

Research on College Students' Views on Marriage and Childbearing—Based on a Sample Survey of Colleges and Universities in H City, Zhejiang Province, China

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Abstract: College students are important participants in future reproductive behavior, and their views on marriage and family are the basis for predicting future changes in marriage and family, and have a huge impact on population fertility. In this study, college students from three colleges and universities in H City, Zhejiang Province were systematically investigated and studied, and it was found that college students in H city generally had conservative views on marriage and childbearing, with diversified characteristics and obvious gender differences. The author analyzes the problems from three aspects: the concept of marriage and childbirth, the paradox of marriage and childbirth and the education of marriage and childbirth, and puts forward countermeasures and suggestions from three aspects: accelerating the construction of a new marriage and childbirth culture system, a new birth incentive policy system and a new marriage and childbirth culture education system.

Keywords: College students, Conception of marriage and childbearing, Status quo, Problem, Countermeasure

1. Introduction

The population issue has always been an overall, long-term and strategic issue for China^[1]. In recent years, there have been some significant changes in China's population development, facing both the pressure of a large population and the challenges brought by the change of population structure. Under the background of negative population growth, "aging with declining birthrate" will become the norm^[2]. As the backbone of the youth group, college students' views on marriage and childbearing are the basis for predicting the future changes of marriage and family, and the core subject of future marriage and childbearing behavior, which has a great impact on the whole population fertility rate of the country^[3]. At the same time, college students are in the key node of becoming adults, is an important period of personality and ideology formation. College students' views on marriage and childbearing not only determine the group's future marriage and childbearing behavior and fertility level, but also have unique and powerful radiation and influence on the whole society^[4]. Therefore, attaching importance to the education and research of marriage concept of college students and other young groups is of great significance to explore and solve the problem of low fertility^[5]. In the past five years, more than 400,000 new college students have been introduced into H City, Zhejiang Province, and college students have become the main force of the new influx of population in H City. Taking the college students in H City as an example, this paper investigates and analyzes the current situation and problems of their views on marriage and childbearing, and puts forward countermeasures and suggestions.

2. Study Subjects and Survey Methods

As shown in Table 1 college students in 3 universities (1 normal college, 1 comprehensive college and 1 vocational college) in H City were selected as the research objects. From September to December 2022, the research was carried out by a combination of questionnaire survey and interviews, and a total of 6321 valid questionnaires were collected. Among them, males accounted for 38.47%, females accounted for 61.53%; Professional college accounted for 40.35%, undergraduate 55.26%, graduate 4.4%; Only child accounted for 40.74%, non-only child accounted for 59.26%.(See Table 1 for details)

Table 1: Distribution of respondents

	Options	Valid questionnaires	Percent
School distribution	School A (Normal College)	3255	51.50%
	B School (Comprehensive College)	591	9.35%
	C School (Vocational College)	2475	39.15%
Sex	Male	2432	38.47%
	Female	3889	61.53%
Educational background	vocational degree	2544	40.25%
	Bachelor degree	3499	55.36%
	Postgraduate degree	278	4.4%
Whether it is the only child or not	Yes	2575	40.74%
	No	3746	59.26%

3. Survey Results

3.1 The Concept of Marriage and Childbearing of College Students in H City is Generally Conservative

First, the desire to love is not strong. Only 22.65% of the survey respondents have love experience, and the rest of the single college students, only 23.13% have the intention of falling in love in the near future, 7.85% have the intention of never falling in love. Second, the time of marriage and childbearing is later. The survey showed that the age of first marriage and first childbearing were 26.92 and 27.88 years, respectively, and the intended childbearing interval was 3.13 years. The results of the seventh Chinese census show that the average age of first marriage in Zhejiang in 2020 is 24.73 years old, and the average age of first, second and third children is 27.33, 30.96 and 32.02 years old, respectively. All indicators of college students in H city are higher than the provincial average, among which the age of first marriage is 2.19 years higher and the age of third child is 2.12 years higher. Third, the desire to have children is not high. 31.12% of the respondents said that they did not want to have children after marriage, and the rest of the respondents said that having a child was the mainstream, accounting for 50.76%, and the average number of children they wanted to have was 1.54, showing a double low trend of fertility desire and number.

