

# The Impact of Maternity Benefit Policies on Women's Willingness to Have a Second Child in Shanghai

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## Abstract

In 2016, the two-child policy began to be implemented in China. And a maternity welfare policy was introduced at the same time to encourage women to have a second child. As Shanghai is an important city in China, it is essential to study women's fertility intentions in Shanghai. The analysis of the impact of the fertility welfare policy can also be used as suggestive evidence of policy development. This dissertation analyses the impact of Shanghai's fertility welfare policy on women's fertility intentions to have a second children explores how to improve women's fertility intentions and help implement the comprehensive two-child policy.

The analysis found that each of the maternity benefit policies increased the willingness of some women in Shanghai to have a second child. However, some policies do not cover specific aspects that affect the willingness of some women to have a second child. It is recommended that these policies should be improved to increase the willingness of Shanghai women and geriatric mothers to have a second child so that the comprehensive two-child policy can be implemented more effectively.

**Keywords:** fertility policy, welfare policy, fertility intentions

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

In the traditional Confucian ethical structure of the unity of the home and the state, the home is a shrunken state, and the state is an expanded home (Sun, 2020). The state's problems need to be considered from the perspective of the family situation at the grassroots level, and each family's issues also reflect the country's difficulties (Sun, 2020). In traditional Chinese culture, patriarchy influences women's fertility. Patriarchy sees men as the rulers of power and the economy (Liu, 2011). Only by becoming mothers through reproductive behaviour can women win living space in the family. Procreation is seen as respecting the family and perpetuating the family (Overall, 2014). However, fertility affects the number of people, and the formulation of population planning is the need for compiling a unified national economic plan (Robinson & Ross, 2007). Therefore, it is necessary to formulate different fertility policies for different situations.

In the 1970s, to control the population growth rate in China, the government implemented a family planning policy that allowed each couple to have only one child and held the population growth on a family basis (Wang, 2012). However, as society progresses, the one-child policy will lead to increased ageing, an imbalance in the gender ratio between men and women, and a steady decline in the working population in China in the coming decade (Zeng & Hesketh, 2016). Therefore, the government needs to adjust its fertility policy in a short period. In 2016, the Chinese Government enacted the two-child policy, allowing two children per couple to improve China's demographic situation (Feng *et al.*, 2016).

But according to a survey conducted by Feng and Zhang (2002) in Shanghai, 60% of one-child families are unwilling to have a second child. In modern society, women are gradually moving out of the home and into the

community, participating in the construction of society, and the social status of women is constantly improving. Women's rising literacy and income levels exist in all walks of life, directly participating in social construction and playing a huge role in social development (Zhai *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, more and more women are becoming more independent. They have the right to decide whether or not to have children and how many children they want to have (Sonfield *et al.*, 2013). Women's willingness to have children directly impacts the reproductive situation of society as a whole, affecting the implementation of the two-child policy and having a significant impact on the demographic structure of Shanghai.

### 1.2 Research Purpose

Shanghai is typical and exemplary of other towns and areas in China, both economically and in terms of population issues (Li & Yi, 2020). All of the only children are already at marriageable age, and the breadth and depth of their impact are far greater than in other cities and regions of the country (Settles *et al.*, 2013). With the Shanghai government's comprehensive two-child policy, women, as the dominant agents of fertility behaviour, have a high degree of decision-making power over their fertility (Zhai *et al.*, 2016). The state of fertility intentions of the female population will directly influence actual fertility behaviour in society. The impact of the change in fertility policy on women's rights is multifaceted, especially for geriatric mothers with two children (Huang, 1997). As a result, the Shanghai government has enacted several fertility welfare policies to enhance women's willingness to have a second child to ensure population growth. The purpose of this study is to analyse the impact of Shanghai's fertility welfare policies on Shanghai women and to identify the reasons for the low fertility of Shanghai women and geriatric mothers to make the implementation of the comprehensive two-child policy more effective. Recognising the shortcomings of the current fertility welfare policy in Shanghai, promoting the fertility welfare policy, and providing some ideas for the comprehensive two-child approach to encourage a reasonable population replacement in China.

### 1.3 Research Significance

This research is original and relevant. The survey of maternity welfare policies will enable us to understand the current development of maternity welfare policies in Shanghai and understand the willingness of Shanghai women and geriatric mothers to have children. It will also enable us to understand the research methodology better and improve the protection of the rights of Shanghai women with second births and geriatric mothers. It is also possible to extend this research to a broader range of women's rights protection activities and practices. Therefore, it is of great relevance to study women's fertility intentions in the context of fertility welfare policies, provide some research material for improving fertility policies, and provide some research basis for the advancement of population policies.

### 1.4 Research Idea

The general idea of this dissertation is to examine the impact of maternity welfare policies on women's fertility intentions in Shanghai through policy analysis and case studies. And to analyse the reasons for the low fertility intentions of women and senior women in Shanghai in the context of role conflict and gender theory to propose appropriate solutions in Shanghai. Firstly, this paper reviews the literature on the impact of maternity welfare policies on women's fertility intentions, discusses the relevant literature, and identifies gaps. After placing Shanghai as the city of study and introducing the contents of the fertility welfare policy in Shanghai, the literature and case studies on the fertility intentions of women in Shanghai after the implementation of the comprehensive two-child policy and the fertility welfare policy are collected using the literature analysis and case studies method. The study then analyses the impact of the maternity welfare policy on fertility intentions in the light of role conflict and social theory, in conjunction with the literature and the content of the policy. Finally, in the context of Shanghai's actual situation, it is proposed what complementary approaches can increase the fertility intentions of Shanghai women and women of advanced age in the comprehensive two-child policy.

### 1.5 Research Methodology

All data in this dissertation is secondary research. It was obtained through journals, books, Google Scholar and national literature. The use of websites and photocopied materials was kept to a minimum. To understand the content of maternity welfare policies in Shanghai, women's willingness to have children, and the impact of maternity welfare policies on geriatric mothers. To analyse the reasons for the low fertility intentions of women and geriatric mothers under the maternity welfare policy in Shanghai through a case study approach and to propose solutions.

## 2. Theories and Concepts

### 2.1 Main Body

#### 2.1.1 Fertility Intention

Fertility intention is people's expectations of their fertility behaviour and reflects their perceptions of the level of

economic, social, and cultural development (Ajzen & Klobas, 2013). There are three definitions of fertility intentions: Gu (1992) states that fertility intentions are the three dimensions of willingness to have children in terms of number, timing, and gender. The second is the view of fertility intention under the four dimensions. The main four dimensions are the number of children, gender, birth spacing, and purpose (Song & Yu, 2017). The third is a view of fertility intention in five dimensions. According to Zhou (2007), willingness to have children is a combination of quantity, sex, timing, spacing, and quality. As this study was conducted in the context of the comprehensive two-child policy, the fertility intention of the study is the intention of families who have already had one child to have a second child.

#### 2.1.2 Maternity Benefit Policies

In China, Maternity benefits refer to the provision of welfare resources and services by the state, the market, and society for the use of women, children, and their families, to improve the level of welfare for women and children (Lim & Lee, 2014). In terms of the division of responsibilities, the state is primarily responsible for the provision of resources and the development of a system of maternity benefits, the market is mainly responsible for the social protection of women in maternity and employment through occupational benefits, and society is primarily responsible for the health and care of women and children (Fei, 2014, p. 12). The provision of maternity benefits includes financial support during the birth and childbirth process, support for women's and children's health care services, and maternity leave (Wu *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, the maternity benefit policies are maternity leave, employment protection policy, maternity protection policy, maternal and child health policy (Liang & Wang, 2019).

