



# The Effects of Three-Child Policy on Women in Workplaces

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**Abstract.** On May 31, 2021, the Three-child Policy was put forward officially in China. It is obvious that it will impose some effects on women. The aim of this paper is to find out these effects, especially in the workplace, and the ways to solve them. This research can help provide some helpful supporting measures for this policy. An in-depth interview methodology is applied in this paper. The research found that women faced greater working pressure in the workplace because of the Three-child Policy. In our interview, eight ninths of interviewers thought they will face great working pressure in the workplace in the future because of the Three-child Policy or they had experienced the great working pressure in the workplace. For example, they may be discriminated by their employers because of this policy.

**Keywords:** Three-child Policy · Woman rights · Woman employment · Fertility desire

## 1 Introduction

Nowadays, China is facing the greatest problem ever before. Chinese society has reached the level of moderate aging, according to the standard of the United Nations. At the same time, the low fertility rate occurred. As a result, it is possible for China to put forward the three-child policy.

Before the three-child policy had been put forward, China had conducted two-child policy for several years. However, it seemed effectless. In terms of the implementation effect of the two-child policy, the fertility intention and actual fertility behavior of young people are not as good as expected. Modernization changes people's attitude towards marriage and family, and delaying marriage and childbirth will inevitably have a negative effect on the increase of fertility rate [1].

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On May 31, 2021, Chinese government had a meeting and officially carried out the three-child policy, a couple can give birth to three children. Chinese government said that this policy can improve Chinese population structure, cope with the aging stress and maintain the China's advantages in human resources.

Birth is one of the important people's livelihood. The adjustment of birth policy is an important measure for the state to improve the population development strategy according to the situation of population and economic and social development. The adjustment of birth policy is of great significance to improving the population structure, coping with the national strategy of population aging, maintaining the advantages of human resources endowment, consolidating the achievements of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, and promoting the harmonious development of man and nature [2].

However, Chinese people are now unwilling to give birth to a child because of the great pressure of housing and education. What's more, the strict policy before had changed Chinese people's minds that it is suitable to have only one child. Today, when they are asked to give birth to the second or third child, they may show little enthusiastic.

The female will be affected by this policy dramatically. They had faced the unfair problems in the working place for a long time. Since the special body structure of females, they have to take the responsibility of giving birth to children. In this period, they need to leave their work aside, which will bring the extra cost to the company. As a result, the company do not want to recruit female workers or dismiss them when they are pregnant. These deeds seriously infringe female's rights. In a word, how to safeguard female's rights will determine the effect of the three-child policy.

This paper will focus on the question that what influence will the three-child policy have on the female in the working place and how to solve it.

The three-child policy meet the requirement of the population development in China and can deal with the aging problem effectively. At the same time, it can slow the trend of aging and increase the quantity of the young labour. However, the policy has its own drawbacks and may have some negative effects on females, especially in the working place. We hope to find out these negative effects and the ways to deal with them. At last, we want our research can give some experience to the supporting measures of the policy and put it into effect.

In order to explore the impact of the three-child policy on women's status in the workplace and the solutions, this paper intends to summarize the previous studies, find out the results of previous studies, and also find out the shortcomings and gaps in the process of previous studies, and conduct research on this basis. The three-child policy is the latest birth policy in China, which is bound to have a certain impact on female groups. Through the research in this field, we can find a good way to make up for the shortage of the three-child policy and realize the good implementation of the three-child policy. In our literature review, this paper will divide the key words of this research into women's rights and women's employment then makes a literature review respectively.

Since the formation of the women's liberation movement in modern China, there have been theoretical studies on women's rights in China. With the implementation of the reform and opening up policy, China has entered a new stage of historical development. However, many social problems have emerged. The government and all sectors of

society attach importance to the issue of women's rights. The available literature shows that relevant studies are mainly carried out from the following aspects: (1) research on women's equal employment rights; (2) Research on women's personal rights; (3) Research on women's marriage and reproductive rights, etc. [3]. With the development of Chinese society, the change of birth policy has paid more and more attention to the research on women's rights. This paper is to study women's employment under the background of three children, so how to interpret women's rights under the birth policy is an important reference in previous studies.

