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The Comparative Study on Fertility Intention between Floating Population and Local Residents in China----Based on Beijing's Survey

Abstract: Based on the survey data that the Beijing population research Institute conducted in 2008 and 2011 in Beijing, this study made a comparative research on fertility intention between floating population and local residents, with regard to ideal number of children, gender preference and influence factors. The research results show that both of floating population and local residents show low intentions in ideal number of children, low probability on having a second child and no son preference. Meanwhile, the study demonstrated that it is social-economic factor not family planning policy more influential on the childbearing behavior. And more and more families voluntarily choose bearing one-child. Based on the findings, this paper draws the conclusion that with rapid modernization and urbanization in China, the fertility intension has been greatly weakened and Chinese government should make fertility policy adjustment as early as possible .

(150 words)

Key Words: fertility policy, fertility intention, comparative research

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Background

Up to now, it has been over 30 years that strict family fertility policies such as one-child policy have been carried out in China. China's fertility has been dropped to the level below replacement since the early 1990s. The 2010 Chinese census show total Fertility Rate (TFR) for China is about 1.18 and it is ever lower than 1 in more developed areas such as Beijing, Shanghai and Jiangsu. (Zheng, 2010). If the extremely low fertility continues, China will have to take on a huge aging group soon

and face a rapid decline in labor force (Gu, 2006). It is time to adjust the fertility policy. In fact, some fertility policies have been amended in some provinces in recent years such as couples with one side single are allowed to have a second child in rural areas in seven provinces (Gu, 2006). The adjustment has kept on the same old model that the different policy had been taken place between urban and rural areas.

As most of us know that fertility policies in China have been carried out over past 30 years and they are duality fertility policy instead of simple one-child policy. The dichotomic fertility policy were characterized by urban-rural duality system that overwhelming majority of urban residents is subject to one-child policy and most people in rural areas is subject to one-and-half policy (Guo, 2002). The theoretical basis of dichotomic fertility policy is that there is a considerable gap in fertility intention between urban and rural inhabitants in the 1980s and 1990s. Lu's studies show that the fertility level is very different between urban and rural areas due to the different socio-economic conditions, education and health services (Lu, 2004) and ideal number of children. The fertility desire such as ideal number of children and gender preference is considerably different as well (Zheng, 2004).

However, with the rapid modernization and urbanization, the fertility desires among rural residents are changing in the socioeconomically more developed areas of the country such as Beijing, Shanghai and Jiangsu Province (Ma, 2007, 2008; Zheng, 2010). Then, what happened about their fertility intention under current situation? What is the trend of intention to bear more or less children? The study on these questions can have important policy implications when the central and local governments are to revisit fertility policy, This paper focuses on these questions with data from Beijing surveys.

Data

The paper based on the data from the two questionnaire surveys conducted in July 2008 and Aug 2011 in both urban and rural areas in Beijing by Beijing Population Research Institute, with 3,000 respondents aged 20-39, who belong to different groups. Some are local residents living in urban or rural area and some are floating population from other cities or rural areas (see table 1). Based on the surveys' data, this paper made a comparative research on fertility desire including the ideal number of children, gender preference and influence factors in fertility intension.

Table 1 The Detail Information about Respondents (%)

urban registered	rural registered	Urban to urban floating	Rural to urban floating
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		residents	residents	population	population
Numbers		974	984	342	642
Gender	Male	47.9	48.4	37.1	46
	Female	52.1	51.6	61.5	54
Age	20-24	24.9	31.6	16.7	34.5
	25-29	25.2	57.9	36.0	27.7
	30-34	32.6	10.6	24.9	18.4
	35-49	17.2	00.0	22.5	19.3
Education	Junior high school or below	4.5	15.9	7.1	60.3
	Senior high school	17.0	47.2	17.0	23.9
	Junior collage	27.0	27.7	24	9.9
	University Degree or above	51.4	9.2	51.9	5.9
Marriage	unmarried	51.0	22.4	31.9	31.6
	married	49.0	77.6	68.1	68.4

Main Results

1. Four groups all show lower fertility intentions.

The table 2 shows the ideal number of children of our target interviewees when they do not consider other influential factors.

Table 2 Ideal number of children in Beijing Surveys (%)

Sample type	# of sample	0	1	2	3 and above	Average number of ideal children
Urban registered residents	974	9.5	51.6	38.3	0.6	1.30
Rural registered residents	983	1.4	50.4	47.6	0.6	1.47
Urban to urban floating population	342	6.3	49.1	43.5	1.2	1.39
Rural to urban floating population	646	1.3	44.2	54.3	0.3	1.53

The table suggests that all four group interviewees hold the idea of low rate of fertility. The figures also show that the first three groups have higher intention to have no or one child than two children. Although the last group shows the greatest intention in having a second child compared to other three groups, the average number of children they desire to have is only 1.53 which is actually much lower than replacement level fertility. The average number of ideal children of all groups is lower than 1.6. More than half of the registered residents and urban-urban floating population prefer to have only one child. The floating population from rural areas wants to have more children than local residents and urban to urban floating population.