#### 2.1.3 Geriatric Mothers

Geriatric mothers are defined as pregnant at the age of 35 or older, a group of women at increased risk of complications in pregnancy after the age of 35 and whose maternal health declines, hence the term geriatric mothers (Sigle & Kravdal, 2021).

#### 2.1.4 Role Conflict Theory

Role conflict theory refers to the fact that role conflict arises when an individual plays a role contrary to their values or plays a role with conflicting needs simultaneously (Chiu, 1998, p. 410). Generally speaking, there are two types of role conflict: intra-role conflict and inter-role conflict (Gray, 1983, p. 237). Intra-role conflict arises in the psychology of the role-player due to the different expectations and demands of various role-players, or the role-player's understanding of the role and society's understanding of the role confusion and contradiction (Herman & Gyllstrom, 1997). Inter-role conflict is the conflict that occurs when an individual is playing two or more different roles. When an individual plays two or more roles simultaneously, within a certain amount of time and limited energy, and these roles cannot be abandoned, the role-player is often overwhelmed and unable to attend to all the roles played (Yin, 2007). After the birth of a child, a woman is a wife and mother and a leader and friend. The family role requires working women to play the role of a good wife and mother, focus mainly on the family, and take care of the children, the husband, and the elderly. On the other hand, the work role requires working women to take charge of their work and achieve tremendous professional success, just as men do (Herman & Gyllstrom, 1997). During their childbearing years and when their children are young, women have to choose between work and family during this period, resulting in a conflict between their roles. This conflict still exists when having a second child.

#### 2.1.5 Gender Theory

Gender is a power relationship (Millett, 1970, p. 2). Gender refers to the characteristics shared by the respective groups of men and women and the different ways in which each behaves (Hare & Marecek, 1988, p. 460). Butler (1990) found that gender hierarchies are built based on coherence between biological sex, gender, and desire. Connell (1987) proposes that an interacting social dimension constitutes the gender order, namely the power relations between masculinity and femininity that permeates society. The power relationship is primarily between the overall subordinate position of femininity and male domination. In all cultures, there is a core of masculine power, which is reflected in that men control the organised coercive of institutions and male control of the main instruments of economic production (Hodapp, 2017). Ancient Chinese society also advocated the superiority of men over women. After introducing Buddhism to China in 1937, the fight against male supremacy over women and the promotion of equality between men and women began to emerge (Gao, 2011). In gender theory, the leading cause of gender inequality between men and women is the persistence of male superiority and gender blindness in society. In the light of this philosophy, gender theory analyses the political, economic, cultural, and social institutional causes of gender inequality (Owence *et al.*, 2009). Gender theory reveals the unequal relationship between men and women and argues that this inequality is due to unequal rights between men and women (Braunstein & Folbre, 2011). Women are subject to employment inequalities in the workplace due to traditional patriarchal attitudes, exacerbated by issues such as physical reasons when women have

children. After a woman has a second child, she may lose her job, be forced to resign and be unable to compete fairly with men when applying for employment and having the opportunity for promotion.

#### 2.1.6 Literature Review

The existing literature can be divided into three categories to consider the impact of maternity welfare policies on women's willingness to have a second child from women themselves, their families, and society.

#### Research on Women

Through interviews with 30 women of different ages in Wuhan in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, Li and Xiang (2010) concluded that women of different generations have preferences for gender, which directly affects the willingness to have a second child, independent of maternity welfare policies. Women in the 1970s preferred boys, women in the 1980s preferred girls, and women in the 1990s did not have self-evident gender requirements. Due to the ancient heritage of traditional thinking, the older generation of women are more conservative in their thinking and believe that raising a boy prevents them from growing old (Croll, 2000). And the one-child policy was introduced in the 1970s, so women in the 1970s preferred boys because of the influence of having only one child and traditional thinking (Zeng & Hesketh, 2016). From the 1980s onwards, due to economic development, a new generation of women began to change their mindsets. Feminist thinking became popular, believing that women could be just as capable as men (Braunstein & Folbre, 2011). After the 1990s, the mindset changed to a more open one, where both genders could be used for society (Gao, 2011). Therefore, women's willingness to have a second child in the 1970s and 1980s depends on the gender of their first child, and the existence of maternity benefits are not the main reason women choose to have a second child. But Li and Xiang (2010) did not consider the different fertility intentions of women in different areas. Jiang *et al.* (2016) noticed the regional differences in women's fertility intentions. He surveyed 3000 women of different ages through questionnaires and interviews. The study concluded that women of all ages in rural areas choose to have a second child or even an extra child to have a boy because of the traditional preference for sons in rural areas. The traditional Chinese idea that a woman's family status is enhanced when she gives birth to a male child has faded in the cities but still exists in the countryside (Qian, 1997). Although Jiang *et al.* (2016) conducted a survey on the willingness of women of different ages to have a second child in rural areas, increasing the comparison with urban areas, but too concentrated in the same place for the findings to be generalisable. The regional economic development of different provinces in China varies. A survey of fertility intentions in just one area does not represent the whole country, so surveys should be conducted on urban and rural women of different ages in different provinces. Such an approach would provide a clearer picture of the fertility intentions of urban and rural women in China.

Liao *et al.* (2009) selected their study population by considering women of different ages in urban and rural areas in 12 provinces of China and surveyed women through a combination of questionnaires and interviews to reach their conclusions. The over-concentration of interviewees in Jiang *et al.* (2016) was avoided. In urban areas, women of different ages would consider whether to have a second child because of the gender preference of the child they were having. In rural areas, most women of all ages choose to have a second child because the sex of their first child is female. Women's willingness to have a second child is not related to maternity welfare policies in urban or rural areas. Two types of surveys were used to ensure that richer data were collected, but the number of people interviewed was extensive and required considerable time, effort, and financial resources (Liao *et al.*, 2009). The interview method for a total survey sample is a less sensible one.

This factor has been taken into account in Xu's (2007) survey. Xu (2007) conducted a questionnaire survey on the willingness of rural and urban women to have a second child, with the primary sample focusing on the 1990s group. It was also combined with a literature research method, which reduced the time and accelerated the efficiency compared to interviews. He thinks even after considering different age groups and regions, some minority groups need to be surveyed accordingly and explored the Dink group of the 1990s. The study draws the same conclusions as Jiang *et al.* (2016), Women's willingness to have a second child has nothing to do with welfare policies and mentions why dink families do not want to have children, mentions the particular situation of women in the 1990s, this is something Jiang *et al.* (2016) had not considered. Due to a paradigm shift in thinking, a group chose not to have children and decided to become a Dink family. The Dink family is a new type of family in which both spouses have incomes and can have children, but neither wants to have children (Che & Li, 2021, p. 500). These families do not wish to have a child, let alone a second child. No welfare policy will make them want to have children.

Shi and Yang (2014) took into account that urban women have different levels of education and have different positions, so they divided the respondents into classes. As bosses, maternity welfare policies have increased their willingness to have children. Employees felt that maternity leave would discriminate against them in employment, making them less inclined to have a second child. But for women in different positions, the difference in a place directly affects the salary level. The level of wages can reflect whether maternity protection policies have affected women financially. So, it is very one-sided to consider only the position and not the salary

(Elizabeth *et al.*, 2018). Bosses at the same level are paid differently, as are ordinary employees, so a combination of salary and job title is needed to ensure that maternity benefit policies can address the different levels. Shi and Yang (2014) do not consider this, whereas Wang (2018) does. Wang (2018) used the literature survey method and questionnaire method to divide the respondents by their education level, position, and salary level. Based on Shi and Yang's (2014) findings that maternity leave affects women's fertility intentions differently by class, Wang (2018) argued that the impact of maternity protection policies on women's fertility intentions differs by salary. For women with average wages, paid maternity leave and the maternity allowance in the maternity protection policy increase their willingness to have children. For women with low salaries, the maternity allowance does not cover the daily expenses of two children, so they do not choose to have a second child.

