

The Role of Chinese Media in the Decline of Fertility Rates: A Critical Analysis of Policy Communication and Representation of Women's Perspectives

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Abstract. The media plays a crucial role in the distribution of public policy, serving as a critical connection between the government and the general public. The media promotes the rapid communication of policy information nationwide through many platforms, including traditional news outlets and social media. Nonetheless, the communication strategy utilized by Chinese media primarily remains largely unidirectional. It insufficiently conveys public sentiment and real social needs to politicians. The disconnect is apparent in the execution of pro-childbirth policies, as long-term initiatives to promote childbirth have not substantially enhanced women's inclination to have children. The media primarily emphasizes the promotion policies and expected societal advantages, frequently neglecting the necessity of addressing and incorporating public concerns and perspectives. This gap emphasizes the necessity to build a more interactive and responsive media construction to properly facilitate conversation between the state and its constituents.

Keywords: fertility rate, policy communication, media influence, women's perspective, declining birth rates.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

1.1.1. Current Situation of Declining Fertility Rate in China

The fertility rate in China has declined significantly in recent years, which has become one of the most significant social problems in the country. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, China's birth rate is 6.39 per thousand in 2023. The birth rate dropped by 0.38% compared to 2022. Meanwhile, the mortality rate increased to 7.87 per 1,000 people, leading to a natural population growth rate of -1.48 per 1,000. This marks the first time that the population has entered a negative growth phase. This persistently low fertility rate will have a profound impact on the future demographic structure, economic development, and the social security system.

The government has introduced several supportive measures to encourage more families to have children. For example, the two-child policy was launched out in 2016, followed by the three-child policy in 2021. These measures were aimed at addressing the aging population and encouraging higher birth rates to ensure a balanced population in the long run. In addition to these policies, various supportive measures were put in place to motivate families to have more children. However, despite continuous adjustments, the declining fertility trends' problem has not been effectively solved. For instance, in 2021, the ideal number of children for women in childbearing age in China was only 1.8, well below the replacement level of 2.1.

According to Statista, between 2002 and 2022, China's total fertility rate peaked at 1.81 in 2016, but it has sharply declined since 2017, falling to 1.18 in 2022. This trend reflects not only the limitations of policy implementation but also the profound impact of changes in social structures and reproductive attitudes on fertility rates.

1.1.2. The Role of Women's Perspectives in Fertility Decisions

As the social status of Chinese women has risen, their views on childbearing have also experienced significant changes. In 2020, the average number of years of schooling for Chinese women reached

9.59 years, almost the same as the 9.66 years for men, emphasizing the narrowing of the gender gap in the field of education. It is notable that the proportion of women in tertiary education has surpassed that of men, which is reaching 52.04%. This reflects the fact that Chinese society is placing increasing emphasis on women's education and giving them more autonomy, especially in career and family planning decisions. More and more women are choosing to postpone marriage and childbirth to focus on their career goals.

However, the cost of raising children is rising, especially in the cities. It has become an important factor driving down women's willingness to have children. For example, a child being raised to the age of 18 costs about 536,000 yuan in Beijing, including education and living expenses, which is 6.3 times the China's per capita GDP. These economic constraints have had a deep impact on women's reproductive decisions, leading many women to delay or abandon childbearing.

Meanwhile, the expectations of society on women are also changing. Women are no longer satisfied with the traditional role of the family and are more focused on self-realization and quality of life. This change in attitudes is particularly apparent in the urban areas, and later marriage and childbearing have become more common, directly leading to a decline in the country's birth rate.

In addition, recent changes in the law have been slightly unfair to women, such as the introduction of a "cool-down period" in divorce proceedings. To women who are victims in family violence, the rule makes them unable to end their marriages immediately, which increases their risk of further victimization. Moreover, incidents of women facing sexual harassment or revenge attacks in public have exacerbated fears about marriage and childbirth.

These negative events have made many women more cautious about marriage, further intensifying their anxiety about having children. They worry that marriage and family life might negatively affect their personal safety and quality of life.