3.2 The Concept of Marriage and Childbearing of College Students in H City has Diversified Characteristics

First, love motivation is diverse. The questionnaire summarizes seven types of love motivation options, including "finding a learning partner", "increasing emotional experience" and "blindly following the trend". The respondents who are interested in falling in love are asked to answer in the form of multiple choices. The average number of options is 2.4, which is relatively scattered, indicating that the diversity of love motivation is obvious. Second, the marriage attitude is diverse. It mainly shows three characteristics: reality, openness and autonomy. In terms of reality, "GO dutch marriage" has a high degree of recognition, showing a certain value orientation of marriage tools. In terms of openness, premarital cohabitation, unmarried birth and extramarital affair have a certain proportion of acceptance, and the acceptance rate of premarital cohabitation is as high as 45.39%. In terms of autonomy, parents' influence on their children's marriage and childbearing is decreasing, with 13% of respondents saying they do not want to be bound by marriage and support voluntary celibacy. Third, there are multiple influencing factors. Realistic conditions, network information and traditional ideas are the main influencing factors. The three realistic factors of economy, time and work accounted for 65.68%, 61.97% and 34.42% respectively, and the negative network information and virtual technology accounted for 52.02% of the reasons for supporting non-marriage. The survey of the reasons for supporting age-appropriate marriage and childbearing showed that traditional concepts such as "When you grow up, you should get married" and "Have a son to carry on his family name" accounted for 50.79%.

3.3 The Gender Difference of Marriage and Childbearing Concept of College Students in H City is Obvious

First, the male view of marriage is relatively more positive. ① Men are more supportive of age-appropriate marriage and childbearing. The proportion of men who support age-appropriate marriage and childbearing is 1.5 times that of women, and the proportion of men who support non-marriage is only

1/3 of women. ②Men are willing to have more children. The average number of children men want to have is 1.62, 10 percentage points higher than women. ③The age of men willing to have children is earlier. The mean age of first childbearing for males was 27.5 years, 0.7 years earlier than that for females. ④Men prefer shorter birth intervals. The ideal child-rearing interval for men is 2 years, which is 0.4 years shorter than that for women. Second, gender preference for parenting has changed. ①The thought of "son preference" has reversed, and the preference of girls is much higher than that of boys, and the preference of male college students is higher. ②The proportion of non-gender preference is the highest, indicating that a new gender view of parenting is taking shape. "One is a boy and the other a girl" is still the preferred choice for having a second child, which is in line with traditional Chinese fertility concept.

4. Problem Analysis

4.1 Problems in the Concept of Marriage and Childbirth

First, the "dejected culture" is popular. The "casual" concept of marriage and childbirth represented by "indifference" and the "radical" concept represented by "Dinks" and "voluntary celibacy" account for a large proportion, which is hidden behind the popularity of "dejected culture" in which college students excessively pursue individualism and liberalism. Second, the sexual concept is open. The acceptance rate of open concepts such as "premarital cohabitation" and "unmarried childbearing" accounted for more than 60%. The acceptance rate of unhealthy sexual behaviors such as accidental sex and extramarital affairs was 5.74%. Overall, sexual attitudes are comparatively open.

4.2 The Paradox of Marriage and Childbearing

The first is the paradox between studying and marriage. A high degree of education represents good quality to a certain extent, which is conducive to prenatal and postnatal care. However, a high degree of education also means a high age and late marriage and childbirth, which is not conducive to prenatal and postnatal care and multiple births. The second is the paradox between job hunting and marriage and childbirth. On the one hand, a stable job is regarded as an important pre-marital condition; on the other hand, the family responsibilities after marriage affect the job involvement to a certain extent, so college students generally get employed first and then get married. Fertility has a greater impact on job hunting, and many enterprises will discriminate against women for maternity leave^[6]. Influenced by the mentality of a strong woman and her high age, female elites in the workplace will also have a dilemma in choosing a spouse. The third is the paradox between providing for the aged and marriage and childbearing. The cost of studying time leads to college students' late marriage, the pressure of employment and career development leads to college students' late childbearing, and the combination of educational, economic and time constraints leads to college students' fear of having more children, which further aggravates the problem of "having fewer children at an advanced age".