But Wang (2018) only analysed women's rights without considering that men are also part of the family and that men's leave is beneficial to men and women and their families (Zheng, 2009). Zheng (2009) analysed the impact of maternity protection policies using a comparative analysis. The study found that maternity protection policies neglected paternity leave for men in terms of maternity leave. Men do not have the time to care for women after childbirth, thus increasing the health risks for women. Although the absence of paternity leave for men affects women's willingness to have a second child, paternity leave does not yet exist in some Chinese cities, and paternity leave exists only in fast-growing Chinese towns (Jin, 2016). So, a study of whether maternity leave in China affects women's willingness to have a second child should consider the policies implemented in all provinces.

### **Studies Related to the Impact of Families**

In analysing the impact of maternal welfare policies on maternal secondary births, the impact on women should not be analysed separately but also family factors should be taken into account. Jin (2016) investigates this question. Through quantitative analysis, Jin (2016) concluded that the income gap between urban and rural families is significant. The same maternity allowance does not improve rural poverty. Having a second child will increase poverty, so some rural families choose not to have a second child. Jin (2016) only considers the income gap between rural and urban areas. Studies have shown that more women in urban areas get post-natal depression after childbirth than in rural areas, which places a significant financial burden on urban women. Rural women have a less stressful life than urban women and are therefore less likely to suffer from post-natal depression (Yang *et al.*, 2020). So even though the income gap between rural and urban areas is significant, urban areas spend a lot of money on psychological issues due to the pressures of life and the conflicting roles of work and family, and there is no welfare policy for psychological treatment (Tang *et al.*, 2019). So, it would be a one-sided study to consider only urban and rural incomes without considering the impact of other social factors on income.

Using a questionnaire survey of mothers in five hospitals in Shanghai, Gu *et al.* (2017) found that mothers' psychological state after the birth of a second child produced varying degrees of post-natal depression. In China, most mothers are cared for by their mothers-in-law, so the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law directly impacts maternal mood (Lee *et al.*, 2014). The rapid decline in hormone levels after childbirth, coupled with the difficulties of caring for a new-born baby and moving around, can make a woman post-natal depression, and prolonged poor relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law can exacerbate her depression (Osei-Tutu *et al.*, 2021). Because there is no policy on maternity benefits related to psychological treatment, women choose not to have a second child. Zhang (2020) synthesised the study of Jin (2016) and Gu *et al.* (2017). He took into account woman's psychological state, whether women lived in the city and the composition of the couple's family members. Through literature research, Zhang (2020) analysed the different willingness of couples to have a second child depending on their family type. Due to the development of our fertility policy, the current family types can be divided into three categories. Families in which both spouses are only children, families in which one spouse is an only child and families in which neither spouse is an only child (Shi & Yang, 2014, p. 32). Females are more likely to have children in families where both spouses are only children. However, there is no analysis of which fertility benefit policy reduces the willingness to have children, only of which group is more likely to have a second child.

### **Social Factors**

As for the impact of maternity benefits on women's willingness to have a second child, there are social influences and women's reasons and family reasons. The effect of society on women's desire to have a second child is powerful (Bao *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, in contrast to Jin's (2016) study, health care is one of the issues to be considered, in addition to the gap between rural and urban household incomes. In a survey of whether maternal and child health policies affect women's willingness to have a second child, Gao and Zou (2020) compared urban and rural areas. The study found that medical facilities in rural areas were inadequate, medical care was not available in remote areas, and some villages did not even have doctors. The maternal and child

health policy has improved the standard of care in urban areas, but there is still no policy to protect medical care in rural areas. As a result, women in rural areas choose not to have a second child because of fears about the health problems that would result from having a child. However, Gao and Zou (2020) only used a comparative approach in their study, and the single research method may make the findings inaccurate.

Wang and Peng (2015) analysed women in rural areas of Site H through quantitative analysis, collecting data from 1991 to 2019, and came up with the same results as Gao and Zou's (2020) study. Meanwhile, Wang and Peng (2015) concluded that since only employed women are eligible for maternity insurance, women in rural areas are mainly unemployed. Therefore, women living in rural areas do not have the same maternity health insurance benefits as urban women. Even though rural women live in areas with the same level of medical care as urban women, the government's high medical costs are not reimbursed in the same way as urban women, which adds more burden to rural women's lives. As with rural women, urban women who do not work do not have maternity insurance, which Wang and Peng (2015) did not consider. Huang *et al.* (2017) pointed out interviewing urban women without jobs about their willingness to have children. The lack of maternity coverage was why they did not want a second child. Another reason was lower satisfaction with urban maternal and child health policies. The quantitative analysis by Liang and Wang (2019) found that women's satisfaction with the level of maternal and child health care in their area is low due to the limited services provided by maternal and child health service providers, the shortage of maternal and child health care personnel and beds, and the shortage of obstetricians and paediatricians. The level of maternal and child health care is an essential factor affecting the willingness of urban women of childbearing age to have a second child.

### 3. Case Study

#### 3.1 Contents of the Women's Maternity Benefit Policies

With the comprehensive two-child policy, some women plan to have a second child. But some women want to have a child but are afraid to do so, and some do not want to have a child, which is an obstacle to implementing the comprehensive two-child policy (Ji *et al.*, 2020). The problems that arise for those who want to have children but are afraid to do so as well as those who do not wish to have children are mainly due to relevant practical factors, such as the economic situation of the family, the cost of raising children and women's rights (Qian *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, the government has to provide solutions based on these realities and enact related welfare policies to increase women's willingness to have a second child. The main direction of follow-up research is whether these welfare policies have increased women's fertility intentions to have a second child, and what policies have influenced women's fertility intentions.

#### 3.2 Maternity Leave Policy

Shanghai's regulations on maternity leave are divided into three stages: before, during, and after childbirth. Article 12 of the Shanghai Measures for the Labour Protection of Female Workers: A female worker who is more than seven months pregnant (calculated at twenty-eight weeks) may take prenatal leave for two and a half months if the worker's work unit permits and upon worker's application (Schwank *et al.*, 2018). Female workers in the city are entitled to 98 days of maternity leave for childbirth. If a female employee still needs to take a break after maternity leave, she may take breastfeeding leave for six and a half months upon her application (Wang, 2017). Article 31 of Shanghai's new birth control regulations stipulate that for couples who give birth by the laws and rules, the male partner is entitled to ten days of paternity leave for his spouse (Schwank *et al.*, 2018).

Because of childbirth involves an extended period, and women who have given birth cannot return to work immediately afterwards for various reasons (Jiang, 2018). To provide women with the opportunity to temporarily leave the workplace and help them better complete the childbirth process, the government has proposed a maternity leave policy to address this issue. The maternity leave policy provides 98 days of spare time for women policy support and protection for women who give birth during this critical period of their lives, allowing them to take statutory leave to repair the physical and psychological effects of childbirth (Buzzanell & Liu, 2007). For companies, a maternity leave policy for women helps improve labour relations between female workers and their employers and helps build and maintain corporate culture (Baird, 2003). An enterprise that can implement a good maternity leave policy for women will have higher competitiveness and employee loyalty than other enterprises that fail to implement a good maternity leave policy (Baird, 2003). Its corporate image and attractiveness will be enhanced accordingly.