In conclusion, women's decision-making regarding childbirth is increasingly characterized by greater autonomy and complexity. This shift is not only influenced by education and career development but also by societal expectations and deep concerns about marriage and safety.

1.1.3. The Role of Media in Policy Communication

In China, media plays a crucial role in the communication of fertility policy. Media should ensure that the implementation of fertility policies reaches all groups across the country by widely disseminating policy information. Whether it is the three-child policy, or measures to encourage childbirth, media conveys the specific content and social background of the policy through a variety of channels, including newspapers, television, online news, and social media.

However, while media have performed very effectively in communicating information, this mode of communication tends to be unidirectional. After policy information is released through the official media, it is difficult for the public's feedback and needs to be quickly transmitted back to policy makers. For example, although the government has introduced policies to encourage childbirth, many women do not feel sufficient social support or economic incentives in real life, resulting in policy effects that fail to meet expectations. This reflects that the media lacks an interactive mechanism with the public in the process of policy dissemination and is unable to provide adequate feedback on the public's real needs and feelings.

Meanwhile, media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion. When reporting on fertility policies, media often focuses on what the government wants to emphasize, such as the long-term social benefits or economic motivation. This news may enhance public awareness, but they also may lead to lower public acceptance of the policy if they ignore the actual concerns of the public in making decisions about childbearing, such as the cost of childcare and balance between career and family. For example, although the media heavily covered the introduction of the three-child policy, they did not pay sufficient attention to the issues of high childcare costs and women's pressure to give birth, resulting in a less effective communication of the policy than expected.

Social media has played an increasing role in recent years as an important complementary channel for policy dissemination. Through platforms such as Weibo and WeChat, the public can participate in policy discussions and express their opinions and suggestions. However, the fast and widespread

dissemination of information in social media often brings about some negative public opinion or bias. For example, some social media users have a loud voice of skepticism towards the fertility policy, believing that the incentives of the policy are insufficient or worrying about the financial pressure brought about by the policy. These voices spread rapidly on social media and may weaken the positive impact of the policy.

In order to improve the facilitation of the fertility policy, the government and media need to do better on evaluating the effectiveness of the communication. With regular surveys on the public's understanding, attitudes and behavioral responses to the policy, the government can adjust the content of the policy or the way it is communicated to ensure that the policy message actually reaches the target population. For example, if the economic incentives of the policy can be adjusted in response to public feedback, or if the promotion of childcare support can be strengthened, the actual effectiveness of the policy may be greatly enhanced.

1.2. Research Questions

1.2.1. Media's Role in Policy Communication

In recent years, Chinese media have played a crucial role in the communication of fertility policies, particularly during the promotion of the two-child and three-child policies. Major outlets like People's Daily, The Paper, and CCTV have used various channels—television, newspapers, news websites, and social media platforms—to widely and rapidly communicate these policies, ensuring that the public, especially in urban areas, is well informed.

However, there are certain challenges in how effectively these policies are communicated. While media have leveraged social platforms such as Weibo and WeChat to increase interaction with the public, many of them use a “selected comments” system, allowing only approved comments to be visible. In some cases, comment sections are completely disabled, limiting public feedback. Although this approach helps control the narrative, it restricts genuine public engagement, leading to one-way communication where the media and policymakers may not fully understand the public's concerns.

The media coverage tends to highlight the positive aspects of these policies, such as government incentives and long-term social benefits, but falls short in addressing the real challenges people face, like the high costs of raising children and balancing work with family life. This is especially true in rural areas, where limited access to information weakens the impact of these policies, widening the gap between urban and rural implementation.

Although the media have made strides in promoting these policies, there is still room for improvement in fostering two-way communication and responding to public feedback. Greater attention needs to be paid to how people are reacting to these fertility policies, particularly in terms of addressing the needs of young people and women of childbearing age.

1.2.2. Media Influence on Public Fertility Attitudes

The media has a strong influence on how people, especially women of childbearing age, think about having children. Both traditional and social media play a role in shaping these views. In China, mainstream outlets like People's Daily and CCTV often focus on economic incentives and social benefits to promote policies that encourage more births. For example, the government has widely advertised childcare subsidies, extended maternity leave, and childcare services as ways to support families and promote population growth. However, even though these policies are described positively, the media tends to ignore the real problems that many women face, such as the high cost of raising children, discrimination in the workplace, and family pressures. These factors can make it more difficult for media messages to have a real connection with people and to bring about any meaningful change.