Under the background of the second child, most previous studies explored women's equal rights in politics, personal and employment from the perspective of gender, and proposed the causes and solutions of the problems. For example, Song Fang proposed a new legal thinking on the protection of women workers' rights and interests. She sorted out the current situation of the protection of rights and interests of female workers in China from four aspects of employment and occupational security, special labor protection, maternity insurance system and labor supervision, and put forward the formation reasons and solutions to explore [4].

After the implementation of the one-child policy and the national two-child policy, China introduced the three-child policy in 2021. The research on the three-child policy is similar to the previous research on the birth policy, mostly focusing on the influence of the emergence of the new policy on women's different rights and how to better implement relevant measures. For example, Wang Yujian believes that the impact of this policy on women's rights can be divided into: (1) impact on women's reproductive rights and health rights; (2) Having a major impact on women's right to education and equal employment; (3) It has an impact on women's marriage and family. The legal measures to protect women's rights under the three-child policy can be: adjusting and improving family planning laws and policies, legislating to guarantee women's free choice and reproductive health rights; We will improve and implement labor laws to protect women's rights, legislate against gender discrimination in employers, guarantee vocational education and skills training for women with multiple children, and ensure that men and women shoulder family responsibilities on an equal basis. We will improve and implement the protection of women's rights under the Marriage Law, improve the system of compensation for the value of housework through legislation, and protect the property rights of women who have more than one child [5].

In general, Chinese scholars have conducted detailed and comprehensive studies on the analysis of women's rights under the birth policy. It can be seen from their research that women are empowered individuals, and how to better protect women's legitimate rights and interests under the adjustment of fertility policy [6]. They systematically analyzed the influence of women's rights by literature analysis and process tracking. About the research topic of this article, although many scholars carried out many studies, but there is also insufficient aspects: (1) from the balance work and family relations, mostly lower fertility cost to safeguard the rights and interests of women's labor and social power, etc. are discussed, put forward the corresponding countermeasures and Suggestions, but for the stress on the power of the female social value made no further discussion; (2) Research on supporting measures attached to the three-child policy is not comprehensive enough, such as the impact of measures to extend maternity leave and

increase parental leave on women's rights; (3) Comparative analysis of the impact of the lack of three-child policy on women's rights of different social status. These aspects will be further analyzed in this paper.

In 1980, China officially entered the era of family planning, or "one child", which lasted until 2013. In this nearly 30 years, there are about the impact of family planning of the workplace for women literature rarely seen, we believe that because women naturally have to conceive of this role, therefore "one-child policy" almost does not affect women in fields, but due to the policy limits the number of women have children, Therefore, it will reduce worries for enterprises, especially for women who have given birth, and will hardly be affected by the birth policy in the workplace. As a result, there is very little literature in this area.

Since 2013, the country has gradually relaxed the control of "one child", from "only two children" to "universal two children". As a result, women in the workplace began to suffer the impact of the adjustment of the birth policy, especially the negative impact. Relevant literature research also began to focus on this area. Zhang Yun believes that the universal two-child policy will affect women of different ages, especially young women of child-bearing age who have not yet had children and middle-aged women who are in the process of promotion in the workplace, and their career will be adversely affected. For the former, the "comprehensive two children" policy indirectly improve their entry threshold, because women to leave the workplace for birth will bring a lot of loss, let alone "comprehensive two children" policy to a woman's chances of second birth, so companies tend to be more male candidates, virtually raised the entry threshold of women. For the latter, having a second child means losing more work opportunities and time, and there are certain risks for women who choose to have a second child to return to work [7]. Empirical studies based on China show that women's reproductive behavior has a significant negative impact on their employment, and women who have interrupted employment due to childbearing are far less likely to get re-employment than women without such experience [8]. At the same time, Wang Yiping believes that although there are relevant provisions in the Constitution, Labor Law, Law on The Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, Law on The Promotion of Employment and other laws to protect women's employment rights, there are still many employers who fail to implement them due to their lack of social responsibility [9]. In addition, Xu Li believed that after women have two children, they are bound to devote a lot of time and energy to taking care of children due to special physical and psychological needs. Therefore, their enterprise before childbirth will be distracted [10], which will also have a negative impact on women's career. The above scholars have basically clarified the negative impact of the "universal two-child" policy on women's career development, which also represents the general research results in this field in the current academic circle. There are a lot of relevant literature, but the reasons are generally focused on the above points, which is also a common phenomenon in today's society.