However, while maternity leave policies protect women's rights, the burden businesses. There is no provision in the maternity leave policy for enterprise protection (Wang, 2017). With the increase in the number of people taking maternity leave in the company, it has to some extent, increased the employment tension in the department, and the pressure on the employees in the post will increase (Demleitner, 1992). The company needs to invest other resources to ensure that the company's business is carried out correctly. The company's costs will

gradually increase, and the company's profits will suffer as a result (Gomez-Jimenez, 2018). And the contents of the maternity leave policy reveal that maternity leave does not consider the self-employed. The difference between a self-employed person and an employee of a company is that the self-employed person has to be personally responsible for their shop (Jia & Yang, 2020). Self-employed women run shops instead of resting after childbirth, which has a greater impact on their health. So, the government should consider a different maternity leave policy for this group.

### 3.3 Employment Security Policy

Since implementing the comprehensive two-child policy, a series of initiatives such as maternity leave has safeguarded women's reproductive rights of childbearing age in China (Jiang, 2018). At the same time, to a certain extent, it has also aggravated employment discrimination against women and exacerbated the employment pressure on women, with most women in China being forced to face the choice between career and childbirth (Zhao & Peng, 2016). To alleviate women's employment conflicts, the government issued the Circular on Further Regulating Recruitment Practices to Promote Women's Employment, which makes every effort to protect women's employment rights in China and requires companies not to discriminate against women in employment. It strongly supports women to return to their previous jobs after childbirth and prohibits employers from disguising women's work and lowering their income levels during birth (Cui *et al.*, 2018). As this municipality proposes no employment security policy in Shanghai, the national employment security policy prevails (Zheng, 2009).

A significant concern for many women is that once they have taken maternity leave and re-entered the company, many benefits and opportunities for promotion may be eliminated. More importantly, many companies and factories still discriminate against women, and when it comes to hiring, men are preferred on equal terms (Burnett, 2010). The Employment Security Policy addresses this concern for women. But there are no criteria set out in the employment protection policy. Incomplete consideration may result in companies not strictly following the standards set by the government when implementing maternity protection policies but rather shirking their responsibilities by implementing the procedures in a token manner (Cooney, 2007).

### 3.4 Maternity Protection Policy

In 2016, Shanghai developed the conditions for receiving maternity insurance benefits: female employees who have paid maternity insurance premiums for 12 months or nine months continuously in the month of birth or miscarriage shall receive a maternity allowance paid in full. Suppose the cumulative contributions in the month of birth or miscarriage are less than 12 months and less than nine months continuously. In that case, the maternity insurance fund shall pay part of the costs, and the remaining portion shall be paid by the employer first (Maitra *et al.*, 2007). The allowance for medical expenses is increased to RMB 3600 for births of seven months' gestation or more minor, RMB 600 for natural miscarriages of four months' gestation or more, and RMB 400 for natural miscarriages of less than four months' gestation (Zhou & Gao, 2018). In the case of maternity allowance, the female employee's salary will be paid during her maternity leave as usual. Under this provision, prenatal and breastfeeding leave are paid at 80 per cent of the employee's original salary (Liu *et al.*, 2020).

The government has introduced the maternity protection policy to address the economic loss that women experience when they are temporarily incapacitated by the birth of a child (Zhang, 2010). The government provides women with the necessary financial compensation and medical care. The maternity protection policy offers financial and medical protection for women who give birth, including reimbursement of medical expenses for childbirth and subsistence allowances during maternity leave. Such a policy frees women from worrying about the cost of medical care and some living expenses during childbirth. (Stearns, 2015).

However, Maternity Protection Policy is detrimental to career women and rural women. The maternity health insurance and maternity allowance do not cover women who have lost their jobs or are unemployed or in rural areas but only employed women (Liu & Sun, 2015). In recent years, as a result of male labourers going out to work, the number of rural women in the countryside has increased, their health has a direct impact on agricultural productivity, their inability to work during childbirth can result in a loss of family income (Shi, 2008). Maternity protection policies should consider unemployed women and women in rural areas.

### 3.5 Maternal and Child Health Policy

To ensure the effective implementation of the comprehensive two-child policy, the Shanghai government deepened the reform of the medical and health system, improved primary health care services throughout the childbirth process, and enhanced the health of women and children. And also provide essential health care services for families before, during, and after childbirth (Du *et al.*, 2021).

The implementation of the two-child policy requires securing healthcare resources and addressing current issues in healthcare (Zou, 2018). The government has proposed a maternal and child health policy to ensure that women have access to medical services in connection with the birth of a second child. The maternal and child

health policy mainly concerns providing primary health care to women during childbirth (Liu *et al.*, 2020).

Although medical care is guaranteed in the maternal and child health policy, it is currently more important for women to have guidance and counselling in addition to medical resources (Stewart & Vigod, 2016). Some women suffer from prenatal anxiety and post-natal depression due to social factors (Tham *et al.*, 2016). The main reason for this is that women are not aware of the physical and psychological changes that occur during each stage of labour and the unknown about the state of the new-born. There is a lack of guidance and counselling before, during, and after pregnancy (Deklava *et al.*, 2015). In addition to women, there is no policy for new-borns only, and the new-born's health is the essential aspect for women as mothers (Lupton, 2011). New-borns require primary care, such as feeding and nutrition, counselling on growth stages, and developmental assessment (Lupton, 2011). Therefore, in addition to the health guidance for women, it is also necessary to increase the knowledge of new-borns.

### 3.6 Related Cases

#### Case 1

Ms A is now living in Shanghai, is 38 years old, and has worked as a teacher for almost 20 years. Ms A became pregnant shortly after her marriage when she was 25 years old. Ms A applied to her company for a leave of absence before giving birth. Still, the school headmaster refused to grant it and informed Ms A that the head of her year group was vacant, and she was one of the candidates who needed to devote more energy to her work. As a result, Ms A returned to work two months after giving birth. However, the school director did not promote Ms A to the post. After Ms A's delivery, a large part of Ms A's social media feeds was filled with complaints about her husband. The protest was that her husband had no time for his family and was focused on his job. As her husband's career continued to grow, he spent less and less time and energy on his family, and Ms A was under physical and psychological stress as she juggled her family and cared for her new-born child. During Ms A's labour, Ms A gave birth in the hospital's corridors. This noisy environment prevented her from recovering well after giving birth due to the strain on medical resources. The situation was further complicated because Ms A had no financial resources during her break. Ms A says that the lack of medical resources, conflicts with her husband, and the added financial pressure discouraged her from having a second child.

Now that she is 38 years old, Ms A has chosen to have a second child. What made her change her mind about having children was the advent of the maternity benefits policy. The maternity benefits policy, maternity insurance policy, and maternal and child health policy have addressed her concerns about having a child. The maternity insurance policy addresses Ms A's financial concerns and allows her to have a second child without worrying about whether it will affect her standard of living. The maternity leave policy and paternity leave ensure that Ms A is healthy and can return to work quickly after recovery. The maternity and childcare policy also provides that Ms A has access to medical resources for the birth of her child. As a result of the maternity benefits policy, Ms A chose to have a second child. Her colleagues also considered whether to have a second child in the light of their circumstances and realities. Therefore, Ms A believes that for Ms A and her colleagues, the maternity benefits policy protects their rights as women and affects their willingness to have a second child (Zhang, 2013).