2. The willingness of having a second child tends to be low

The graph shows the intention of having a second child provided that policy permits.

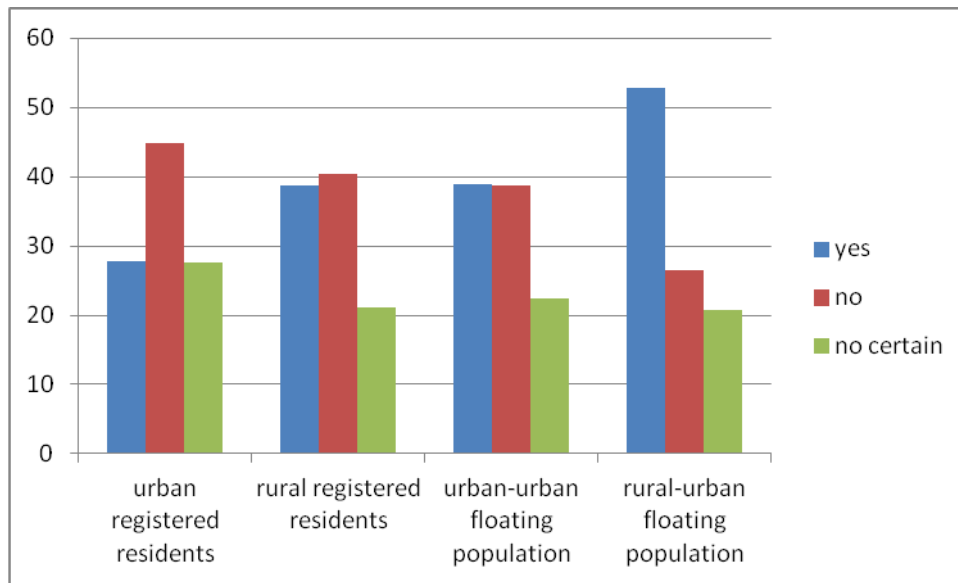


Figure 1 The desire of having a second child tends if the policy permit (%)

The figure 1 shows that not many people in the four groups are willing to have a second child despite comparatively higher percentage in rural-urban floating population, which is still very low. While previous studies showed that people in rural area were willing to have more than one child, this survey suggests that recently rural registered residents show very low intention to have a second child and the figure of the intention to have a second child is even lower than 40 percent. Even if the fertility policy allows, most of urban young people are unwilling to have a second child. This figure tells us that only a small portion of registered residents and urban floating population are likely to have a second child even if the policy permits

3 There is no son preference for all groups

In the questionnaire, the interviewees were asked the questions of which gender of child they prefer to have. Their answers revealed that there is no big difference between boys and girls.

Table 3 The gender preference for children (%)

Sample type	Sample number	Have a son	Have a daughter	Either gender	having both a son and a daughter	Total
urban registered residents	974	6.6	12.4	76.7	4.3	100
Rural registered residents	983	13	13.9	73.1	0.0	100
Urban to urban floating population	342	7.6	19.1	59.2	14.07	100
Rural to urban floating population	646	9.31	11.8	67.55	11.34	100

The figures shown in table 3 suggest that there is no sex preference among the four-group interviewees. Sons used to be the preferred choice in traditional societies. However, with rapid economic development and modern culture transformation, many people from rural area changed their mind significantly. According to the figure, son preference is not evidently shown among all the interviewed residents. People do not show more interest to have a son than a daughter. Some people even think that having a daughter is a better choice. All in all, over 60 percent interviewed residents chose that either gender would be acceptable.

4. Childbearing behavior depending on self-determination no matter which group of residents they belong to

The following table illustrates that the questions of who influence your childbearing behavior. The items in answers include myself, spouses, my parents, spouses' parents, colleagues or friends, and others.

Table 4 Who influence your childbearing behavior? (%)

	urban registered residents	rural registered residents	urban-urban floating population	rural-urban floating population	average
Myself	86.5	58.8	63.1	61.5	74.3
Spouse	7.4	23.5	20.1	17.4	12.9
My parents	3.6	13.4	10.3	12.9	7.8
Spouse's parents	0.5	3.64	2.7	5.5	2.5
Colleagues/friends	0.7	0.3	2.1	1.3	1.1
other	1.2	0.51	1.8	1.4	1.4
Total	100	100	100	100	

The figure shows that most interviewees say whether or not to bear a child is decided by themselves. The overwhelming figure of 86.5 percent for urban registered residents shows strong self-determination on their childbearing behavior, which is more so than that of the other group residents. This means that urban registered residents usually make up their minds on whether or not to have babies by themselves. Nevertheless, the other group interviewees also show strong tendency to determine their childbearing behavior by themselves, 58.8 percent, 63.1 percent and 61.5 percent shown for rural registered residents, urban-urban floating population and rural-urban

floating population, respectively. From the table, only a small number of young generation are influenced by their parents, which mean young people are more and more independent from their parents on childbearing behavior.

5. Financial consideration becoming a major factor which affects childbearing decision

What factor is most influential on fertility intention? No 1 and No 2 are the same in different groups that are “income” and “policy”.

