Academic Journal of Management and Social Sciences
ISSN: 2958-4396 | Vol. 5, No. 3, 2023

Impact of the One-child Policy on the Sex Ratio at Birth

Xinshu Wang *

Guangdong Country Garden School, Foshan, Guangdong, 528000, China
*** Corresponding author Email:** wangxinshu2005@126.com

Abstract: The population problem cannot exist independently, and the number and structure of the population will inevitably have an impact on the economic level and social structure. As Birth-Control becomes an important part of Chinese policies, more and more researchers pay attention to the policy and its impacts on the population structure. Birth-Control is one of the basic state policies of China, it was decided to be a basic policy in Sept 1982, and added to constitution in December in the same year. The policy mainly encourages late marriages, late pregnancies, less births and better births to control population. While affecting the population positively, some serious social problems should be considered. This review aimed to comprehensively analyse the impact of the only child policy on Sex ratio at birth in China. The study included a discussion of the knowledge of other scholars. The only-child policy has severely changed the sex ratio at birth in China.

Keywords: Only-Child Policy; Birth Control; Sex Ratio at Birth.

1. Introduction

Birth-control policy was widely carried out since the 1970s in China. It reduced birth rate in China while improving people's income, education level and living standards. However, at the same time, sex ratio of new born population increased significantly. The normal male to female birth ratio should be between 103 and 107. The sex ratio of new born population in China started increasing rapidly from the 1980s. The policy strengthened parents' preferences to boys and increased abortion of female fetuses. It is also assumed that the birth-control policies after One-Child policy could reflect the impacts on sex birth ratio from One-Child policy.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Constitute of Only Child Policy

Birth-control policies had experienced preparation and discussion for many years, Through the process of proposing, developing and perfecting. With the implementation of this policy, the need for socio-economic development and the need for population to match resources, this policy has gradually evolved into more stringent requirements. In 1982, China promoted birth-control policies with a clear attitude. However, the policies opposed cultural traditions and lead to protests of the population. The side effects of One-child policy should be considered and reviewed. For example, pregnant women tried to hide themselves because they were going to have more than one child, poorer living conditions have reduced their health. The rate of population increase after Only-child Policy rose back in 1981, which represents people's opposition to the policy. The Chinese government adjusted One-child Policy. In 1984, it gave some regions autonomous right to release the conflicts from previous actions of carrying out the policy. After 1984, birth rate gradually decreased. According to Birth Control Report Outline in Mar 1988, families with single daughters were allowed to have another child after an interval time of several years.

Gara described Only-child Policy as a restriction designed to control the rapidly increasing population [1]. The birth of more children would force families to pay significant fines. After giving birth of the first child in a hospital, Chinese mothers would need to be fitted with an intrauterine device, or IUD, which is a permanent contraceptive that could prevent pregnancy. After having a second child, mothers should be permanently sterilized by a process called tubal ligation. Over 400 million Chinese mothers endured the procedures. noncompliance to the compulsory sterilization could be met with unemployment or their children having to leave school. With the increasing improvement of people's living conditions and China's economic development, Chinese people gradually accepted and actively responded to the only-child policy. Moreover, China is a multi-ethnic country facing diverse cultural differences and population sizes of different ethnic groups, so it is fully understandable that China's only-child policy is not uniform, but has regional differences [2].

The Chinese government was surprised by the increase of Chinese population that was over 50% from 614 million in 1955 to 949 million I 1977 just after the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976. Therefore, communist politicians created a strict birth control policy, the One-child Policy that started in the 1970s.

2.2. The Concept of Birth Sex Ratio

The sex ratio at birth is usually defined as the ratio of the number of men to the number of women in a specific period of time (e.g. a year) for a specific range of people. The more commonly used sex ratio is the birth sex ratio, that is, the number of male babies born or the ratio of the number of male babies born to the number of female babies per 100 female babies, and the corresponding birth sex ratio by child number can also be obtained. For example, for every 100 female births in a given year, the sex ratio at birth is 107 for every 100 female births. Since in most countries around the world, the sex ratio at birth is between 102 and 107, This range is also considered an internationally accepted theoretical sex ratio, Above or below this range is considered too high or too low for the sex ratio.

2.3. Analysis of the Reasons for the Rise in Sex Ration at Birth

2.3.1. Traditional Ideas

Under the conditions of backward productivity in ancient

Chinese feudal society, male labor force was stronger than female. The male labour force in the household directly determines the level of household income, One more boy is one more labor force, People have long developed a preference for having boys. Through an empirical study on the sex ratio of the birth population in tea-producing areas of China, Considering that higher income alone has no effect on the sex ratio, When women's relative incomes rise, girls' survival rates increase [3].

China is influenced by thousands of years of traditional Confucian culture, The mainstream concept is that the son inherits the father's business, The family follows the father's surname, The purpose of raising boy is to prevent no one to support them in old age, More boys and more blessings, Unfilial piety has three nothings, and the latter is great etc. These traditional beliefs give Chinese a deep-rooted preference for boys. Traditional attitudes are intrinsic motives that contribute to the imbalance in the sex ratio. However, before the only-child policy, the sex ratio in China remained at a normal level. That is, boy preference can be achieved by having more children. Having more children until a boy is born, this process does not affect the sex ratio at birth. Therefore, the sex ratio at birth data from 1952 to 1983 showed an average of 107.40,67 and a standard deviation of 199.567, and the sex ratio at birth was stable at this stage.