On the other hand, social media—with its decentralized and interactive nature—has a much more profound impact on how the public perceives fertility. Platforms like Weibo, WeChat, and Douban provide open spaces where users can engage in discussions about fertility issues. While this interactivity allows for faster policy dissemination, it also amplifies anxieties surrounding fertility.

Discussions about the risks associated with “older women giving birth” and the stigma of being a “leftover woman” frequently stir up widespread social anxiety. Through images, videos, and personal stories, the public—particularly young women—are continuously exposed to negative information about childbirth, such as the pain of labor, post-partum recovery difficulties, and workplace discrimination. As a result, women become more cautious about the idea of having children, and in many cases, their desire to have children decreases. Research has shown that women who frequently use social media are more likely to be influenced by this negative information, making them even more hesitant to have children.

Moreover, social media plays a role in stimulating personal consumption, which further affects people’s decisions about having children. Many young people are influenced by the lifestyle content they see on social media, which promotes luxury goods, travel, and personal enjoyment. This shift in values leads them to allocate more of their financial resources to personal consumption, leaving less room in their budgets for raising children. In big cities especially, there’s a growing tension between pursuing personal lifestyles and the rising costs of raising children.

Finally, there is a disconnect between the media's description of the fertility policy and the actual needs of the public. Despite the Government's efforts to publicize the three-child policy, many young people especially women found that the policy did not address their core concerns. While social media provide a platform for widespread discussion of these policies, public expressions of anxiety and misgivings often remain unanswered. For example, the recent policy of delaying the retirement age has only exacerbated concerns about the future, leading young people to be more cautious about the idea of starting a family. The failure of media reports to confront these realities reduces the effectiveness of policy-oriented messages and makes it more difficult to shift public attitudes towards having more children.

In conclusion, the media influences public attitudes toward fertility in multiple ways, but these effects are mixed. Positive policy promotion through the media can raise awareness of government efforts to support families, but the spread of negative narratives and amplified anxieties about childbirth, coupled with the allure of consumer culture, often complicates women’s decision-making about having children. To effectively promote fertility policies, the media needs to better balance its messaging and address the actual concerns of the public.

1.2.3. Female Perspective in Contemporary Chinese Society

Women's perceptions are characterized by pluralism and differentiation in today's Chinese society. With the promotion of film and television works, literary creations and the media, more and more have begun to convey the concepts of the new era to women, which encourage them to be autonomous and independent and to pursue the value of self-realization. For example, “The Story of Rose”, a popular TV drama this year and “Ode to Joy”, a popular TV drama before have both inspired women to bravely pursue their personal ideals, love and professional success by creating strong and independent female images. These TV dramas show that contemporary women are no longer considering marriage and family as their only goal, but emphasizing self-worth and quality of life. Through their works, female writers and female artists also convey the idea of independence to society, encouraging women to break the boundaries of gender roles and pursue their personal dreams.

However, these ideas of women in the new era are being widely communicated, but the traditional concept of gender roles is still deeply rooted, especially in some areas with more conservative family and cultural backgrounds. Most men still believe that women should return to their families at a certain age, become housewives, bear children and take on the main responsibility for the family. They are expected to dress conservatively, behave appropriately, not to show their faces outside the home, and are even asked not to get too involved in competition in the workplace. This traditional view is also reflected in the requirements for women's marriages, such as that women should marry early, have children, and be the primary caregivers in the family, and even limit their contact with the outside world and their career development.

This conflict between new-age and traditional concepts of women can be seen everywhere in Chinese society. Women are becoming more and more conscious about the importance of self-

realization and changing their life path through education, work and lifestyle choices. Meanwhile, on the other hand, gender stereotypes of women still exist in society and are reinforced through the power of the family and culture. This puts a lot of pressure on many women to pursue independence, requiring them to make difficult choices between career development and family responsibilities.

