

From Policy Design to Implementation: Research Methods and Practical Evaluation of Beijing's Three-Child Policy

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Abstract: Beijing's three-child policy represents a significant initiative to address challenges related to an aging population and declining fertility rates. This paper analyzes the policy's background, content, and outcomes, highlighting its role in mitigating demographic shifts, optimizing population structure, and boosting birth rates. The findings reveal that, despite improvements in economic support, childcare services, and social security provisions, challenges persist, including slow shifts in societal attitudes, high childcare costs, inadequate childcare resources, and significant adaptation pressures on enterprises. Based on these issues, this paper proposes recommendations such as enhancing financial support, improving childcare systems, strengthening public awareness campaigns, and optimizing enterprise assistance, providing a practical basis for policy optimization.

Keywords: Three-child Policy; Population Aging; Birth Rate; Beijing; Policy Evaluation.

1. Policy Background and Objectives

Policy background

As the capital of China, Beijing is an important area for population policy implementation and experiment. China has long enforced strict family planning policies, including the one-child policy and later the two-child policy. These policies have achieved some success in controlling population growth, but they have also brought about new problems such as an aging population and labor shortage. According to the Beijing Bureau of Statistics, by the end of 2020, the proportion of people aged 60 and above in the total population in Beijing had reached 18.7 percent, much higher than the national average. The increasing aging of the population has brought great challenges to Beijing's social security system, medical services and labor market.

Faced with these problems, the central government issued the Decision on Optimizing the Fertility Policy to Promote Long-term and Balanced Population Development in June 2021, announcing the implementation of the three-child policy, allowing each couple to have three children. The city has responded quickly with a series of support measures aimed at encouraging families to have more children to cope with the pressure of aging and a shortage of labor.

Policy objective

Increase the birth rate in Beijing: Encourage families of childbearing age to have more children by relaxing birth restrictions and providing economic support to increase the birth rate in Beijing.

Optimize the population structure of Beijing: By increasing the number of newborns, slow down the aging process of the population and optimize the age structure of the population.

Improve the labor supply of Beijing: Support the sustained economic development of the capital by increasing the future labor pool.

2. Policy Content and Policy Instruments

Policy content

Relaxation of birth restrictions: Each couple will be allowed to have three children, abolishing previous birth limits.

Economic support measures: provide child care subsidies, extend maternity leave, pay child care allowances, etc., to reduce the burden of child care. For example, the Beijing municipal government has stipulated that from 2021, every family with a third child will receive a one-time childcare subsidy of 5,000 yuan and enjoy extended maternity leave of up to 168 days.

Child-care service support: Strengthen the construction of child-care institutions, increase the number of public child-care institutions, and improve the quality of child-care services. According to the data of the Beijing Municipal Commission of Education, in 2021, Beijing will build, renovate and expand more than 150 kindergartens, with more than 10,000 new nurseries.

Social security measures: Expand support for families with multiple children in education, medical care and other aspects, and ensure that families with multiple children enjoy equal social resources and services.

Policy instrument

Laws and Regulations: The Regulations of Beijing Municipality on Population and Family Planning were amended to officially relax birth restrictions and clarify the legal rights and interests of families with multiple children.

Financial support: Through fiscal budget arrangements, child care subsidies and tax incentives are provided to reduce the cost of child care for families.

Social services: Increase investment in child-care institutions, improve the supply capacity of public services, and ensure that families with multiple children have access to high-quality child-care services.

Publicity and guidance: Through media publicity and education activities, improve social support and recognition

of families with multiple children, change public perceptions, and create a good birth environment.

