

The Difficulties in Raising Fertility Rates—The Deficiencies and Improvements of the Maternity Protection System for Women of Childbearing Age

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Abstract: Fertility policies consist of not only the legal definition of “procreation”, but also the “maternity” protection system, the complete set of self-consistent social relations and policy systems formed around “fertility”. Gender, labor and intergenerational relations are the cornerstones of a fertility policy system. In this framework, we focus on women of childbearing age as the main actors of reproductive behaviors, to research how drastic social changes have altered women, the above-mentioned relations, and policy support and analyze the structural factors that restrict women’s reproductive intentions. The traditional male breadwinner model, which can no longer prevail and the relatively slow development of maternity protection policies and service systems leave women of childbearing age in a dilemma between working hours and birth timing. Therefore, maternity protection policies should focus on improved decommodification of maternity insurance and the construction of women and children’s social welfare systems including childcare social service systems.

Keywords: reproductive behaviors, social support for women, fertility policy, fertility rate

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In the long history of human societies, fertility has had a dual meaning for individuals and societies. For society, fertility is a basic system to achieve racial continuity and sustainable social development; for individuals, in addition to the physiological significance, fertility has experienced the instinctual needs based on the maintenance of a social community and is an emotional choice under a specific birth culture. In the stage that witnesses the changing meanings of such things as rational calculations from the angle of modern “cost-benefit analysis”, fertility is a product of the interactions between the macro society, the family and the reproductive subject. It reflects the society’s shaping and restriction of individual reproductive intentions and behaviors, as well as individual proactive responses to a macro-social structure, and drives fertility institutions and social systems to make corresponding adjustments and conversions. Therefore, unlike the formulation of fertility policies, which reflects the overall interest orientation of the state and society, the result of fertility policies depends on the effect of interactions between reproductive subjects and social systems.

In view of the development of human society since modern times, each transformation of society has caused an adjustment in the relationships between reproductive subjects and social support systems, and a subsequent change in fertility institutions. Since the 1970s, European and American societies have shown obvious postmodern characteristics, and the fertility institutions, based on traditional female social norms, women’s social status, and gender social relations, have been greatly challenged. Consequently, the fertility rate has been declining, and a worldwide fertility crisis has emerged. At the same time, a reform of the social security system mainly aiming to stimulate and redefine reproductive behaviors has been put into practice.

The Difficulty of Improving the Fertility Rate and Its Multidimensional Interpretation

A Fertility Paradox

Data from China’s sixth census in 2010 showed that China’s total fertility rate was 1.18, far lower than the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman at which population stability can be maintained. The meaning of the population replacement rate does not focus on quantities, but on quality and structure. According to Fei Xiaotong, fertility institutions are supposed to provide new social elements. A social element is a person who can assume a certain position in the structure of social division of labor and cooperation (Fei, 1998, p. 115). Therefore, in the context of China’s upgrading transformation of industrial structure and its supply-side reform, it is still debatable whether the decreased replacement level for the population will seriously threaten economic development. However, with the increased aging of the population, the social effect and chain reactions of fertility decline will have a significant impact on the smooth operation of the country. For this reason, the Chinese government has been active in adjusting its fertility policies to facilitate the fulfillment of policy expectations. From the perspective of actual population fertility, however, the reform of fertility policies has received relatively indifferent social responses.

Sober reproductive behaviors. In 2013, the *Decision of the CCCPC on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform* initiated “the policy that allows married couples to have two children if one parent is a single child” and that marked the end of the “the one-child policy” era that had lasted 35

years. At the same time, as a result of the previous policy, the family planning condition for “married couples to have two children if one parent is a single child,” is already in place. In October 2015, the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee brought forward another major adjustment in China’s population policies to adhere to the basic national policy of family planning, improve the population development strategy, and comprehensively implement a policy that one couple can have two children. The tight timing of policy adjustments reflects China’s eager expectation to increase its fertility rate. However, the population of childbearing age shows a weak fertility response to the urgent adjustment of population policies. Since the adoption of the universal two-child policy in 2016, China’s birth rate has not significantly increased but has instead declined year by year. So, can such a reproductive behavior as this seemingly indifferent response represent people’s true reproductive intentions? Through survey and literature reviews I found that this restrained fertility response reveals imbalanced fertility levels and relatively strong original reproductive intentions.