1.3. Significance of the Research

1.3.1. Theoretical Significance

The theoretical meaning of this study aims to contribute in the academic field. Through studying the role of the media in China within the setting of declining fertility, this study expands upon existing theories on how the media influences the communication of public policy. It explores the two-way interaction between the media and policy communication, and the role of the media in shaping public perceptions of fertility. It deepens our understanding of the functions of the media during social transformation. In addition, the study expands relevant theories in gender studies by analyzing how changes in women's perspectives affect their fertility decisions. It provides new academic perspectives on how modern Chinese women are able to balance career development and family responsibilities, and offers valuable insights into discussions about gender roles, work and family.

1.3.2. Practical Significance

This study offers important insights for policymakers to be able to plan more effective fertility policies. Through analyzing the role of the media in policy communication, the study found some key issues, especially the gap between policy messages and the actual needs of the public. These findings can help policymakers adjust their communication strategies to enhance the effectiveness of policies. Additionally, the research highlights the media's role in shaping public attitudes toward fertility, especially through the spread of negative stereotypes like "older women" and "leftover women." Finally, the study calls for the abandonment of deeply rooted traditional views of women's roles, especially in rural areas where women are still primarily seen as child-bearers. By revealing how women's perspectives have shifted in modern society, the research emphasizes the importance of recognizing women as independent individuals with the right to pursue personal and professional growth.

2. The Role of Chinese Media in the Declining Fertility Rate

2.1. Current Situation of Policy Communication and Government Interaction

In China, the government usually publicizes policies by traditional media (e.g., newspapers, television, and radio). Such top-down communication can reach a wide audience quickly, but it has some obvious limitations. Traditional media emphasize the positive effects and social benefits of policies but lack interaction and feedback with the public. It is difficult for the public to express their specific problems and needs through these channels, leading to an information gap between policy communication and public needs. In spreading the fertility policy, government media concentrate too much on publicizing economic incentives (e.g., childcare subsidies, extended maternity leave, etc.), which are less frequently reported as problems in the actual implementation of the policy. For example, despite publicity emphasizing maternity benefits, many people still face real problems such as high childcare costs and lack of social support, and such incomplete reporting tends to weaken the implementation of the policy.

Social media platforms, such as Weibo and WeChat, have opened up new ways for the public to share their views and engage with policies. But even here, there are problems. Often, official accounts filter comments, showing only select opinions that don't necessarily reflect what most people are feeling. When there's criticism, some accounts might turn off the comments section or delete negative feedback, making real dialogue difficult. So while it might seem like there's more engagement, meaningful conversations are still limited.

China is a geographically large country, and the effectiveness of policy communication varies greatly from region to region. Policy communication in rural areas often faces more challenges than in urban areas. In remote areas, due to underdeveloped information technology and low Internet penetration, the main means of policy dissemination still relies on traditional media. In these areas, many policy messages do not reach the target groups effectively, resulting in a marked difference in policy implementation between rural and urban areas. Most of the policy propaganda in the media is based on the lifestyle and economic capacity of the urban middle class, while women in rural areas often face more practical problems (such as underemployment, high economic pressure, insufficient social security, etc.). Such communication content is difficult to resonate with rural women, making them less influenced by policy in their reproductive decisions.

2.2. The Impact of Media on Fertility Perceptions

Nowadays, the media play an important role in shaping the concept of fertility and have a profound impact on the fertility intentions of young women particularly. The media in China is not only a tool for information communication, but also an essential shaper of public opinion. From traditional media to social media, the role of the media in the topic of fertility has become increasingly significant.

First, traditional media, such as newspapers and television, tend to publicize fertility policies through a state-dominated lens. They usually focus on emphasizing the necessity of fertility for the country's economic development and demographic balance, especially in response to the socio-economic pressures of an aging population. Such propaganda mostly tries to encourage the younger generation to have children through economic incentives and childcare subsidies. However, the traditional media have made fewer references in their reports to real-life problems directly related to childbearing, such as the high cost of childcare, the gender discrimination faced by women in the workplace, and the inadequacy of the social security system. This has led to a mismatch between the publicity of the fertility policy and the actual needs of the public, making the policy much less influential.