#### Case 2

Ms D is a secondary school teacher in Shanghai, aged 45, who gave birth to her second child at 42. When she was pregnant with her second child, Ms D often went to the hospital for examination and treatment due to physical problems, which cost a lot of money. Due to the small number of public hospitals and maternal and child health clinics in Shanghai, Ms D was placed in a standard ward of three to four people during labour and a short recuperation period after delivery. Due to her age, Ms D felt that she was recovering slowly and needed a quieter environment to rest, and an award with too many people was not conducive to her recovery. Ms D's colleagues reported that when they visited Ms D in the hospital, the harsh environment made them discourage the idea of having a second child. During her maternity leave, Ms D's school supervisor would still assign Ms D to work on several tasks that Ms D had to complete. After her maternity leave, Ms D was refused a claim to reimburse her maternity medical expenses because of the school's financial burden. She was told that she had been dismissed and replaced by a new teacher and was not given a living allowance during her maternity leave.

As a result of the employment protection policy on maternity benefits, Ms D reported to the government that the school had dismissed her during her leave and refused to reimburse her for her maternity medical expenses. The school eventually reinstated Ms D and reimbursed her living and medical allowances, and the school was sanctioned accordingly. Ms D believes that the maternity benefits policy benefits women to have a second child and provides women with the backbone to defend their rights against abuse. The maternity benefits policy has helped Ms D resolve the difficulties arising from the birth of her second child (Chen, 2020).

#### Case 3



Xiao Yan, a 38-year-old civil servant in Shanghai, says that she will not have a second child although she likes children. Xiao Yan believes that the cost of raising a second child as an ordinary employee is too high. She is surrounded by wealthy friends who send their children to study piano, calligraphy, dance, and painting. She does not want her child to fall behind other people's children, but she and her husband cannot afford these costs. Xiao Yan believes that although there are employment protection policies for women, many women are discriminated against in employment. She believes that the stipulated 98 days of paternity leave is too short. Still, because the government does not regulate the implementation of employment protection policies and breastfeeding leave, many companies do not comply with the policy, let alone extend the number of days of maternity leave. Xiao Yan believes that although the maternity benefits policy guarantees women the right to have a second child, she chooses not to have a second child because the maternity benefits policy does not fully address Xiao Yan's concerns about having a second child, the child support. The length of maternity leave is why Xiao Yan chooses not to have a second child (Bao, 2017).

Combined with the role conflict theory in the previous section, where women have to play the role of mother, wife, and daughter in the family and the role of the worker in the workplace, maternity leave and paternity leave in maternity welfare policies address the problem of role conflict for Xiao Yan (Zhou & Gao, 2018). In the analysis of employment protection policies, it is also mentioned that the government has not played a supervisory role, which has caused enterprises not to comply with the relevant regulations. Therefore, the government's supervision of the employment protection policy, with a clear division of labour between departments and good management will also change Xiao Yan's willingness to have children.

#### 4. Analysis

This chapter analyses the willingness of women and geriatric mothers to have a second child in Shanghai from the perspective of case studies and policy analysis. The impact of maternity welfare policies on the willingness to have a second child and makes recommendations for the shortcomings of maternity welfare policies. In analysing the effects of maternity welfare policies on them, the analysis is divided into three areas: women's factors, social factors and family factors. Based on role conflict theory and gender theory, the content of the policy is analysed in-depth to identify the reasons for the low fertility intentions of geriatric mothers and women in Shanghai.

##### 4.1 Shanghai Women's Willingness to Have a Second Child

Childbirth and child-rearing are traditionally considered to be the unique vocation of women. Taking good care of the elderly and children and taking care of household chores has always been regarded by traditional Chinese society as the standard for a woman to be a good wife and mother (Bao, 2017). After China's reform and opening up, a new generation of women grew up and increasingly sought economic independence and personal freedom (Zhai *et al.*, 2016). In a questionnaire survey of Shanghai women, Liu (2010, p.25) found that 43.5 per cent were willing to have a second child, 30.0 per cent were unwilling to have a second child, and 26.5 per cent were unsure. Of those willing to have a second child, 79.8% do not want to lose their job because of a child. Some women eager to have a second child are geriatric, while others believe they can combine family and professional roles.

Conflicting roles leave many women with no way of balancing work and family. Pursuing a professional career is more important for young women who are more open-minded and have just entered society. Although young women are gradually leaving the confines of the family, the demands of the family on women in terms of spiritual needs are not diminishing (Caldeira & Hall, 2012). However, the gender structure in the traditional sense has not changed significantly, men are still the dominant group in society, and there is still gender inequality (Han *et al.*, 2018). The integration of women into society and the world of work requires them to be evaluated on the same basis as men to realise their value. Due to individual differences, dual role conflict significantly impacts women's work and lives (Perrone *et al.*, 2015).

The woman in Case 1 often complains about her husband. Because men mainly control the leading economy and institutions in society, her husband has a very patriarchal attitude towards family relationships (Hodapp, 2017). Ms A struggles with the conflict between family and work, as she asks for time off work because she is physically and mentally incapacitated and pregnant. Still, her supervisor does not allow it due to the importance of her position, which leads to her not wanting a second child.

##### 4.2 Geriatric Women's Willingness to Have a Second Child

Some geriatric mothers choose to have a second child mainly because of traditional fertility culture. The following bases characterise the traditional fertility culture: firstly, the emphasis on marriage and family and the continuity of the family, this is reflected in the fact that women are encouraged to marry early to build a family, and the purpose of marriage is to have children and reproduce (Bray, 2008). Secondly, there is a concern for the economic value of having offspring. Parents tend to view their children from a utilitarian perspective, valuing the

labour value of their children (Cain, 1982). Thirdly, there is a focus on the number of children. Traditional societies have relatively low productivity levels and therefore require a large proportion of the population's labour force as a substitute. Having a second child is a subjective choice and an objective necessity (Qiu, 2003). Older women believe that having a second child is an objective need. However, some older working women are also not influenced by traditional attitudes. Because of their older age, geriatric mothers have longer work time. They are more experienced. Because of the more significant work experience, it is common for people who have just worked and have no work experience to ask experienced women for advice on their work (Major *et al.*, 2002). They need to take care of their husbands, children, and older adults at home. However, time and energy are limited, and combining these two roles in one individual will inevitably affect and constrain each other (Marks, 1977). Both Ms A and D are older working women and have more stressful lives, families and jobs and more prominent role conflicts between work and family than younger women (Qiu, 2003). However, they have both chosen to have a second child due to traditional attitudes and the influence of maternity benefits.

#### 4.3 The Impact of Maternity Leave on Women's Willingness to Have a Second Child

According to modern Western medicine, it takes six to eight weeks after childbirth for a woman's body to return to its prenatal level (Herron-Marx *et al.*, 2017). Traditional Chinese medicine believes that childbirth causes a woman's vital energy significantly depleted and her veins empty. It takes about six weeks for her body to recover (Jiang, 2018). The 98 days provided for in the maternity leave policy ensures that women's bodies have time to recover. For working women, childbirth is an extended period, and for various reasons, women cannot return to the workplace immediately after giving birth. The maternity leave policy includes two and a half months of prenatal leave and six and a half months of breastfeeding leave in addition to the 98 days of maternity leave (Wang, 2017). Maternity leave gives women the opportunity to leave work temporarily to help them better complete the childbirth process and ensure that they recover during all stages of labour (Buzzanell & Liu, 2007).