Unbalanced fertility levels. Different female groups of childbearing age in China do not show the same fertility level, fertility rates vary greatly from one group to another. Women who harbor strong fertility desires have a relatively low awareness of child support costs (or have low costs for child support), pay less attention to their quality of life, are not in pursuit of careers, live in poor and backward areas and thus display relatively high fertility rates. Repressed fertility desires lurk in the groups of low fertility-rate females. Fertility levels and reproductive intentions are closely related, but in a negative way (Hou et al., 2014), that is, one cannot generally assume that a low fertility level is due to the low reproductive intentions in the population of childbearing age. We can categorize reproductive intentions into three dimensions: original fertility desires, repressed fertility desires, and practice-oriented fertility planning.^① According to my survey on the reproductive intentions of 778 people of childbearing age in Changchun (with 800 questionnaires issued, of which 778 were valid), 88.3% of the respondents stated that they were “willing to have two children” “if the realistic factors in having children (childbearing age, costs of raising children, accompanying time and energy) were ignored.” When they were asked “whether they have the intention to have a second child,” 45.7% of the respondents said that they were considering it, 25.6% replied that it was a part of their birth plans already, and 28.7% expressed that they had no such reproductive intention. It is worth noting that 62.7% of the respondents had the desire but not the courage to have a second child. The reason why reproductive intentions are repressed is a specific issue of my research.

Existing Interpretations

Explaining why the population of childbearing age has the desire but not the courage to have a second child, researchers have proposed the following five research perspectives. The first is a descriptive perspective on structural characteristics. This type of research usually adopts the form of empirical investigations and quantitative research to examine the impact the structural characteristics of families that

^① Reproductive intentions, as an important reference to prejudice reproductive behaviors, are at different levels, and can be divided into the original fertility desires without any constraint of realistic factors, the repressed fertility desires with the constraint of realistic factors, and the reproductive-behavior-oriented fertility planning under the influence of restrictive factors. The third is the indicator most approximate to an actual reproductive behavior.

women of childbearing age belong to, regional structural characteristics, and female structural characteristics divided by occupations. The goal being to quantify and understand the impact these conditions have exerted upon reproductive intentions. The groups identified include families in which neither partner is an only child, families that have poor resources for elderly people to help raise infants, urban women, and female senior intellectuals. These groups have lower reproductive intentions, while those to the contrary have high reproductive intentions (Zhang & Ru, 2016; Keim et al., 2013). The second is a perspective on psychological pressure. Scholars who hold this view point out that various factors, including traditional fertility ideas at the social level, birth cultures, women's desires for career development, imperfect fertility policies, support from spouses and parents, and women's own physical and economic conditions all have a significant impact on reproductive intentions. The third is a cost-benefit perspective. This perspective originates from the cost-utility analytical framework established by Harvey Leibenstein in 1957 (Chen, 1992). This theory is unique in that it applies the basic principles of economics to the analysis of reproductive behaviors, assuming that family incomes and fertility costs are positively related, that is, reproductive intentions are reduced when the marginal cost of raising a child is greater than the marginal utility. This shapes a theoretical paradigm of family fertility costs. The fourth is a perspective of quantity-quality substitution. This theory was formulated in the 1960s. On the basis of the consumer demand theory, Gary Becker further developed the paradigm of the cost-benefit theory, whose core idea is that parental requirements for children are expressed in terms of quantity and quality. When the financial situation of a family reaches a certain level, parents will improve the quality of the lives of their existing children rather than increasing the number of children (Luo, 1991). The fifth is a perspective of women's welfare. This view introduces female social welfare into the theory of family costs, and points out that the weaker ability of women's social welfare policies tend to "de-commodify", family-centered child rearing and the inadequate social regulations for gender equality in the workplace etc., and have an important impact on the fertility of women of childbearing age. By analyzing the decline of traditional family functions for children's care, the increase in employment pressure for women in the workplace, and the growth in the time and money costs of raising children, the study puts its footing on the appeals to improve women and children's social welfare level and reduce family costs (Chen, 2017; Zhong, 2016).