Table 1. 1953-1983 Sex ratio at birth in China

Year	Sex ratio at birth	Year	Sex ratio at birth
1953	108.6	1968	102.5
1954	108.5	1969	104.5
1955	109.4	1970	105.9
1956	109.7	1971	105.2
1957	110.3	1972	107.0
1958	110.3	1973	106.3
1959	108.8	1974	106.6
1960	110.3	1975	106.4
1961	108.8	1976	107.4
1962	106.6	1977	106.7
1963	107.1	1978	105.9
1964	106.6	1979	105.8
1965	106.2	1980	107.4
1966	112.2	1981	107.1
1967	106.6	1982	107.5

Source: Zhaoyun Tang, A Study on Sex Ratio at Birth in China. China Yanshi Publishing House, 2008

2.3.2. Institution

In order to balance the contradiction between the rapid growth of the population and the slow economic growth, China's one-child policy has gradually changed to a strict one-child policy.

Western scholars through empirical testing and analysis, this proves that China's unique family planning policy does have a greater impact on the imbalance in the sex ratio. Sen suggested that the mandatory measures to control family size that were inducted in 1979 was an important factor of birth sex ratio imbalance [4]. In some regions of all the country, the government insisted on the "only-child family". In the background of China's strong preference for boys, this policy of limiting births has led to serious neglect of girls. In the early years after the birth control policies, girls infant death rate rose from 37.7 per thousand in 1978 to 67.2 per thousand in 1984. Although this data seems exaggerated, it is enough to show that only-child policy has adversely affected girls' survival. In order to ease the contradictions caused by the only-child policy, the Chinese government has made corresponding adjustment measures, such as appropriately relaxing the conditions for having a second child in rural areas, and allowing ethnic minorities with a population of less than 10 million to have a second child.

Gara pointed out that in China, the increase of selective female abortion coincided with One-child Policy [1]. The parents thought that if the family was allowed to have only one child, the child would must be a boy. By2015, the only-child policy was abolished and adjusted to the two-child policy, more than 80 million Chinese girls had been selectively aborted. Using the 1990 consensus, Zhang et al found that the strong restriction of the Only-child Policy led to 4.4 more boys per one hundred girls in the 1980s, accounting for approximately 94% of the total increase in birth sex ratios in this time [5]. They announced that One-child Policy caused total increases of birth sex ratios of about 57% for the 1991-2000 and 54% for the 2001-2005. Table 2 shows the sex ratio at birth in China since 1982.

Table 2. Sex ratio at birth in China since 1982

Year	Sex ratio at birth
1982 population census	108.47
1987 population census of 1%population sample	110.9
1990 the 4th population census	111.27
1995 population census of 1% population census	115.6
2000 population census	119.92
2001	115.65
2003	117.54
2004	121.18
2005	118.9
2010 population census	118.06

Source: 1982,1990,2000,2010 population census; 1987, 1995 population census of 1% population sample; 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006 Chinese population statistics yearbooks

2.3.3. Skill

Since the 1980s, China birth sex ratio was seen as abnormal because it exceeded the normal limit of 107 based on random events. The birth sex ratio increased more quickly, and the imbalance became more severe. It is because of the techniques to check gender of fetus. The abortion of female fetus experienced gradual increase annually and caused female new-born population to reduce. Between 1991 and 2004, birth sex ratio imbalance became serious rapidly [6].

Huge number of ultrasound instruments used, even in relatively remote and backward areas, fetal sex determination can be achieved. After Sept 1986, the Chinese government announced policies that prohibits illegal authenticate of baby's gender for nonmedical reasons. However, the policy has not had the desired effect, and people have resorted to various methods to evade regulation.

The technique used to identify the sex of the fetus is abortion. Before 1957, Although abortion is legalized in China, it is still restricted and allowed only in exceptional circumstances, Proof from the work unit and doctor of both

spouses is required. After1957, Abortion has become relatively easy. Abortion is not allowed until less than 10 weeks' gestation, and it can only be done once a year. As China began to implement the one-child policy since 1980, the number of abortions increased dramatically. To the surprise of policymakers, abortion was used to control population numbers and to perform sex-selective births. Therefore, fetal sex determination and corresponding abortion have a direct impact on the imbalance of the sex ratio at birth in China.

3. Conclusion

Synthesize the above elaboration, among the factors influencing the increase in the sex ratio at birth, the preference of boys in traditional fertility culture is intrinsic motivation, The one-child policy is a contributing factor, Fetal sex determination and elective abortion are technical means, not a single one can be omitted.

References

[1] Lisa Jane de Gara. (2017) Asia's missing millions. Education About Asia, 22(3): 57-58.

[2] Li, H., Zhang, J., Zhu, Y. (2005) The effect of the one-Child Policy on fertility in China: Identification based on the differences-in-differences. Department of Economics.

[3] Qian, N. (2006) Missing women and the price of tea in China: The effect of sex-specific earnings on sex imbalance. The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 123(3).

[4] Sen, A. (1990) More than 100 million women are missing. New York Review of Books, 37(20): 1-8.

[5] Li, H., Yi, J., Zhang, J. (2011) Estimating the effect of the One-Child Policy on the sex ratio imbalance in China: Identification based on the difference-in-differences. Demography 48, (4): 1535-1557.

[6] Liang, J. (2019) New Chinese thought study 1949-2019. Economic Science Press, Beijing.