Ms A in Case 1 returned to work before she had recovered from her first birth because her request for leave was not granted, leaving her in poor health and not wanting to have a second child. After all, she had not had enough rest. With the maternity leave policy, she felt that the 98 days of maternity leave and the prenatal and breastfeeding leave allowed her to have enough time to rest to ensure her recovery and therefore chose to have a second child (Zhang, 2013). Consequently, it shows that the maternity leave policy has increased women's willingness to have children and has significantly impacted women's choice to have a second child. At the same time, when Ms A had her first child, her husband did not have the time to care for her and the child due to his work, leaving her with the physical and psychological stress of juggling family and work (Zhang, 2013). With the advent of male paternity leave, her husband will also have time to care for her and the baby, easing her burden. Paternity leave allows her to recover more quickly, reduces conflicts with her husband and makes her more willing to choose to have a second child.

However, while the maternity leave policy guarantees women's health at all stages of labour, it does not consider the differences in physical conditions between geriatric and younger mothers. Clinical studies have shown that the incidence of pregnancy complications and comorbidities increases significantly with age, particularly hypertension in pregnancy, gestational diabetes, and pathological pregnancies caused by advanced age also affect the development of the foetus and new-born (Attali & Yogeve, 2021). The risks associated with labour and delivery are more significant in older age. The mother's age is such that it is not conducive to natural birth, and the fear of childbirth at an advanced age has led to a decline in the rate of successful vaginal deliveries and a high rate of caesarean sections (Laopaiboon, 2014). The challenges of an advanced maternal pregnancy result in varying degrees of psychological stress for geriatric mothers. Many surveys have found that the influence of social expectations and family stressors can lead to the development of negative affect and psychological distress in pregnant women (Dipietro *et al.*, 2006). Pregnant women with negative emotions and psychological problems may show symptoms such as anxiety, depression, fear, nervousness, paranoia, sleep disturbances, lack of concentration, and emotional instability, which may even disrupt their everyday lives (Velders *et al.*, 2011). The woman's emotional distress not only has a direct impact on the outcome of her pregnancy but also has long-lasting adverse effects on her health, the development of her new-born child, and the family as a whole (Ma, 2014).

The women in all three cases were over 35 years of age, and all were working women. Both Ms A in case 1 and Ms D in case 2 reported that their physical conditions do not recover as quickly as those of younger people after childbirth and that the material, as well as psychological damage, is heavier than that of younger people due to their older age (Ma, 2014). It is, therefore, unreasonable to regulate the group of geriatric mothers according to the same number of days of leave, as they are unable to ensure that their physical condition can recover within the same regular number of days as younger people (Jin & Cheng, 2018). It is also clear from Xiao Yan's case that breastfeeding and prenatal leave are not strictly enforced in all companies in Shanghai. There are no government regulations and applications for breastfeeding leave, and prenatal leave is not mandatory but require

company approval to take breastfeeding leave. Most companies will refuse to grant leave because of the company's interest (Bao, 2017). Therefore, due to the lack of maternity leave days, breastfeeding leave and antenatal leave are not regulated by the government, many geriatric women hesitate or decide not to have a second child considering the high risk of childbirth due to their health condition and the fact that the leave is not extended enough for their body to recover, which affects their willingness to have a second child.

In addition, a small proportion of working women believe that extending the number of days of maternity leave will increase their willingness to have a second child (Jiang, 2018). For them, 98 days of maternity leave is too short to meet their needs. Shanghai is an economically developed city with a fast pace and rapid economic development (Han *et al.*, 2009). As a working woman living in Shanghai, she needs to take care of her family at home and do her job well at work to adapt to the changing society (Li, 2020). The 98-day maternity leave is far from enough for these working women while solving a large part of the problem. Babies are still very fragile at three months of age, and at this time, being entirely away from the mother is not particularly good for the child's development (Qiu, 2003). At this time, leaving the mother impacts the baby's physical development, and it will also be busier and consume energy in caring for the child and at work. Xiao Yan of Case 3 argues that 98 days of maternity leave is not enough. She was unable to balance family and work within this time frame fully. Both extended maternity and paternity leave alleviate work-family conflicts for working women, suitable for children and families.

#### *4.4 The Impact of Employment Protection Policy on Women's Willingness to Have a Second Child*

Shanghai requires that prenatal and breastfeeding rest be spent at 80% of one's original salary (Liu *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, many companies choose to recruit male employees for profit. Some dismiss women during maternity leave, leaving many women to choose not to have a second child to fear losing their jobs and financial resources. Zhou and Gao (2018, p. 77) found that during pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding, 1.6 per cent of female employees had their jobs changed, 1.4 per cent had their jobs unchanged, but their salaries were reduced, 0.4 per cent were dismissed, 2.1 per cent had restrictions on selection and promotion, and 2.4 per cent had restrictions not only on vocational training but also on appointment and promotion. The Employment Protection Policy requires businesses not to discriminate against women in employment and strongly supports women returning to their previous jobs after birth (Cui *et al.*, 2018). Such an approach addresses the difficulties women face in their careers due to maternity leave and protects women's right to work.

In Case 2, Ms D lost her job when the school dismissed her during her maternity leave and replaced her with a new teacher. As a result of the employment protection policy, Ms D took her case back to the relevant government authorities and was reinstated, and the school was sanctioned (Chen, 2020). Thus, the employment protection policy protects not only a woman's right to give birth to a child but also her right to work, so that women do not have to worry about working either with their first child or with their second child, which increases their willingness to have a second child.

In a market economy, women are at a competitive disadvantage compared to men in terms of work (Mavin, 2001). The advent of employment protection policies has eased the competitive burden of women. However, geriatric mothers are more likely to be discriminated against in employment and job search than average women because of their older age (Chen, 2020). And the employment protection policy does not consider that special provisions should be made for the employment protection of geriatric mothers. In addition, the employment protection policy does not specify what penalties companies will receive if they breach its provisions, and it does not determine which government department is responsible for regulating companies (Cooney, 2007). Such a loophole has led to many companies ignoring the policy and failing to comply with it in practice due to the lack of government regulation (Cooke, 2011). Women still face inequalities in employment and maternity leave.

In Case 3, Xiao Yan, aged 38, believes that although there are employment protection policies for women, they do not fully address women's employment concerns. For women of her age, the employment protection policy only protects women temporarily absent from work due to maternity leave from losing their jobs. Still, there is no protection for women seeking employment (Bao, 2017). Due to the older age of geriatric mothers, companies prefer younger women in recruitment to older women, which makes the competitive pressure on aged mothers after childbirth more pronounced than on younger mothers. And Xiao Yan believes that the employment protection policy does not help women protect their employment rights as many companies do not follow the procedure due to poor government regulation (Chen, 2020). Therefore, the incomplete targeting and coverage of employment protection policies led Xiao Yan not to choose to have a second child, suggesting that the preliminary consideration of employment protection policies affected women's willingness to have a second child.

#### *4.5 The Impact of Maternity Protection Policies on Women's Willingness to Have a Second Children*

With the development of medical services and the increased focus on children's and women's health in Shanghai,

examinations and hospitalisation costs have increased (Zhao, 2019). The birth of a second child has tripled all prices. The reimbursement of medical expenses for childbirth under the maternity protection policy has reduced the financial pressure on women for medical care in connection with birth (Gao *et al.*, 2017). Women do not have a corresponding subsistence allowance during their leave, and the reduction in income can put more significant financial pressure on family life (Waldfogel, 1995). The maternity protection policy's maternity subsistence allowance protects a woman's financial resources and eases the financial burden on her family.