4.3 Problems in Education of Marriage and Childbearing

First, the new marriage culture has not yet been condensed and formed. University leaders, teachers and college students have not reached a consensus on the core value of the new marriage and childbearing culture, and their understanding of the new marriage and childbearing policy is not consistent, which leads to the lack of endogenous motivation and direction guidance in the new marriage and childbearing culture education in colleges and universities. Second, the network publicity effect of marriage and childbearing culture is not good. College students' network circle culture and marriage and childbearing culture are interacting with each other^[7], but the network propaganda effect is not good, the awareness rate of college students' marriage and childbearing policies is not high, and influenced by the fragmentation, extremism and negativity of Internet information, some college students infinitely magnify the negative problems of some minimal probability events and even some normal physiological phenomena, resulting in "catastrophic" thinking and inducing college students to have a bad view on marriage and childbearing. Third, the supply of marriage and childbearing education resources in colleges and universities is insufficient. At present, there are four main types of marriage and childbearing education in colleges and universities in H city: youth and healthy peer education based on student associations, love education based on mental health education, general courses on sexual and reproductive health (only offered in one school), and online courses related to marriage and childbearing. There are some problems such as lack of curriculum resources, shortage of teachers, unsystematic content and narrow coverage, which can not meet the practical needs of college students.

5. Countermeasures and Suggestions

5.1 Accelerate the Construction of a New Cultural System of Marriage and Childbearing.

The culture of marriage and childbearing is a kind of silent influence and change on the behavior of childbearing. ^[8]At present, great changes have taken place in China's marriage and childbearing policy, and it is urgent to promote the iteration and upgrading of traditional fertility culture and build a new marriage and childbearing culture with the times. First, a macro perspective: three dimensions should be considered comprehensively. ①From the height of population development strategy to think about the rich connotation of the new marriage and childbearing culture.②From the depth of Chinese excellent traditional culture to think about the core content of the new marriage and childbearing culture . ③From a global perspective to think about the China's characteristics of the new marriage and childbearing culture. The second is the micro perspective: focus on four levels. ①Emphasize the age-appropriate marriage and childbearing, and further optimize the legal marriage and childbearing conditions. ② Emphasize autonomous reproduction, advocate responsible family planning, and do not arbitrarily interfere with reproductive private rights. ③Emphasize prenatal and postnatal care, improve the quality of marriage and childbearing, and give guidance, care and protection to reproductive behavior. ④Revise the unhealthy concept of marriage and childbearing, awaken college students' attention to population issues from the perspective of national development, and resist negative circle cultures such as voluntary celibacy, dink culture and unhealthy sexual behavior.

5.2 Accelerate the Establishment of a New Fertility Incentive Policy System

College students are the main force in the future fertility. To mobilize their fertility enthusiasm, it should focus on solving the "worries" of college students' fertility, accelerate the construction of a fertility incentive policy system, and make comprehensive policies from the aspects of fertility, parenting, education and economy. ^[9]First, the fertility level: to improve and implement the maternity leave system. Increase publicity and supervision of the newly revised population birth policy, insure maternity insurance protection, and strictly implement the new maternity leave, parental leave and paternity leave systems. The second is the parenting level: to promote the development of inclusive childcare services. Optimize and improve the "sunflower parent-child cabin" model, and gradually promote. Encourage the establishment of childcare service centers in communities or large units in the form of public construction and private operation. Strengthen supervision and inspection, carry out qualification certification and training, and improve industry norms. Third, the education level: to balance the basic education resources and explore the flexible education system in colleges and universities. Optimize the allocation of basic education resources and admission policies, rectify the hype of a house in the catchment area for a school, continuously rectify off-campus training institutions, and continue to regulate off-campus training institutions, and strictly implement the "double reduction" policy. Actively explore the flexible education system in colleges and universities, and provide convenient "suspension-resumption" channels for students who cannot graduate on time due to marriage and childbirth^[10]. Change the management concept of students and promote the "a dormitory for spouses" system of graduate students^[11]. Fourth, the economic level: it is necessary to establish a differentiated subsidy system for housing and childcare. For newly-married groups, basic housing security is provided by providing transitional housing or the first set of housing subsidies. For families with multiple children, provide improved housing security in the form of house purchase and deed tax subsidies, and implement a tiered subsidy policy to encourage multiple children to have children. Establish and strengthen economic compensation policies such as childcare subsidies and tax deduction to minimize the cost of childcare.