However, some academics believe it could have a positive impact on women's performance in the workplace. Wang Zhenzhen and Min Rui believe that based on the comprehensive liberalization of the two-child policy, once women choose to have a second child, they will face an increase in living costs, and they have to continue to work hard to pay for the expenses of pregnancy, birth, support and education of children [11].

However, Yang Siyuan believes that even though the universal two-child policy promotes female employment, those women who choose employment due to family pressure are more likely to accept gender discrimination in order to get a job. It will make gender discrimination more rampant in the labor market. Therefore, having a second child may promote the improvement of female employment rate, but it may also aggravate the discrimination against women in the labor market [12]. Therefore, it can be seen that the “universal two-child” policy has brought far more disadvantages than advantages to women in the workplace, which makes the situation of women who are not in an advantageous position in the workplace even more worrying.

In 2021, our country began to formal into the era of “comprehensive three children”, due to the implementation of the policy of time is not long, so the related research is almost a blank stage, Pengcheng zhao to three child birth policy under the background of women after maternity leave back problems are studied, basic it is before the second child of the policy process has the problem, These include higher employment thresholds, serious inequities, obstructed career advancement, increased risk of unemployment, and forced career interruption [13]. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that in the universal three-child policy, the negative impact on women in the workplace will be further deepened on the basis of the original two-child policy, because the policy will further increase the opportunity for women to give birth to three times. Therefore, women will face a more severe workplace environment at this stage.

This article will use in-depth interviews to analyze the data of 9 interviewees.

## 2 Methods

This study applied in-depth interview methodology to explore women’s willingness to bear children and their views on the annual open family planning policy. The main factor is that interview analysis has strong flexibility and can obtain direct and reliable information and materials. In order to make our research and analysis more comprehensive and representative, we found a total of 9 interviewees and preliminarily divided them into three categories according to their ages. The purposive sampling criteria included: (1) Female university students between the ages of 19 and 21 in China; (2) Working women between the ages of 25 and 30 who haven’t had children; (3) Working women between the ages of 40 and 50 who have had children.

A total of 9 interviews were conducted in April 2022. Some of the participants came from different Universities ( $N = 3$ ) and from different academic standards (Grade 2 = 2; Grade 3 = 1). Most of them are willing to have children, but it is generally believed that having children has a negative impact on career development. Others were from different jobs ( $N = 6$ ), they included three who had never given birth and three who had. They generally considered that women of childbearing age have little desire to have a second or third child, mainly due to the high cost of childbirth and the impact on career development. We conducted online interviews and withheld their names.

### 3 Results

Because we divided our interviewees into three different groups according to their ages, we want to introduce our results by different groups. The direct results of this interview can be seen in the table below.

The first group, female university students, whose ages are between 18 and 24. Their ideas of having a child in the future are different. The career prospects and the difficulties of giving birth to a child are the two main factors which make them unwilling to have a child. Mrs. Lin said it is harmful to the body and the cost is high. However, we also found that there is one woman who has strong wish to have a child. Mrs. Liao said it is common to have a child after forming the family. All of them consider they will be discriminated by the employer in the future because of the pregnancy. As for the latest three-child policy, they all think it is unrealistic. Mrs. Deng said without the supporting measures the three-child policy is useless. Nowadays women are not glad to give birth to three children although the three-child policy had been proposed. Mrs. Liao said the financial situation and the children's education must be concerned as well. As for themselves, if their rights can be guaranteed, they also do not want to give birth to three children since the objective difficulties can not be overcome easily. Finally, they all agree that young women today outweigh their own careers than having children. Mrs. Deng said women themselves can determine their performances in the workplace and nowadays women play a very important role in different fields.

The second group, women between 24 years old and 32 years old, who have entered into working place for a period of time. All of them have not yet given birth to a child and consider the discrimination on women in the working place is very common. However, they have different views about the career prospects after giving birth to a child. Two of them think the pregnancy will have a negative effect on it while the other one do not have this concern. Mrs. Li said underlying fertility factors and domestic factors can affect the attitude of the company towards one's position and income. The two-child policy before have not influenced on them because they have not yet had a child. As for the latest three-child policy, some of them show negative attitude on it since it can not change anything in their views. Mrs. Wang said it is unaffordable to bring up even one child. However, there are also women who want to give birth to three children if given optimum conditions. For example, Mrs. Wang said if the housing pressure and the educational pressure can be eased, she will consider it.