In Case 1, Ms A's relationship with her husband has become increasingly severe due to her lack of financial resources while on leave, increasing the family's financial burden. With the maternity protection policy, Ms A's financial problem was solved, causing Ms A to change her mind about not having a second child (Zhang, 2013). Ms D in Case 2 also received a subsidy for the medical costs of having a second child and an allowance for childbirth, which ensured her medical care and income for her second child (Chen, 2020). Thus, the maternity protection policy ensures that women have access to medical care and a standard of living that increases their willingness to have a second child.

However, the maternity protection policy has impacted the willingness of women who are not working to have a second child. The maternity protection policy is only available to women who are employed and on maternity leave and women who are employed and have a company that can pay for the insurance on their behalf (Maitra *et al.*, 2007). But there are still many women in Shanghai who are unemployed and have no financial resources of their own, which puts them under more significant financial pressure than women who do work (Jiang, 1987). The cost of an average maternity check-up in Shanghai is between 5,000 and 10,000 RMB, which is unaffordable for women who do not have a job (Zhou & Gao, 2018). The massive pressure of life and the cost of medical care discourages women who want to have a second child from doing so, thus reducing their willingness to have a second child.

The financial burden on her family caused by the interruption of her income during the holidays in Case 1 strained her relationship with her husband and made Ms A choose not to have a second child (Zhang, 2013). The lack of maternity protection affects non-working women's willingness to have children as the policy does not consider the non-working group.

Secondly, the maternity protection policy has impacted the willingness of geriatric mothers to have a second child. In terms of medical care, geriatric mothers are not in the same physical condition as younger mothers and often have physical problems during pregnancy. Therefore, older mothers spend more on medical care during pregnancy than younger mothers (Jin & Cheng, 2018). For example, geriatric mothers are more likely to have a caesarean section than younger mothers due to medical reasons (Kenny *et al.*, 2013). The average cost of a caesarean section hospitalisation in Shanghai is RMB 9,281, while medical expenses are only reimbursed at RMB 3,600 (Qiu, 2020). For older mothers, the vast medical expenses reduce the willingness of older mothers to have a second child.

In case 2, Ms D was 42 years old when she had her second child, and because of her age, she had to go to the hospital frequently for treatment when she was pregnant with her second child, which cost a lot of money (Chen, 2020). It is not fair to reimburse the same medical expenses for this group of elderly mothers as for younger women. A large amount of money spent on medical care can affect the willingness of geriatric mothers to have children.

Thirdly, the maternity protection policy only subsidises the medical costs incurred by a woman in having a child and the living costs arising from childbirth. But for women, the cost of raising a child is the primary consideration (Li, 2017). In 2010, according to a survey conducted by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, the average annual cost of raising a child aged 0-6 for an average family in Shanghai was more than 30,000 RMB. The cost of clothing, food, accommodation, transport, childcare, school choice, and training for a child adds up to several hundred thousand (Zhou & Gao, 2018). The cost of raising children is higher in Shanghai compared to other cities (Chen, 2021). According to the survey, the economic capital required to raise a child from birth to adulthood is 1 million yuan. Based on the average income level in Shanghai, it would cost a family nearly 10 years of net income (Gu, 2021). For an average family, the pressure of 1 million in child support, the cost of raising children is enormous. And the stress of having a second child is twice as great. So, for many women, not having a second child is that the maternity protection policy does not provide benefits for child maintenance.

In Case 3, Xiao Yan's colleague's child has piano lessons to enrich her child's skills, and although she does not want her child to lag behind other children, she cannot afford to pay for them. Therefore, she chooses not to have a second child to increase her financial stress (Bao, 2017). The inadequacy of the benefits provided in the maternity allowance policy regarding child support affects women's willingness to have a second child.

In addition, When the comprehensive two-child policy was introduced, the phenomenon that emerged in the

human resources market was that women who were not married and who had one child were more competitive than women who had two children (Gu, 2021). When a woman has two children, the company has to bear the additional costs of the birth of her offspring and the statutory holidays. For many companies, this is a substantial financial burden. Because of the company's financial commitment, many companies will refuse to provide women with a maternity living allowance to cover maternity medical costs (Li, 2007). Such practices prevent women from receiving appropriate benefits and reduce their willingness to have children.

In Case 2, due to financial pressure, Ms D's school refused to reimburse Ms D's obstetric medical expenses. It declined to provide Ms D with an obstetric subsistence allowance, which affected Ms D's financial situation (Chen, 2020). Thus, the omission of maternity protection policies for companies directly affects the financial crisis of female employees, the cost of medical care, and the willingness of women to have a second child.

#### *4.6 The Impact of Maternal and Child Health Care Policies on Women's Willingness to Have a Second Children*

According to data from Shanghai, the number of medical institutions in Shanghai increased from 3,270 in 2010 to 1,2011 in 2016 following the introduction of the maternal and child health policy (Zhang, 2019, p. 66). In addition, Shanghai has always been a national leader in terms of overall medical standards and is far ahead of other provinces in terms of various technologies and service levels (Wang *et al.*, 2014). Medical resources can guarantee women's medical allocation and safety when giving birth to a child, thus increasing their willingness to have a second child (Chatterjee & Sennott, 2020). Ms A in Case 1 chose to have a second child because of the advent of maternal and child health policies that guaranteed her the safety of having a second child.

However, Shanghai's specialist hospitals and health technicians are concentrated in urban medical institutions (Sun, 2013). Due to this vicious circle, the level of skills has been concentrated in a few hospitals, and it is difficult to evacuate to the leading hospitals in the suburbs. Hence, the level of care varies significantly across Shanghai (Cheng & Lian, 2018). Many women choose hospitals with a higher level of medical care to ensure that their birth is safe (Coxon *et al.*, 2014). As a result, the number of available beds for women giving birth in many hospitals is always tight. In many cases, due to lack of privacy and noisy environment, women with no exceptional circumstances choose to recover briefly in hospital after delivery and then return home in time to recuperate (Heaman & Gupton, 1998). However, geriatric mothers are slow to heal and have a higher chance of having a caesarean section than younger mothers. A short recuperation period does not allow them to recover (Kenny *et al.*, 2013).

When Ms D in Case 2 gave birth to her second child, she had to stay in a multi-person ward during labour due to a lack of beds in the hospital. Ms A in Case 1 even gave birth in the corridor. The noisy environment was very detrimental to her physical recovery. Seeing Ms D's situation, her colleagues reduced their willingness to have a second child (Chen, 2020). Although maternal and child health policies have ensured an increase in the number of hospitals and doctors, the tightness of beds due to the gap in medical standards can affect the willingness of women and older mothers to have a second child.

In summary, maternity leave policies, employment protection policies, and maternal and child health policies will increase women's willingness to have a second child. However, some elements of these policies may also affect women's fertility intentions to have a second child. Therefore, these policies need to be addressed through some changes to increase women's willingness to have a second child.

#### *4.7 Extended Paternity Leave and Maternity Leave Duration*

To address the problem of short maternity leave days for elderly mothers in three cases and paternity leave for working women in case 3. It is suggested that the Shanghai Government should appropriately extend maternity leave to six months for working women to alleviate the contradiction between childbirth and work. For elderly mothers, maternity leave should be developed by several days to one year. From traditional to modern societies, domestic work and family care have always been seen as women's responsibilities, and men's family responsibilities have rarely been mentioned as necessary (James, 1992). The most effective and direct way to emphasise men's family responsibilities is to allocate paternity leave equal to maternity leave. (Haas & Rostgaard, 2011) Men's family responsibilities should be strengthened to safeguard women's rights truly. Therefore, the government needs to extend the number of paternity leave days for men to the same number of days as maternity leave for women to equalise the distribution of holidays between men and women.