Second, the communication of negative stereotypes, such as “the risk of having children at an advanced age” and the phenomenon of “leftover women”, has further aggravated women's anxiety about marriage and childbearing. Repeated media coverage of these topics has reinforced society's strict requirements on the timing of women's childbearing, causing many women to feel enormous pressure from society. This not only affects their attitudes towards childbearing, but also delays their childbearing decisions and even makes some women choose to give up childbearing.

With the popularization of social media, the media's influence on fertility attitudes has become more widespread. Social media provide more platforms for the public to discuss fertility issues, and users can freely discuss their personal experiences, social news and parenting pressures on platforms such as Weibo, WeChat and Tiktok. Information communication on these platforms is more decentralized, but also more interactive and emotional. According to the survey data, 47.83% of young women said that their fertility intentions have changed due to the influence of social media. This suggests that social media not only exacerbates women's anxieties by spreading information about high childcare costs, workplace discrimination, etc., but also further consolidates these anxieties by sharing personal stories and social phenomena.

In addition, social media often discuss women's dilemmas in the workplace, especially the impact of childbearing on career development. The bottlenecks in career development and the pressure to balance work and family that many women face after giving birth have become important reasons for them to delay or minimize childbearing. This phenomenon has been discussed more frequently on social media, making the public's fear of childbearing further intensified.

Both traditional media and social media influence the public, especially women's concept of childbearing in different ways. While traditional media overemphasize economic incentives and ignore problems in actual implementation when disseminating policies, social media reinforce public anxiety about childbearing through extensive discussions and the spread of negative emotions. This

makes women face more complex emotional and practical challenges in making fertility decisions, leading to a further decline in fertility intentions.

2.3. The Influence of Media on the Dissemination of Women's Perspectives

The media plays a crucial role in shaping and spreading the idea of women, especially in Chinese society. The role of the media is particularly prominent in the collision between traditional gender roles and modern women's sense of independence. Traditional media often strengthen women's roles in the family and emphasize their responsibilities as wives and mothers through film, television and news reports. For example, the image of the "good wife and mother" is still seen as the ideal female role in many families. This stereotype is deeply rooted in society and puts tremendous pressure on women to marry and raise children, especially when it comes to childbearing decisions, where women are often expected to take on more family responsibilities.

At the same time, awareness of independence among modern women has gradually risen under the guidance of the media. Several films, television dramas and advertising campaigns recently have shown successful figures of women in the workplace, portraying the independence and self-confidence of new generation women. For example, *The Ode to Joy* and *Story of Roses*, both popular dramas, have spread the idea of pursuing personal values and a sense of independence by creating images of women's resilience in their careers and lives. These works have changed traditional social expectations of women's roles to a certain extent, empowering women to make more independent choices.

However, social media has brought double impacts. On the one hand, social platforms have provided space for women to express themselves and share their personal experiences. Many women have shown their career development, marriage concepts and parenting experiences through these platforms, which has promoted the discussion of gender equality. On the other hand, social media are also full of voices of traditional gender concepts, such as "women unable to get married if they are not married by the age of 30" or "women should focus on their families rather than careers". These comments have been widely disseminated through social platforms, exacerbating the conflict between their awareness of modern independence and traditional expectations, and making them more hesitant and anxious about marriage and parenthood choices.

In addition, the media's hype about "leftover women" and "advanced age births" has further aggravated women's social pressure. By dramatizing these topics, the media inadvertently reinforces the idea that women must complete their marriage and childbearing at a specific age, creating an unnecessary sense of urgency. This social pressure makes many women more cautious when facing marriage and childbearing, and even choose to postpone or give up childbearing.

Overall, the media, in spreading women's concepts, is both an important force in promoting the rise of modern women's sense of independence and a transmitter of traditional gender concepts. This duality has had an extremely profound impact on women's concepts of childbearing, prompting them to be more cautious and complex in their marriage and childbearing decisions.