Power and interest grid

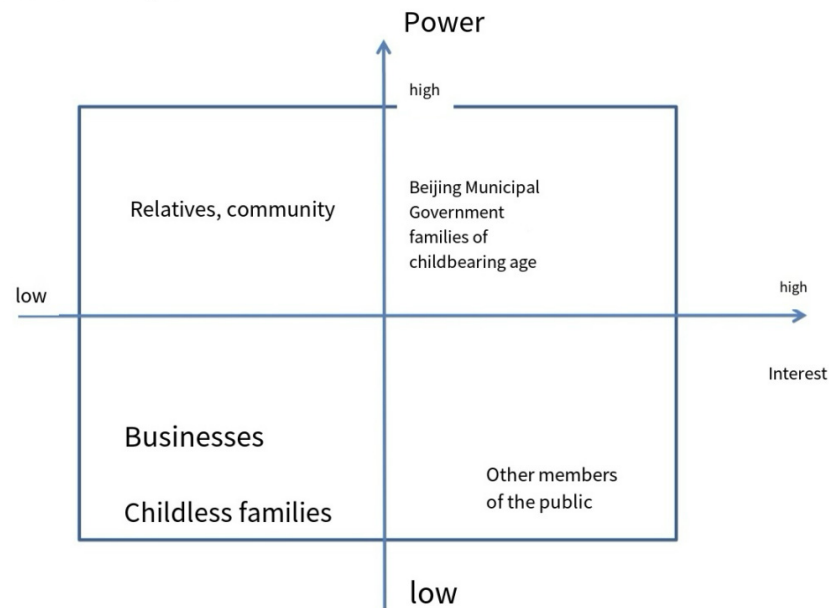


Fig 1. Power and interest grid

explain

High power and high interests: The Beijing Municipal government and families of childbearing age are the main stakeholders of the three-child policy. Through policy regulation, the Beijing Municipal Government is expected to solve the problem of population structure and promote sustainable economic and social development. Families of childbearing age are the direct beneficiaries of the policy, enjoying the relaxation of birth restrictions and various economic support.

High power and low interest: relatives and communities have limited influence on policies, but their support as auxiliary roles in policy implementation will affect the social acceptance of policies.

Low power and high interests: other members of the public have limited influence on policies, but the effect of policies will indirectly affect their quality of life and the distribution of social resources.

Low power and low benefits: Enterprises and childless families have less direct influence on and benefit from the policy, but enterprises need to adapt to the new employment system and employee welfare requirements, and childless families may be interested in the adjustment of resource allocation brought by the policy.

The impact of policies on stakeholders

Beijing Municipal Government: Through the three-child policy, the Beijing municipal government hopes to alleviate the problems of an aging population and labor shortage, and promote sustainable social and economic development. However, the effective implementation and implementation of policies will directly affect the realization of policy objectives.

Family of childbearing age: Policy relaxation and support measures have reduced the economic burden of childbearing families, but they also face the problem of increasing family resource allocation and parenting pressure. For example, issues such as the high cost of childcare and fierce competition for education and healthcare resources still need to be addressed.

3. Policy Stakeholder Analysis

Enterprises: The employment system and welfare policies need to be adjusted to meet the needs of employees after having a third child, such as providing flexible working arrangements, increasing maternity leave and parental leave. In the long run, businesses will also benefit from an increase in the supply of Labour.

Other members of the public: the overall allocation of social resources and welfare policies may be adjusted, and some people may benefit from the overall economic development, but they may also face the problem of increased competition for resources.

4. Policy Evaluation Design Scheme

Investment in government funds, policies and regulations, social service resources, publicity and education

Revision of laws, provision of financial support, construction of childcare institutions, publicity and guidance

The implementation of the revised law, the distribution of financial support, the increase in the number of childcare institutions, and the improvement of public awareness

In the short term, the fertility rate increased, the burden on families of childbearing age decreased, and the social support for families with multiple children increased

Results The number of births increased, the economic status of childbearing families improved, and the social service system was perfected

In the long run, the population structure is optimized, the aging rate is slowed down, the labor supply is increased, and the economy is sustained

4.1. Policy Problems

(1) **Slow change in social concepts:** the concept of fewer births and better births formed under the one-child policy for many years is difficult to change in the short term. Many families are still accustomed to having fewer children and fewer dependents in pursuit of a higher quality of life and economic stability. Although the three-child policy has provided some economic support, traditional attitudes and the

pressures of modern life have made it difficult for the policy

to take effect quickly.