#### *4.8 Government Training for Women and Increased Monitoring of Employment Protection Policies*

The older mothers in Case 3 are under more pressure to find employment than younger women. The government can provide free employment-related training to older mothers to better understand work and increase their competitiveness (Liang, 2017). To address the lack of government regulation of employment protection policies in Case 3. The recommendation for the government is that it needs to establish an independent system of protection for the rights of pregnant women. Increase awareness of the need to protect pregnant women, strengthening women's resolve to have a second child. The government should also establish a unique channel

for complaints from pregnant women, enhance attention to and acceptance of employment discrimination during pregnancy, and impose severe penalties on the companies targeted by complaints to deter other companies. In practice, a confidentiality system should be adopted, and complaints should be kept confidential to reduce the fear of complainants. Rewards should be given to enterprises that conscientiously implement employment protection policies.

#### *4.9 Increase in Medical and Living Cost Subsidy for Maternity Protection Policy*

The medical costs of older mothers in Case 2 are higher than those of younger mothers, placing a substantial financial burden on older mothers. For this issue, it is recommended that the government increase the amount of maternity health insurance reimbursement for older mothers. With the complexity of the medical items required for childbirth and the different tests and medications needed by other women, even if the allowance rate is increased to RMB 3600, the burden of medical expenses for birth remains high for families (Yu & Zhu, 2000). Therefore, it is necessary to determine the appropriate level of subsidy according to the type of delivery and the level of the hospital. A standard adjustment mechanism should be established to increase maternity benefits gradually. Raise the percentage of contributions to maternity insurance and increase government subsidies. In addition to contributions from employees and enterprises, government subsidies to the maternity insurance fund should be increased to reflect the government's support and responsibility for maternity.

For those who do not work in Case 2, the government should extend the payment of maternity subsistence allowance based on the family contributions of both spouses to maternity insurance, which allows for a reasonable distribution of financial benefits. As giving birth is a joint responsibility of both spouses, the provision of the maternity allowance should also consider gender balance (Liff & Wajcman, 1996). The unit should apply for half of the maternity allowance according to the contributions made by both spouses to avoid the situation where a woman loses her job and is left without maternity protection. Raise the rate of maternity allowance and establish a particular budget for the second child to effectively reduce the burden of childbirth on families. Strengthening the speed of the double child allowance on top of the first child allowance will facilitate the birth of a second child and help reduce the second child's financial burden.

#### *4.10 Reducing the Cost of Childcare for Maternity Protection Policies and the Burden on Businesses*

The massive cost of raising children in Case 3 puts a lot of financial pressure on families. The government should help families reduce the cost of educating their children and participate in planning free educational facilities for infants and toddlers. It is essential to increase the number and capacity of kindergartens and focus on the priority planning of early childhood education. Cultivate education as the primary tool lowers the entry threshold for caregiver professionals. Expand the full coverage of early childhood education, socialise the problem of uncared-for children and use policy services as a driver to help the effectiveness of the implementation of the two-child policy.

The school in Case 2 refused to provide Ms D with maternity maintenance and medical allowance due to her financial situation. So, for many businesses, maternity protection policies also significantly impact their financial situation. The government can provide subsidies or incentives to businesses to ease the financial strain. For example, Japan offers incentives to companies that accept women back into the workforce. According to data, companies can receive an incentive of around 130,000 Yen for taking reinstated female employees (Xiao, 2001). Thus, motivation can be an excellent solution to the company's financial problems and help women give birth without worrying too much about post-natal employment.

#### *4.11 Strengthening Health Care Settings in Maternal and Child Health Policies*

In response to the low number of beds in Case 2, the Shanghai government needs to reasonably plan the construction of medical institutions in Shanghai based on the regional layout of the city and the denseness of the regional population of childbearing age (Shi & Chen, 2016). Rationalise the allocation of medical institutions in each district of Shanghai to address the problem of limited areas within Shanghai and the inherent shortage of authoritative hospitals in the suburbs (Cheng & Lian, 2018). The establishment of a mother's love hut and a parenting workshop to provide psychological support and parenting classes for women workers during pregnancy and childbirth. It is recommended that the government expand the size of breastfeeding rooms in the city to provide a better breastfeeding environment.

## **5. Conclusion**

This dissertation focuses on the impact of maternity welfare policies on women's willingness to have a second child. It is essential to determine how willing Shanghai women and geriatric mothers are to have a second child. What is the impact of fertility welfare policies on the fertility intentions of Shanghai women and senior women? What are the recommendations for policies that hurt women's fertility intentions in Shanghai? Therefore, this dissertation analyses the impact of maternity welfare policies on the willingness of women and geriatric mothers to have a second child in Shanghai, taking into account role conflict and gender theory. It also analyses the

reasons for low fertility rates regarding policy content and relevant cases. It provides a practical and theoretical basis for improving maternity welfare policies and increasing the second-childbirth rate in Shanghai.

For women, role conflict manifests itself in social and family disputes. Women have to play the role of mother, wife and daughter in the family and the professional role in society. And in both community and the family, they encounter situations where men control power and the economy. Thus, a combination of role conflict and social theory analysis was concluded. Women in Shanghai and geriatric women do not choose to have a second child due to the significant impact of role conflict on women's work and lives. The government has introduced a series of maternity welfare policies to address these issues. The analysis shows that maternity leave, employment protection policies, maternity protection policies, and maternal and child health policies all positively impact women's willingness to have children. However, there are some problems with these policies that affect the willingness of women to have a second child in Shanghai.

In the course of the dissertation, it was found that it is essential to define the number of days of maternity leave in the maternity welfare policy and increase men's participation in the birth of a second child. In the social context of a comprehensive two-child approach, women's costs in choosing to have a second child are doubled, adding to the pressure of having a second child. Women face a difficult balance between the stress of having a second child and having a career, and some women are under more significant psychological pressure. Women also face unequal employment opportunities and employment situations, which increases the financial burden on women's families and leads to increased family conflicts and contradictions. In response to these situations, the government needs to reconcile the family's interests with those of the individual woman. Improve employment policies to ensure equal access to employment for women. Strengthen companies' monitoring of employment policies to ease women's worries about childbirth and jobs. Introduce a gender perspective, taking men into account in maternity leave, so that women's rights are protected through equality in employment and equality in family relations. Geriatric mothers have more factors to consider when choosing to have a second child than the average woman. Their health, family, career, and energy are more complex than the average woman. Therefore, particular policies are needed for geriatric mothers in response to these policy elements.

The following recommendations are made in response to the policy's emergence of a reduced desire for women to have a second child. Firstly, the existing number of days of maternity leave should be extended to meet the needs of women. The maternity leave policy also needs to consider the physical condition of geriatric mothers by expanding the number of days of maternity leave above the average number of days. Secondly, for the employment protection policy for women, the government should strengthen regulation. For geriatric mothers, the government needs to provide free employment training to increase their competitiveness in employment. Thirdly, the maternity protection policy should include a maternity maintenance allowance and a maternity medical allowance for those who do not work. It should also increase the maternity allowance for older people and reduce the cost of raising children by opening more kindergartens. Incentives or subsidies should be given to more influential companies implementing the policy. Fourthly, the policy on maternal and child health care should provide an equitable division of medical resources between urban and rural areas of Shanghai to alleviate the problem of space constraints.

The research in this dissertation considers the current situation in Shanghai to understand the willingness of Shanghai women to have a second child. This dissertation also analyses the impact of existing welfare policies on women's willingness to have a second child. Recommendations are made for those policies that are inadequate. Such an analysis will assist in implementing a comprehensive two-child policy and provide evidence for future population planning.

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