3. Recommendations for Improving the Communication Strategies of Chinese Media

3.1. Enhancing Policy Dissemination and Public Feedback

3.1.1. Interactivity and Transparency

The policy dissemination in China currently relies mainly on traditional media, with a top-down method of dissemination. Although this method can reach a wide range of people, it often lacks direct interaction with the public and fails to reflect the public's needs and feedback in timely manner. By introducing more interactive communication platforms, such as social media (Weibo, WeChat, etc.), the government and the media can enhance the transparency of policy communication and provide more opportunities for the public to express their opinions and feedback. Policymakers are required

to release policy information through these platforms, as well as to establish more open communication channels at the early stages of policy implementation to respond to public concerns promptly. Regularly releasing reports on policy implementation or showing policy progress through clear and concise data charts and graphs can deepen the public's understanding of the policy, enhance trust, reduce misgivings about policy implementation, and avoid misunderstandings.

3.1.2. Publicizing Real Data and Policy Adjustments

In the case of ineffective policy implementation, the government should take the initiative to disclose real data, which can be used as the basis for policy revision. By transparent data exposure, the public can know the policy progress and suggest practical suggestions for policy improvement. The government may establish a policy data center that routinely publishes key indicators, such as fertility rates, childcare costs, and welfare receipt, with expert analysis to help the public understand the deeper meaning of the data. As problems become apparent, the government needs to formulate new policy adjustment plans based on the data and explain to the public through the media what the problems are and what the next steps are to address them. Such operations not only show the government's sense of responsibility, but also attract the public to participate in the policy discussion and improvement process, forming a good two-way interaction mechanism.

3.1.3. Enhancing Public Participation

Before the policy is formulated, the government can widely collect public opinions through questionnaires and opinion surveys, especially for groups that are more affected by the implementation of the policy, such as women of childbearing age and low-income families. This mechanism can ensure that policies are closer to the needs of the public and provide the government with upfront feedback. Public feedback should be continuous throughout the policy implementation process and throughout the policy life cycle. By setting up mechanisms such as online platforms and public consultation days, the government can keep abreast of problems in policy implementation and respond quickly. For example, the government can organize regular online question-and-answer sessions, inviting officials from relevant departments and policy experts to interact with the public and answer questions about the implementation of the birth policy. At the same time, a hierarchical response mechanism should be set up to give detailed answers to important questions, avoiding formalized coping responses and ensuring that the public feels the value of their opinions.

3.1.4. Breaking down information barriers and contributing real feedback

Currently, the comment sections of some social platforms may filter or select comments, resulting in the public's critical feedback not being delivered to policymakers in a timely manner. The media and government should be more open to allow diverse voices to participate in policy discussions. By reducing the filtering of information and ensuring that diverse opinions can be seen and responded to, governments can more accurately understand what the public really thinks. This will not only improve the effectiveness of policy implementation, but also reduce the crisis of confidence the public has in the government. The media and the government should jointly create a more inclusive interaction mechanism to enhance the authenticity and comprehensiveness of information dissemination.

3.1.5. Differentiated communication strategies for different audiences

The effect of policy dissemination varies greatly among different regions and groups of people. The government should use different communication strategies based on audience. For example, urban and rural areas, groups with different economic backgrounds and education levels may have different receptivity to information and different channels. While in rural areas the Internet penetration is low, there is still a need for relying on traditional media such as radio and newspapers. Social media and digital platforms can be more utilized in urban areas. This differentiated communication can ensure that policy information can reach each target group accurately, avoiding the problem of information imbalance and enhancing the effectiveness of policy implementation.

3.2. Optimize media propaganda on the concept of women

3.2.1. Abolishing gender stereotypes

The media should reduce the stereotypical portrayal of women's roles in their publicity, especially the reports on “senior women” and “leftover women”. These negative labels can increase women's anxiety and affect their reproductive decisions and social roles. The media should pay more attention to the diversity of modern women, show their achievements in various fields, and promote a change in society's perception of women.

3.2.2. Promote positive images of women

The media should promote the independence and diversity of women through their content and present more positive images of women. As studies have pointed out, the media has an important role to play in promoting women's health and gender equality. By providing scientifically accurate information and reducing gender stereotypes, the media can help women develop a healthy body image and gender identity.