5.3 Accelerate the Construction of a New Marriage and Childbearing Culture and Education System.

Colleges and universities are the main positions for teaching and educating people, also fronts of cultural inheritance and innovation. College students are in an important period of forming their outlook on life and values. Opening up new positions for research, education and publicity of marriage and childbearing culture in colleges and universities and accelerating the construction of a new marriage and childbearing culture education system are conducive to improving college students' cultural literacy and fertility will. First, the educational content should cover multiple dimensions such as law, physiology, psychology and ethics. In the traditional college education system, the content of marriage and childbearing culture should be moderately increased, the knowledge of marriage and childbearing should be disseminated, new concepts should be advocated, laws and policies should be publicized, and college

students' awareness of national conditions and policies should be guided. Its content should cover the knowledge of laws and policies related to marriage and childbearing, social and psychological knowledge, ethics and moral knowledge, as well as physical health and safety knowledge. Second, educational forms should adopt diversified modes such as online, offline and peer education. Online courses have the characteristics of sharing and convenience, and are not limited by time and space, which can not only protect the privacy of learning, but also alleviate the dilemma of teacher shortage. It is necessary to co-ordinate the city's resources, encourage cross-domain cooperation, and accelerate the development of online courses. Continue to promote the construction of youth health peer clubs and youth networks in colleges and universities, make great efforts to train the host team of peer education, give full play to the strength of peers, and let young people educate and guide young people. It is necessary not only to create a course with characteristics of marriage and love, but also to strengthen the training of all teachers by relying on the ideological and political construction of the course, and to embed marriage and childbearing education into the whole process of educating people in colleges and universities, so as to form a pattern of great marriage and childbearing culture and education in which all personnel are educated. Third, the main body of education should form a multi-linkage system of "school - government - society - family - individual" ①Schools: to improve the political position, fully understand the importance of college students' marriage and childbearing education, incorporate the marriage and childbearing culture into the top-level design of school teaching and scientific research. ②The government: not only to optimize supporting policies, but also to actively enter the university campus, to supervise, guide and help the school's marriage, parenting and cultural education work. ③Society: to promote the change of customs, and create a positive and civilized new trend of marriage and childbearing in society. ④Family: to resist the traditional bad habits such as high price betrothal gifts (from the bridegroom to the bride's family), and cultivate a new family marriage and childbearing culture. ⑤Individuals: Take the initiative to learn and improve personal marriage and childbearing literacy; to actively participate and influence each other positively.

6. Conclusion

College students' concept of marriage and childbearing not only affects their individual marriage, family choice and life development, but also has a profound impact on China's fertility level, population structure and intergenerational support system for the elderly^[12]. In recent years, China's fertility rate has continued to decline rapidly, China recorded more deaths than births in 2020 for the first time ever, and the "population crisis" has become increasingly prominent. The state actively adjusts the birth policy, but the effect is not satisfactory, and it is urgent to further study the countermeasures. Based on the data analysis of 6321 college students in H City, Zhejiang Province, the results show that there are some new situations and problems in the concept of marriage and childbearing. These new situations and new problems run counter to the goals of the pro-fertility policy vigorously promoted by the Chinese government in recent years, suggesting that the government, universities and many other organizations should join forces to implement more powerful, more comprehensive and more systematic comprehensive reforms from the new marriage and childbearing culture, fertility support policy and marriage and childbearing culture and education.

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