Logical model of policy

Elements of the Logical Model	Content
Input	Government funds, policies and regulations, social service resources, publicity and education
CONTENT	Revision of laws, provision of financial support, construction of childcare institutions, publicity and guidance
Output	Implementation of revised laws, disbursement of financial support, increase in the number of childcare institutions and public awareness
Short-term RESULTS	Increased fertility rate, reduced burden on families of childbearing age,
Interim results	increased social support for families with multiple children, increased number of births, improved economic conditions of families of childbearing age,
Long-term results	improved social service system, optimized population structure, slowed down aging rate, increased labor supply, sustained economic development

Fig 2. Logical model elements content

(2) Economic pressure: Despite financial support from the government, the cost of childcare remains high, especially in big cities such as Beijing, where housing prices, education and medical expenses put a huge strain on family finances. According to the China Family Development Report (2019), it costs nearly 500,000 yuan on average to raise a child until the age of 18, which is a heavy burden for many families.

(3) Insufficient childcare services: Although the policy supports the development of childcare services, the supply of services is still difficult to meet the demand in the short term. Data from the Beijing Municipal Commission of Education show that in 2021, Beijing will build or expand more than 150 childcare institutions, with more than 10,000 new places, but compared with the huge demand, these new places are still insufficient, and many families find it difficult to find suitable childcare services.

(4) Enterprise adaptation challenges: enterprises need to adjust the employment system and welfare policies to meet the needs of employees after having a third child, such as providing flexible working arrangements, increasing maternity leave and parental leave. In the short term, enterprises may face certain economic and management pressure, which may lead to low support for the three-child policy.

4.2. Suggestions for Policy Improvement

(1) Increase financial support: Further increase financial subsidies and tax incentives for families with multiple children to reduce the economic pressure on child-rearing. We can consider providing a wider range of childcare allowances, childcare supplies subsidies, education subsidies, etc., especially to support low-income families.

(2) Strengthen social publicity and education: Through various forms of publicity and education, guide the society to change its concept and strengthen support for families with multiple children. Through multiple channels such as media publicity, community education, and school education, a positive image of a multi-child family can be established to reduce social prejudice and pressure.

(3) Improve the child-care service system: increase investment in child-care institutions, improve service quality and coverage, and reduce the burden on families. Through public-private partnerships, more social capital can be

encouraged to enter the field of childcare services, while strengthening supervision of childcare institutions to ensure the quality of services.

(4) Support enterprises to adapt: provide enterprises with guidance and support to adapt to the new policy, to ensure that enterprises can smoothly adjust the employment and welfare policies. The government could consider providing corporate tax breaks, training support and other measures to help companies better adapt to the changes brought about by employees having a third child.

4.3. Beijing Three-Child Policy Evaluation Design Scheme

In order to evaluate the effect of the three-child policy, a single time series and a single group of pre-test and post-test designs in non-experimental design can be used.

(1.) Single time series design

Variable: The change in birth rate from year to year.

How to measure: Using the annual birth rate data of Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, calculate the change of birth rate before and after the implementation of the policy, and analyze the impact of the policy on birth rate. The specific steps are as follows:

- Collect birth rate data for the first 5 years of the policy implementation as baseline data.
- Collect birth rate data every year after the implementation of the policy for 5 years.
- Comparing baseline data with post-implementation data to analyze trends in birth rates.

Evaluation study design:

Step 1: Collect and organize data to ensure the accuracy and completeness of data.

Step 2: Trend analysis, using statistical methods to analyze the data and find out the changing trend of the birth rate.

Step 3: Interpret and report, evaluate the effectiveness of the policy based on the analysis results, write an evaluation report, and make recommendations for improvement.

(2.) Single-group pre-test and post-test design

Variable: The cognition and attitude of families of childbearing age towards the three-child policy.

How to measure: Through questionnaire survey and interview, to understand the change of cognition and attitude of families of childbearing age towards the three-child policy

before and after the implementation of the policy. The specific steps are as follows:

- Designed questionnaires containing policy awareness, attitude, economic burden, etc.
- Conduct a questionnaire survey on a target sample (e.g. 1000 families of childbearing age) to collect baseline data before the policy is implemented.
- After the implementation of the policy (such as 1 year and 3 years), the same target sample will be surveyed again.
- Compare pre - and post-test data to analyze the impact of policy implementation on perceptions and attitudes of families of childbearing age.