Table 5 Influence Factors on Fertility Intention

Urban registered residents			Urban-urban floating population			Rural-urban floating population		
Sort	Object	Score	Sort	Object	Score	Sort	Object	Score
1	Income	2.57	1	Income	2.46	1	Income	2.52
2	Policy	2.38	2	Policy	2.29	2	Policy	2.19
3	Housing	1.91	3	Willingness to have children	2.05	3	Willingness to have children	1.95
4	Other	1.8	4	Social Fashion	2	4	Housing	1.8
5	Social Fashion	1.62	5	Career	1.71	5	Child' Care	1.61
6	Career	1.58	6	Housing	1.65	6	Social Fashion	1.57
7	Willingness to have children	1.57	7	Child' Care	1.62	7	Career	1.55
8	Child' Care	1.52	8	Friends' opinion	1	8	Friends' opinion	1.17
9	Friends' opinion	1.5						

As shown in table 5, many factors contribute to childbearing behaviors. Three most influential factors are income, family planning policy and housing for urban registered residents. Income, policy and willingness to have children are the three most influential factors for urban-urban floating population and rural-urban floating population. Obviously, housing can be also counted as a financial problem, therefore, among the most influential factors, financial difficulties are mostly considered by all the residents. For floating population, they don't make up their minds to have children because they haven't settled down in the cities. In the table, it is apparent that family planning policy is not the top factor which impacts on the childbearing behavior. Finance problem is the prime reason.

Discussion

Through the data analysis, it is evident that most interviewees in Beijing have low intention of fertility, only a few of them consider having a second child. Most interviewees seldom depend on parents' opinions, which mean they determine childbearing behaviors by themselves. They hold no discrimination against sex of

children, either gender is acceptable. The prior factor of deciding to have a child is financial issue.

Based on the findings above, this paper has raised suggestion to remove the policy of differentiating urban and rural areas when adjusting one child policy in many provinces and cities. Due to the fact that in some developed areas the family planning policy was successfully carried out and the differences between urban and rural areas have already shrunk, the paper argues that we should make no difference in fertility policy in both urban and rural areas. The reasons are as follows:

i. Variation willingness of children by region was the background of Dual Fertility Policy, however, nowadays, social background has transformed deeply and considerably

Experimented in 1984 and established in 1990 throughout the whole country, the dual fertility policy has eased social conflicts and been in line with many farmers' wishes since it allows the rural couples with daughter as their first child to have a second child. But since the 21st century, and compared to the 1980s, the situation is very different, and the historical background of the dual policies is no longer held. Throughout the whole country, especially in the more developed cities, the economic level is close to the moderately developed countries. Social background and people's ideology have undergone significant changes, as shown in this study, both urban and rural singles who are only children in the family show generally low fertility desire. Income, personal development, child care and other economic and social factors have contributed to people's fertility desire instead of policy factors; therefore, the appropriate relaxation of the policy will not have a strong impact on stabilizing low fertility level.

ii. From the background of social development, the integration of urban and rural areas is the developmental trend of the contemporary society

The pace of reformation of household registration system (*Hukou*) has accelerated. For example, in many provinces and cities, the dual *Hukou* division policy was removed, the traditional division of agriculture and non-agricultural household registration system is to be replaced by a unified household system, A public service system is to be established; culture, sports, health care, construction of basic public service facilities are being gradually built up in order that urban and rural residents can enjoy equal services; the time of urban and rural integration in social policy has come, a full coverage model has been established, which includes medication, pension, subsistence allowances of urban and rural residents. If we still stick to the dual

fertility policy when we adjust the one-child policy, the social management and the trend of change of social policy development will be not consistent.

iii Population movement between urban and rural areas becomes intensified. The existing different urban and rural dual fertility policies become increasingly difficult to be implemented into practice. In this case, the integration of dual fertility policy has been raised on the agenda

Along with China economic reform, a large number of floating population migrate into the cities, and the total size of up to more than 200 million floating population over the country has had a profound impact on all aspects of the society, to social management, particularly brought heavy pressure on family planning program management. The reason is in the management of family planning practice, the floating population are managed and supervised by their hometown and guided by the policy of the outflow place. Therefore, diversified urban and rural fertility policy of family planning has brought great inconvenience of territorial management. (Li, 2009) The gradual implementation of the integration of fertility policy in both urban and rural areas is in line with population migration and flow of activity and social development. The implementation of integration of the policy should be put on the agenda as soon as possible.

Suggestions

In cities, rural fertility policy only can be carried out for a small group of people. Taking Beijing as an example, in 2010, Beijing's urbanization rate has reached 77.31 percent, at the level of the developed countries. Even for those young people from rural areas, most of them are engaged in non-agricultural occupations, therefore their fertility willingness is close to the urban residents. Dual fertility policy does not make any sense today. In other words, in the more economically developed regions such as Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Guangdong and other regions at similar economic level, it may introduce an appropriate family planning policy according to the local situation. The conditions of relaxing one-child policy are mature, some big cities can be pilot cities for the new policy which will allow the couples with one side single to have the second babies. If the experiments of this policy in urban cities are successful, this type of policy can be further expanded to all the couples.