A Brief Evaluation

As a theoretical response to changes in China's population structure and adjustments of fertility policies, research on fertility has been increasing in recent years, and with its diversified research perspectives, it has made important theoretical contributions to the comprehensive explanation about the problem of raising fertility. However, existing research still has the following three shortcomings. Firstly, there are redundant explanations at the micro level, but deficient interpretations either at the macro level or for the interactions between these two. Researchers mainly take the angle of families or childbearing subjects to explain the influencing factors of reproductive intentions, including the ages of women of childbearing age, their education levels, their occupations, their values, their marital relationships, the fertility expectations from their

own parents, and the structural characteristics of their families. Although some researches have involved the impact of macro policies and institutional systems upon individual reproductive intentions and behaviors, for instance, social support, welfare policies, and social environments, their investigations still focus on individuals and make no sufficient analysis of the interactions of individuals and families with external institutional systems. Secondly, there are redundant investigations and research, but inadequate analysis based on scientific principles. Most research is empirical, focusing on two issues: first, the descriptive analyses of reproductive intentions and behaviors, for instance the fertility desires of different social groups, the will of a family as a whole to raise children, and related supporting policies; second, the correlative analyses of the relations of reproductive intentions and behaviors with certain influencing factors. The empirical research has shown the influencing factors of reproductive intentions more intuitively, but the lack of scientific principle support leads to the multiplicity and entanglement of influencing factors. Additionally, there are too many discussions on the reproductive intentions of families, but fewer on female fertility desires. Researchers often focus on the family in their analyses of reproductive intentions, but ignore the fact that women are important responders to family structures, and thus make insufficient analyses of the reproductive intentions of women of childbearing age.

An Women-centric Analysis Framework for Fertility

From the two-way construction theory of individuals and societies, we can see that the formation of an individual's subjective will and the occurrence of their actions is the result of the interactions between individual initiative and social structures. The structure of a social system is specifically manifested as restrictiveness and causativeness. The mechanism for the generation of restrictiveness lies in the fact that when many individuals are united into a whole in accordance to a certain order principle, society will have its independent characteristics and functions that are beyond individuals, and which give society a structural objectivity that cannot be changed by individual actors. An objective structural feature can be described as the choice of a certain actor, or a group, for which the possibilities to secure resources are somewhat restricted in a given context or under a contextual type. The principle behind the formation of an objective structure's causativeness lies in the rules and resources which are specially organized by the social system and are the premise and intermediary for individual actions to be possible. In this process, people symbolize the meaning of external resources and cultural systems and internalize the external structures thus achieving a series of conversions of relations and resources through the processing of human actions. This process takes human "practice" as a carrier, and repeats again and again, realizing the renewal of human habits and the reproduction of social structures (Jia, 2018). From this analysis framework, we can see that the social structure that affects individual reproductive intentions and behaviors is a policy system consisting of fertility policies, welfare policies for women and children, policies on the protection of women's labor rights, social insurance policies, etc., and social networks dominated by gender relations, family relations, intergenerational relations, and industrial relations. Reproductive intentions and behaviors mean that women of childbearing age form their specific tactics in the feasible space provided by this structural framework and thus make

specific responses. It can be seen that strong reproductive intentions result from the comprehensive effects of the policy system where fertility policies are embedded as well as through fertility policies that have a direct impact on individual reproductive intentions.

Unlike existing research that uses the family as a uniform unit of decision-making, the analytical framework in question focuses on women. Examining social development and welfare systems from the perspective of women began in the 1970s, which is both the result of social development and the embodiment of social progress. Specifically, it means focusing on women of childbearing age as the main actors of reproductive behaviors, consider their social networks, their resources therein, and the policy support that they enjoy, and analyze the structural obstacles that restrict women's reproductive intentions, to find a solution to this problem.

According to researchers, due to the influence of social structures, one of the main factors that create obstacles for women's reproductive choice is time constraints. This is because humans are shaped by intertwined time and space. Fertility and work are both time-intensive processes that require individuals to spend a lot of time before they obtain corresponding returns. In the traditional bilateral or biparental child-rearing mode, women are defined as the main responsible subjects of parenting. Since the beginning of the postmodern era, with the increasing number of single mothers, women have been facing the increasing pressure of time and energy on parenting, which has resulted in time conflicts when women shift their various roles. According to a survey conducted by the China Population and Development Research Center, 60.7% of women of childbearing age have given up having a second child because they are so busy with their jobs that they have no time to raise their children; about 30% of urban women who have had one child choose to break their employment due to timing difficulties.

The Changes, Consequences, and Challenges of the Basis for Maternity Protection Systems

Basis and Changes of the Fertility Policy System

Fertility policy encompasses not only the legal definition of "procreation", but also the "maternity" protection system, that is, a complete set of self-consistent social relations and policy systems formulated around "fertility". In particular, gender relations, labor relations, intergenerational relations, and other social relations are the cornerstones of the fertility policy system. They are ingenious devices that interact and drive a certain fertility model, serving as a basic logic for the fertility policy and its guaranteeing system.