3.2.3. Enhancing customized communication

Media campaigns should be customized for women of different age groups and backgrounds. For example, for the younger generation of women, the media can disseminate content on health, education and career development through social media platforms to help them make more favorable decisions for their personal development. Especially for Gen Z women, the dissemination of scientifically accurate health information and support for positive body image is particularly important.

3.2.4. Encourage Diverse Discussions

The media should provide more platforms for the public and encourage diverse discussions, especially on issues of gender equality and women's rights. Through open communication, the media can create a greater space for women's voices to be heard, make their problems in their professional, family and social roles more visible, and push for policy improvements.

3.2.5. Strengthening Feedback Mechanisms and Regulation

When publicizing women's concepts, the media should establish a better feedback mechanism to adjust the publicity strategy in a timely manner and ensure the scientific and impartiality of the content. At the same time, regulators should strengthen their supervision of media content to ensure that it is truthful and credible, and to avoid misleading reports that have a negative impact on women.

3.3. Learning from successful international experiences

3.3.1. Gender Equality Communication Strategy in Sweden

For a long time, Sweden has ranked at the top of the Global Gender Gap Report. These results are due to its progressive gender equality policies and strong media campaigns. By reporting positively on equal parenting policies for men and women (e.g., parent-sharing parental leave), the Swedish media has changed society's traditional views on gender roles, prompting the government to change its laws and promote the equal sharing of social responsibilities. This provides valuable experience on how China can change gender perceptions through media communication.

3.3.2. Widespread Impact of the #MeToo Movement in the United States

The #MeToo movement has demonstrated the powerful role of media and social platforms in driving social change. Sexual harassment in the workplace was widely reported by media, prompting several states to issue stricter anti-sexual harassment laws. Based on EEOC data, the number of sexual harassment complaints increased by 13 percent during the campaign. China can utilize the extensive communication power of social media to promote social discussions and policy reforms on gender equality and women's rights by guiding public opinion.

3.3.3. Portrayal of Women in Korea

Korean media has portrayed modern independent women through dramas and variety shows, such as the popular dramas "Please Answer 1988" and "My Uncle," which promote women's independent and autonomous attitudes toward life through their narratives. These programs not only gained high attention ratings domestically, but also showed the social progress of Korean women to international audiences. China can learn from this successful model and use entertainment content to shape and spread women's attitudes and reach a wider audience.

3.3.4. Gender Equality Policy Reporting in Iceland

Iceland is a leading country on the Global Gender Equality Index. Media has played an important role in promoting Iceland's gender equality policies. The "Icelandic Women's Day of Strike" in 1975 generating widespread coverage and forcing the government to pass a Gender Equality Act. Iceland's gender equality policy is continuously publicized in the media. Transparent news reports have made the public better aware of the actual implementation and effectiveness of the policy. China can learn from this practice to enhance the transparency and effectiveness of policy publicity. The public can be made more aware of the progress and results of the policy, and the implementation of the policy can be enhanced.

4. Summary

By analyzing the role of the Chinese media in the context of declining fertility, the study explores the key role of the media in policy communication and the shaping of women's perceptions. The one-way communication model of traditional media is characterized by information imbalance and insufficient feedback, while new media offer new possibilities for interaction and transparency. Drawing on the successful experiences of Sweden, Iceland, and the United States in gender equality communication, this study proposes a communication strategy that enhances public participation and breaks down information barriers, in order to promote the optimization of women's perceptions and the advancement of gender equality in China.

5. Directions for Future Research

There are three areas that future research can explore in depth: first, by analyzing data to optimize media reports, bring the news closer to the public's needs, and enhance the realism and relevance of the reports. Secondly, to study the transparency and credibility of the media. Publicize real data and be able to truly disclose social issues. Explore how to promote the solution of social problems through real data. Third, draw on international experience to establish a sound media monitoring mechanism. Ensure that the authenticity of news is not covered up, and enhance the sense of social responsibility. Furthermore, it will explore how new media and traditional media can work together to improve the overall quality of reporting, which can better serve the needs of society and the public.

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