ovulation promoting drugs, and the cost of egg retrieval surgery into the scope of medical insurance in proportion to solve the economic burden of some families. In addition, it can also accelerate the exploration of the establishment of pregnancy insurance system, including low-income infertility patients into social security, and effectively protect the reproductive rights of each individual. <sup>[6]</sup>

Childbirth will affect individual work status and thus affect promotion opportunities, and most companies will not give special care to women after childbirth and appropriately reduce performance appraisal requirements. In response to such problems, employers should appropriately reduce the requirements of the performance appraisal system for women after they return to work for a period of time, which is conducive to the recovery of women's post-natal state, readjust to the high-intensity work environment and effectively improve work efficiency. In addition, the Human Resources and Social Security Bureau can encourage enterprises to establish a "promotion delay inspection mechanism" for women of childbearing age who face promotion pressure, and the specific content of the mechanism can be set as follows: If female workers have the desire to be promoted at work but are concerned about fertility at the same time, they can apply to the employer for "delaying the promotion examination period", and restart the promotion investigation when they return to work after childbirth, that is, giving women after childbirth a second promotion opportunity, and to a certain extent, helping women of childbearing age in the rising period of work to reduce the reproductive pressure.

#### 5. Conclusions

Fertility rate is an important factor that determines social development and is the core point that affects the rate of population growth. However, China is currently facing a serious problem of low fertility, which has great potential impact on the healthy development of society. In this paper, based on the background of Shanghai, an international city, questionnaires were issued to investigate the influencing factors of reproductive intention of working women of childbearing age in different occupations in Shanghai, and a logistic regression model was constructed to analyze the data. Several significant factors affecting reproductive intention were drawn, for example, the lower the reproductive intention of working women with promotion intention. Summarize and analyze these factors and put forward relevant policy suggestions in view of these problems from three aspects: social environment, workplace

environment and economic pressure, hoping to provide decision-making reference for further improving China's population development problems, which has great practical significance.

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