Traditional Chinese society produced a bilateral child-rearing model based on the gender division of labor, men were breadwinners and women played the part of homemakers (Fei, 1998, p. 123), establishing the traditional birth culture. The social relationship as a basis for this fertility policy and model was distinctively characterized with the complementarity of gender roles, the division of labor, and responsibility attribution. In the "private sphere" of a family, women bore the responsibility of maintaining the lineage and taking care of future generations; outside the "household", men earned money, obtained social status and resources, and

undertook the responsibility of supporting the entire family. Men are legitimately qualified to obtain social status, while women are not.

Similar to the gender division of labor where men played the role of breadwinners and women homemakers in traditional Chinese society, a welfare system basically in the form of “male breadwinners” was universally established in Western welfare states after the Second World War, which conformed to the development requirements of the economy, society, politics, and population in the “Fordist” era. At the same time, after the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, a course of state building and social remodeling began. Through this process, gender relations and other social relationships were reshaped. Women were empowered to participate in political, economic, social, and cultural construction, and stepped out of the confinement of families and into society one after another, becoming an important part of the socialist labor forces. Due to the population situation during this period, the keynote of the national population policy was to promote fertility. On the basis that major historical changes had taken place to social relations, including gender relations, China established an employment unit system providing comprehensive protection to the vast majority of social members in cities. To ensure that women can balance work and children, daycare centers and kindergartens for preschoolers were set up in employment units. At the same time, the state bore the child-rearing costs in terms of education and medical care, and the security responsibilities for the members of the employment units with respect to their pension, medical care, and housing. In addition, under the employment security system of that time, female employees had relatively sound job security, and faced little employment pressure.

After reform and opening up, Chinese society underwent another dramatic change, social relations were reshaped again, and considerable changes have taken place and women’s subjective consciousness, gender relations, labor relations, and family relations have changed significantly. The disintegration of the previous planned economic system and the establishment of a socialist market economic system have promoted women’s awareness of their rights and interests, as well as their self-awareness. Women have come to pay more attention to their own self-realization, a particular sign of which is the increased proportion of female employment. According to the white paper “Gender Equality and Women’s Development in China” issued by the State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China in 2015, the total number of female employees throughout the country was 346.4 million, accounting for 45 percent of the total employed population (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, 2015). A foreign magazine points out that Chinese women have an employment rate of 70%, and rank first in the world,^① approximate to that of men. At the same time, in the unregulated market under a complete mechanism, female employees face greater employment pressure, which forces them to devote more time to their occupations. Moreover, unlike in the past when women were mostly engaged in marginalized and low-income jobs, according to the *China Population and Employment Statistical Yearbook*, women have increased their proportion of senior positions year by year during the period from 2006 to 2014. In the context that the parenting responsibilities previously shared by employment units and society have been shifted to families, women’s high employment rate, extended working hours, and increased proportion of senior positions have definitely affected gender relations, greatly changed the previous clear gender division of responsibilities for

work and care in the family, and thus formed a new mechanism for fertility decision-making.

The change in gender relations is a worldwide trend. It has become one of the driving factors for the reform of welfare states since the 1960s, and exerted an important impact on family ties, endowing the family with new relational configurations.

The first is the re-discussion of the division of labor between husband and wife in a family. Researchers advocate breaking the original gender division of labor within the family to allow men to take on more housework. The women with higher social status have stronger gaming ability in marital relationships, which can encourage husbands to participate in more domestic work. More and more families are gradually deviating from the traditional family model that men are breadwinners while women take care of family and do the housework. The second is that the rising divorce rates and the increasing number of single mothers; the improvement of women's socioeconomic status, which has greatly reduced women's dependence on men; the increasing number of celibate women, and the growing phenomenon of cohabitation. With the improvement of women's ability in material self-satisfaction and the elevated level of their awareness of and attention to the quality of both individual life and marital quality, celibate women have begun to appear in mass.

In addition, the structural changes in population also have an impact on women's choices of reproductive behaviors. In recent years, the aging process in China has accelerated, and the level of aging has been increasing. On the one hand, it has intensified the pressure of old-age insurance on the Chinese government; on the other hand, it has created an extremely urgent demand for aged care services, the care of the elderly, especially of the disabled elderly, has become an increasingly serious problem. In the situation that the social service system is still immature, it has undoubtedly increased pressure on women in terms of the care for their families and caused financial losses to the women who take care of their families, including the decrease of current salary incomes and the reduction of their future pensions. That has exerted a serious impact on women, hindering them from playing the roles assigned by each of the main relationships.