The third group, women from 32 years old to 50 years old, who have given birth to one or two children. Although the woman who works as a teacher did not meet discrimination in her working place before, other women admitted that their friends, relatives or themselves had this experience. Mrs. Zhou said she did not meet any unfair problems because the special of the job of teacher. What's more, except for the woman who works as a teacher, the other two women both consider that the pregnancy had bad effects on their career prospects. For example, Mrs. Wang said she must concentrate on their children and therefore they could not give much time and energy to their work. However, all of them did not meet difficulties when they returned to their work after giving birth to a child. The two-child policy before had not impacted on them, because they had given birth to two children before that policy or they had no ability to give birth to a child again. As for the latest three-children policy, they all think it is useless, since

the cost of bringing up a child is so high that three-child is impossible. For themselves, some of them are unwilling to give birth to three children while one woman would like to have although she have lost this ability.

Table 1 shows the detailed content of the interview. It can help us get something useful from the interview directly.

## 4 Discussion

China introduces three-child policy to alleviate problem of ageing population. However, it must cause a series of problems with women's career. Females are facing a more serious situation in being treated equally in the workplace compared with males. This study tries to find out side effects of three-child policy and give some reasonable advice to solve them. It will not only protect women's rights in the workplace in the short term, but also do good to the birth rate and population structure of china in the long term.

In this study, we apply in-depth interview methodology to dig out the inequalities which females are facing in the work place, their attitudes to the third-child policy and factors that influence their willingness to have a child. After analyzing our interviews, we found that females are not being treated equally in the work place. This is mainly reflected in three aspects. The first is not to be given priority when looking for a job. The second is that females don't have an advantage in the promotion competition. Last but not least, their welfare in the work unit is not well protected. Compared with other studies, we went one step further to focus on the side effects brought by the latest third-child policy. Meanwhile we also give some reasonable advice to be considered. In order to solve this phenomenon, we think government can improve the system of male maternity leave so that males are forced to have a maternity leave when their couples are pregnant. What's more, we can provide certain subsidies to companies with female employees on maternity leave to make up for the company's economic losses. Third, we need more direct, sustained and stronger financial assistance for families with three children to alleviate the financial burden of raising children.

But this study also has some problems waiting for us to solve. First is that the number of interviewees is not enough, and the content obtained may not be universal. At the same time, some interviewees may not tell the truth due to personal privacy and other issues. On the other hand, the third-child policy has just been introduced for a short time, the impact may not be obvious enough. At the same time, it is difficult for us to learn from or refer to the previous studies of other scholars.

The protection of women's rights in the workplace is beneficial to the whole society. Responding to women's demands for equality is also a major driving force for social development. In the future, we will continue to pay attention to the new impact of this policy and whether it can change the current situation of China's population structure. We will also study the supporting measures of the third-child policy to analyze whether the supporting measures fully consider women's rights and whether they can play a practical role.

Table 1. Detailed Responses of The Interviews

Interviewers	Whether given birth to a child or the willingness of it	Discrimination in the workplace	Impacts of pregnancy	Impacts of the two-child policy	Attitudes towards the three-child policy	Willingness of giving birth to three children if rights can be guaranteed
Mrs. Deng 19 years old Student	No. Maybe will give birth to a child in the future.	Yes. The pregnant woman will bring extra cost to the company.			Negative. It will not be effective without the supporting measures.	No. It is painful for women to give birth to more than one child.
Mrs. Lin 19 years old Student	No. Is not willing to give birth to a child because of the cost and pain.	Yes. Women have to leave the workplace although they have not worked in the company for a long time.			Negative. It will not have impacts on the women who do not want to give birth to a child.	Yes. Women are willing to give birth to three children if they have no concerns.
Mrs. Liao 21 years old Student	No. Wants to give birth to a child since it is common after forming the family.	Yes. The pregnant holidays cause the discrimination.			Negative. It needs some supporting measures.	No. Women also have to concern about children's education and their own financial situations.
Mrs. Li 28 years old Internet workers	No. Wants to give birth to a child maybe.	Yes. The underlying fertility factors and domestic factors cause the discrimination		No.	The policy is reasonable but nowadays women rather want to improve life quality and values.	It will make some women willing to give birth to three children.
Mrs. Zhou 29 years old Market Research	No.	No.		Yes.	It depends on the individual views of people.	Yes.