Evaluation study design:

Step 1: Questionnaire design and sample selection to ensure that the questionnaire design is scientific and reasonable and the samples are representative.

Step 2: Data collection and analysis, using appropriate statistical analysis methods, to analyze data changes before and after the implementation of the policy.

Step 3: Interpret and report, evaluate the social impact of the policy based on the analysis results, write an assessment report, and make recommendations for improvement.

5. Potential Threat to Effectiveness

(1.) Historical effect

Explanation: During the implementation of the policy, other major events or policy changes occurring at the same time may affect the change in the birth rate. For example, economic fluctuations, public health events (such as epidemics), etc., can have a significant impact on family reproductive decisions and thus affect the accuracy of assessment results.

Countermeasures: Make a clear list of other factors that may affect the birth rate in the assessment report, conduct a comprehensive analysis, and try to eliminate the interference of these external variables.

(2.) Maturity effect

Explanation: With the passage of time, the understanding and acceptance of the three-child policy by families of childbearing age may naturally increase, and this change may have nothing to do with the implementation of the policy, but is the result of natural maturity.

Countermeasures: Through a phased pre-test and post-test design, the family's cognitive changes on the policy were dynamically tracked, and the policy impact and natural maturation effects were distinguished as far as possible.

(3.) Selection bias

Interpretation: Whether the selected sample is representative and can accurately reflect the impact of policy implementation on the whole target group. If the sample is not selected properly, it may lead to the deviation of the evaluation results.

Countermeasures: In sample selection, ensure random sampling, cover families from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and increase the representativeness and diversity of samples. Stratified sampling was carried out to ensure adequate representation of different characteristic groups.

6. Direction of Policy Improvement

(1) Improve the breadth and depth of financial support: further increase financial support for families with multiple children, especially subsidies for low-income families. More

forms of financial support can be considered, such as childcare allowances, education subsidies, housing subsidies, etc.

(2) Strengthen social publicity and education: through multi-channel and multi-form publicity and education activities, guide the society to change its concept and create a good atmosphere to support families with multiple children. Media, schools, communities and other platforms can be used to carry out positive publicity on families with multiple children, and improve social awareness and acceptance of the three-child policy.

(3) Further improve the child-care service system: increase investment in child-care institutions, especially in densely populated urban areas, to increase the number of child-care institutions and the supply of places. The government can encourage more social capital to enter the field of childcare services through public-private partnerships, while strengthening supervision of childcare institutions to ensure service quality.

(4) Support enterprises' policy adaptation: The government can provide tax relief, training support and other measures to help enterprises adapt to the change of the three-child policy and adjust the employment system and welfare policies. Through the establishment of family-friendly business demonstration projects, the promotion of flexible working hours, telecommuting and other measures, to increase business support and adaptability to the policy.

7. Specific Cases and Data Support

Increased financial support: In Beijing, for example, from 2021, every family with a third child will receive a one-time childcare subsidy of 5,000 yuan, and enjoy extended maternity leave to 168 days. This measure has played a positive role in encouraging many families. According to the Beijing Women's Federation, in the second half of 2021, the number of families applying for a three-child subsidy increased by 30 percent from the first half.

Improvement of child care services: In 2021, Beijing will build, renovate and expand more than 150 child care institutions, with more than 10,000 new places. However, according to the Beijing Municipal Commission of Education, as of the beginning of 2022, Beijing still has more than 200,000 infants and young children aged 0-3, and the contradiction between supply and demand of childcare services is still prominent. Therefore, further expanding the coverage of childcare services, especially in densely populated urban areas, is an urgent issue.

Corporate adaptation measures: Some large companies have begun to explore flexible working systems to accommodate employees' family needs. For example, a tech company in Beijing introduced a "family-friendly policy" in 2021, including flexible working hours, telecommuting options, increased parental leave and other measures. These measures have been positively responded by employees, improving employee satisfaction and work efficiency.

Through the above detailed analysis and improvement suggestions, we can comprehensively understand the background, objectives, contents, stakeholder impact and evaluation methods of Beijing's three-child policy, and then put forward feasible improvement suggestions, so as to better achieve the policy objectives and promote the sustainable development of population and economy in Beijing and even the whole country.

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