Women's Unbearable Reproductive Burden

Rapid social changes have dramatically changed various relations regarding gender, family, intergenerations, and labor. At the same time, the sluggish and immature development of maternity protection policies and service systems has brought women of childbearing age nothing to reduce the pressures of having children.

On the one hand, it is impossible to return to the traditional model of male breadwinners. As a mechanism for the secondary allocation of public service resources, the family tends to weaken or fail as women gradually move to the labor market, and time costs, allocations, and benefits have become important rational considerations for the family. On the other hand, the imperfect system for maternity protection leaves women of childbearing age in a dilemma where work and fertility compete for their time. More and

① See "Investigation Report on the Impact of Universal Two-Child Policy on Family Education" issued by the All-China Women's Federation, <http://baby.sina.com.cn/news/2016-12-22/doc-ifxyxury8000532.shtml>, December 22, 2016.

more women bear a double burden. They have to take care of children at home without any compensation while coping with the severe competitive situation in the labor market, and always facing crises such as career interruption, wage penalty, downward career development, gender discrimination in employment, and even unemployment (Zhong, 2016). For working women, playing both roles is full of challenges. It is because child upbringing and commercialized labor are both time-intensive processes. The more time and energy they invest, the more they will get in return. However, due to the different attributes of those two roles, child-rearing time belongs to the non-commercialization of labor, while working time belongs to the commercialization of labor. Moreover, they also differ in terms of dominant logic. The time investments in these two conflict rather than being consistent in most cases. In addition, preschoolers and primary school students in China leave school earlier than off-work time, which also exacerbates women's feelings of time pressure.

In this framework of structural analysis, women of childbearing age should actively seek solutions and mobilize available resources. Through this analysis, we can see that women with the following relational characteristics have strong intentions to have children: men in gender relations spend more time and energy in parenting and housework (Mills et al., 2008); grandparents in family relations can bear the responsibility for nursing children or buying childcare services, or couples with high incomes can afford high-quality childcare services from the market; women in labor relations engage in jobs with high flexibility and have high incomes, or are financially capable of breaking off labor relations and undertaking full-time child care at home. It is true that the working women who ask for help from their parents or parents-in-law can flexibly arrange the timing of child-rearing and work, and pursue both jobs and parenting at the same time, but due to inconsistent ideas and methods of upbringing, intergenerational conflicts may easily arise, resulting in family tensions, bringing great psychological pressure to women. In addition, this parenting model may expose parents or parents-in-law to more risks of illness, thus raising the potential upper time limit for women to care for the elderly.

The immature childcare market, still unnormalized, also causes new parenting problems to the working women who purchase private childcare services. Moreover, the high costs of private childcare increase the pressure of family support and greatly reduce the economic benefits that women may gain from working. Therefore, some women choose to suspend work and raise children at home after rational calculations. Although the time investment of full-time mothers has some value as an income substitute, their efforts at housework may be easily ignored now that they do not directly increase family incomes and are usually not included when incomes are calculated. This thus greatly intensifies the psychological pressure of full-time mothers. In recent years, women suffering from postpartum depression and parenting depression have increased in number, resulting in more and more malignant events such as maternal suicide, maternal abuse or even lethal parental maltreatment, which have seriously affected the health of women and children. Therefore, it is urgent to establish a maternity protection and service system.

A Turn of the Fertility Policy System

In order to improve the fertility rate under the new situation, many countries, in view of the new needs

of maternity protections, have reexamined relationships between state and family, social responsibility and welfare, and paid work and unpaid care and the reshaping of these relationships has become a due item in the policy agenda of today's Europe. Whether in the Nordic countries with the highest level of decommodification, or the United Kingdom and the United States at the other end of the spectrum, the concept of the state has penetrated into people's daily life deeper today than at any time in history. Social democratic welfare states have socialized the cost of maintaining families, and the states directly replace markets and families to provide strong social support for women of childbearing age; in Britain, a liberal welfare country, the state provides some social support for women although it holds an extremely negative attitude towards public daycare institutions for children. So, European and American countries have begun to adjust their welfare systems from the perspective of women since the 1970s, which constitutes a part of the reform of welfare states.