(continued)



Table 1. (continued)

Interviewers	Whether given birth to a child or the willingness of it	Discrimination in the workplace	Impacts of pregnancy	Impacts of the two-child policy	Attitudes towards the three-child policy	Willingness of giving birth to three children if rights can be guaranteed
Mrs. Wang 29 years old Cosmetics industry	No.	Yes.	No.	No.	It is unaffordable to bring up even one child.	Yes. If housing pressure and education pressure can be eased.
Mrs. Zhou 49 years old Teacher	Had given birth to a child and had no plans of the second one.	No. The job of teacher is special.	No. Can ask others to replace her work.	No. Only one-year adjustment.	It is unrealistic since the pressure of bringing up three children is enormous.	No. The pressure of bringing up three children is enormous.
Mrs. Cao 45 years old Freelancer	Had given birth to two children.	Yes. According to her observation of her friend.	Yes. The impacts are severe.	No. Had given birth to two children before this policy.	It is useless. The pressure of bringing up three children is enormous and the supporting measures are lack.	No. The cost is too high.
Mrs. Wang 50 years old Education industry	Had given birth to one child.	Yes. According to her observation of her relatives.	Yes. Needs to take care of the child and the energy is limited.	No. The ability of giving birth to a child was lost.	Not many women are willing to do this because the cost is too high.	Yes.

## 5 Policy Implications

To solve the negative effects brought by third-child policy, we have some advice for the future policy path.

First, we should strengthen the publicity of the polymorphic policy of eugenics and good education, not only from the main content level of the policy, but also from the ideological level and social content level, so that the people can truly understand the intention and content of the policy, so as to produce policy recognition, consciously respond to the call of the policy and help China get out of the current population dilemma.

Second advice is to promote the maturity and improvement of male related parental policies such as male parental leave. The inequality, discrimination and pressure women encounter in the workplace are mainly relative to men. China should further improve the maternity leave system related to male childcare. On the one hand, it is conducive to solve the workplace pressure and discrimination caused by women's childbirth. On the other hand, it enables men to take better care of their wives and promote good birth and child rearing; At the same time, let men have more opportunities to participate in the cultivation and education of children, and make men return to the family, which is also conducive to promoting the willingness of the whole family to have multiple births, so as to respond to the call of the three child policy.

Last but not least, we should improve the economic assistance system related to childcare and increase economic assistance. The introduction of the three child policy is bound to exacerbate women's concerns about the cost of childcare. From the above research, it can even be seen that almost every woman with fertility will take the cost of childcare into account. Therefore, it is necessary to consider supporting economic assistance policies to support the development of the three child policy. Previous economic assistance or maternity subsidies have not been able to continuously and significantly change women's concerns about such problems. The development direction of the policy should be to more accurately locate the target population and increase the duration and intensity of direct economic assistance to change the current situation that women are deterred from childbirth due to the economic burden of childcare.

## 6 Conclusion

The fact is that three-child policy makes women face greater workplace pressure. Women may miss opportunities without being given priority in job hunting. Enterprises will more carefully consider the negative economic effects of women's in-service multiple births on the company's departments and interests, as well as the job vacancy caused by women's absence due to childbirth. At the same time, women's in-service childbirth will have a negative impact on career development and promotion. After the introduction of the three child-policy, it is bound to have a more serious impact on women's career development. Enterprises will have more serious discrimination against women in the process of promotion according to their subjective impression. In addition, after giving birth to a third child, women have three children to take care of and educate, which is bound to further shift the focus of work to family rather than work, resulting in lower work efficiency.

What's more, women's treatment and adaptation after childbirth are also very serious. The introduction of the three-child policy will make more older women have children, and they are often difficult to adapt to the work intensity of their posts after childbirth. Sometimes even the original posts have been replaced by other competitors. Some enterprises even reduce the welfare treatment of women who are planning to have a third child, which is a phenomenon of discrimination against women. In order to solve the negative impact of the three-child policy, the government should not only vigorously publicize the intention and significance of the policy, but also pay more attention to solving the problem of equality between men and women in the workplace. In addition, in order to alleviate the economic burden of families with many children, it is also necessary to start with economic assistance policies to ease the pressure on women's work and life and create a fairer employment environment for women.

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