In terms of the practice of these countries, while strengthening their regulations of the market and their protections for the legitimate rights and interests of the labor force, some keep the focus of their policies on the increase of the decommodification level of women's social insurance and the establishment of women and children's social welfare systems and social service systems for childcare. Taking Sweden as an example. It began to implement a parental insurance plan in 1974 and has been regularly increasing the level of insurance since then. Parenting families have the right of paid leave, including 50-day pregnancy leave, 10-day paternity leave, 9-day parental leave per year if the child needs parental attendance due to their own or their regular caretaker's illness, and 2-day parental leave per year for visits to the children's kindergartens or schools. All the required funds are paid by social insurance, and all workers have the right to enjoy these benefits without any qualifications or restrictions.

Policy Suggestions for the Problem of China's Low Fertility Rate

To motivate the women of childbearing age who have "the desire but not any courage to have a second child" and turn the intentions of childbearing into fertility planning and reproductive behaviors, it is advisable to set about taking the following steps.

Regulating the Childcare Market and Strengthening the Training of Professional Talents

China's childcare and education markets have developed rapidly over the past decade resulting in the establishment of various educational institutions, including facilities for early childhood education, kindergartens, and physical therapy centers of traditional Chinese medicine; and the emergence of the occupations of nanny, nursery teacher, and so forth. Although the thriving childcare and education market has increased working women's ability to make parenting choices to a certain extent, it has not reduced the pressure on women of childbearing age and their families. On the one hand, the high market price of childcare and education increases the financial costs of family parenting, forcing family members to devote more time to jobs, without fundamentally solving the problem of time conflicts between work and parenting; also, the immature childcare market is still unnormalized. In this regard, it is necessary to normalize the

childcare market, formulate industrial service standards, strengthen supervision efforts, carry out credit rating, and disqualify childcare businesses with substandard credit ratings. Moreover, we are demanded to carry out professional certification for childcare practitioners, strengthen professional training, improve professional and occupational quality, create standard service indexes, accordingly perform the evaluation of childcare services, and establish a three-level evaluation system that labels positive results with gold, silver and bronze medals, and classifies negative ones to be improved, warned, and disqualified.

Establishing Highly Accessible Childcare Institutions

China has noticed the deficiency of public infant care and childcare services and is making efforts to include infant care and childcare services into the scope of public services, but the current situation is still unsatisfactory. Therefore, we should develop step by step the mechanism for cooperation between the government, childcare enterprises, social organizations and the communities, with the government providing funds or subsidies, enterprises or social organizations supplying professional services pertinent to the childcare needs in certain areas, communities offering places, families that receive the services making evaluation, and professional evaluation agencies conducting professional supervision to jointly improve the universality, inclusiveness, pertinence, and accessibility of childcare services. At the same time, we should formulate the standardized service rules of government purchases, the access qualifications of social organizations or enterprises, the dynamic supervision mechanisms, and the credit evaluations system. Furthermore, employment units that are somewhat qualified should be encouraged to set up daycare centers for children, so that employees can take care of their children on the spot. Also, it is desirable to establish shared spaces for parents and children in the workplace or some public places, so that parents can balance both work and children at the same time. In short, only when women's time is fully released can they play multiple roles at the same time and form a virtuous circle of social networks.

Improving Maternity Insurance and Social Insurance Policies

To improve the maternity insurance system, the necessary parenting time should be included in the scope of insurance. For example, parents may be paid wages or salaries in proportion by means of maternity insurance during such periods as they accompany the child to see a doctor and look after the little patient, or they are supposed to accompany the child on a suggestion from the school, or it is necessary for the parent to pay a visit to the school to learn about the child's academic activity, so as to increase the capability of maternity insurance for decommodification. We should improve the women and children's health care system, strengthen women's occupational, marital, gender, and psychological protections, enhance the public awareness of protection for women, provide the psychological consultations about female occupations, family, and gender problems, and offer the services of social work and legal aid for women to promote the healthy development of women's bodies and minds. Furthermore, we should strengthen the construction of the system for public health services at the community level, do a good job in the research of children's epidemics and infections, publicize healthy lifestyles, and prevent the occurrence of children's epidemics, infections, and other chronic diseases.



Strengthening the Construction of the System for Elderly Care and Reducing Pressure on Women to Provide Family Care

Taking the family as a unit to investigate, it is closely related to family support to transform reproductive intentions into reproductive behaviors. Many families in China have a typical 4-2-1 characteristic—a young couple bears the responsibility of taking care of four elderly people and one child. Therefore, to improve the system for elderly care service and provide seniors with safe and comfortable elderly care will be a great help for women to release time and energy and thus choose to have a second child.

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