

Obstacles to the Implementation of the "Three-child Policy" and Ways to Solve Them—An Analytical Explanation of the Policy Implementation Process

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Abstract: On June 26, 2016, China implemented a three-child policy to promote long-term balanced population development and optimize its birth policy. This paper constructs a theoretical framework of the implementation process of the "three-child policy" based on Smith's "The Policy Implementation Process" and analyzes the factors that restrict the implementation of the "three-child policy": (1) Unclear policy orientation. (2) Poor cooperation of executive departments. (3) Rural economy, culture, values and social views are a major constraint to the implementation of the "three-child policy". (4) Lower fertility intentions among the target groups. How to resolve: (1) Improve the policy and highlight the main theme. (2) Strengthen direct coordination and communication among departments. (3) Improve the macro environment to adapt to the implementation of the "three-child policy".

1. Introduction

By 2022, China will have entered a deeply aging society, with the elderly population expected to approach 380 million, accounting for 27.9% of the population. China's "birth control policy" is also starting to affect the population structure, and the population structure and age distribution in China will gradually change from "olive" to "inverted triangle". In December 2020, the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued a paper stating that China's total fertility rate has fallen below the warning line of 1.5, and in some cities and towns the actual fertility rate is even lower. By 2030, it is estimated that the annual newborn population will drop to less than 11 million. According to international standards, a birth rate of 1.3 to 1.5 per 1,000 population is a society with few children, a birth rate of 1.1 to 1.3 per 1,000 population is a society with severe childbearing, and a birth rate of 1.1‰ or less is a society with superfew children. The current birth rate in China is only 1.05‰, and it has already entered a super-minority society. The aging population and ultra-minority will seriously hinder the socio-economic development and bring great negative impact on science and technology innovation. Therefore, at the meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee held on May 31, 2021, it became necessary to further optimize the fertility policy. The policy proposes that a couple can have three children, with corresponding supporting policies, in order to achieve the improvement of China's demographic structure, actively respond to the national strategy of population aging as well as maintain the advantages of our human resource endowment. However, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, China's total fertility rate will only be 1.15 per 1,000 in 2021, indicating that the implementation of the fertility policy still faces many difficulties.

2. Literature Review

Referring to the implementation of the three-child policy in villages, scholars and researchers have conducted a large number of empirical studies with some positive results.

Some scholars are concerned about the effect of the implementation of the Three-Child Policy and how it affects village areas. Wang Anbang and He Ke (2022) argue that the impact of the Three-Child Policy on rural-urban workers is insignificant, but significant in less developed areas[1]; Liu Hua and

Lu Bingjing (2016) and others show that the Three-Child Policy has increased the proportion of Han Chinese in the rural population, but rural families prefer the sex of the third child to be a male[2] Some scholars have analyzed the fertility intentions of residents in the "three-child policy", and Lai (2023) concluded that 70 percent of women in some rural areas explicitly stated that they "would not consider having three children"[3]. Other scholars have explained the impact of the "three-child policy" on rural population structure; Ma Mang and Wu Shiyang (2017,) argue that the current adjustment of China's birth control policy is conducive to alleviating the structural contradictions of population in rural areas and promoting the harmonious development of population, economy and society [4]. The above studies mostly focus on the influence and influenced factors such as women's fertility intention and policy effect to reflect the effect of the three-child policy, and this paper explores the implementation effect of the three-child policy from the aspect of policy implementation based on Smith's " The Policy Implementation Process ".

3. Theoretical Modeling of the Three-child Policy

Smith's policy implementation model can be used to analyze the implementation of the "three-child policy" in rural areas. According to Smith's " The Policy Implementation Process ", the factors influencing policy implementation include the idealized policy, the implementing agency, the target groups, and the policy environment. Under the interaction of these factors, the results of policy implementation may deviate from the expectations of policymaker.

In implementing a three-child policy, policymakers need to consider several factors. First, the policy must be consistent with the actual situation and target needs. Second, the implementing agency needs to have sufficient capacity and resources to implement the policy. In addition, the characteristics and attitudes of the target groups will also influence the implementation of the policy. Finally, the policy environment includes political, economic, social, cultural and other factors that can have an impact on policy implementation.

In the implementation of the three-child policy in rural areas, the factors influenced by traditional fertility concepts are more significant. For example, people in rural areas generally believe that having more children is for future retirement rather than the financial burden of childbearing. Therefore, policymakers need to take into account the existence of such perceptions and take measures to guide and educate residents accordingly. In addition, implementation institutions and capacity in rural areas need to be further enhanced to ensure smooth policy implementation.

Overall, the Smith's Model can be used as a tool to help policy makers understand the influencing factors and interrelationships of policy implementation, so as to better guide policy implementation and solve problems that may arise in the actual implementation process.

In Smith's policy implementation model, the idealized policy should include the form of the policy, i.e., whether the policy is enacted in the form of a law or an executive order. In implementing the three-child policy in rural areas, the clarity of the content of the policy text, the applicability of the type and scope of the policy, and the public perception of the policy will determine the success or failure of the policy implementation. The implementing agency is the organization responsible for the effectiveness of the policy and the relevant government departments. When implementing the Three-Child Policy in rural areas, commune and county governments and local birth control agencies in each province must work together to promote the policy. However, the different administrative positions of each agency may lead to different implementation of policy objectives according to their own interests.

The target groups is the policy audience affected by the "three-child policy". The main target groups of the Three-Child Policy include women of childbearing age and those who wish to have children. The full and effective participation of the target groups can encourage the policy implementers to integrate with the reality, reach out to the public, and prevent "formalism" in the policy implementation process. However, in reality, due to the different value preferences of each group, group behavior may deviate from policy expectations, resulting in policy implementation bias.

The policy environment is the social, political, and economic external factors that influence the process and effect of policy implementation. The research finds that the current rural semi-working

and semi-agricultural family model reduces the family's economic income and the economic environment is a major factor that makes the three-child policy difficult to accept among the audience.

Therefore, Smith considers that the ideal interactive framework for policy implementation should have a clear and scientific policy text, policy implementation subjects with convergent interests and goals, target groups with the same behavioral preferences and active cooperation in implementation, and a favorable policy environment, and the interaction of the four factors can achieve smooth policy implementation. However, the reality is contrary to it. With the help of Smith's model, we should re-examine the resistance in the implementation of the rural "three-child policy" and propose an optimization path.

4. Constraints to the Implementation of the Three-child Policy

4.1 Idealization policy

4.1.1 Policy orientation is not obvious, the one-child policy and the three-child policy work at the same time

Article 22 of the Liaoning Provincial Regulations on Population and Birth control, which was amended in 2021, clearly states that: Village residents who have obtained the Honorary Certificate of Parents of Only Child, from the time they obtain the Honorary Certificate of Parents of Only Child until the child is eighteen years old, they will be paid a monthly incentive fee equal to or greater than 10 yuan or a one-time incentive of 2,000 yuan for parents of only child; they will be provided with medical care, job recruitment and family economic support for their children. The care. However, it does not state the specific subsidy cost for the three-child birth plan. The provisions of the provincial Population and Birth control Regulations are the same. At present, the three-child policy is introduced to encourage childbirth as a guide, and should be modified to inhibit the previous birth control policy. The current regulations make the policy still play an encouraging and guiding role, which is in conflict with the current encouragement of the birth of three children. For Village residents, the result of the interpretation is that the birth of a child can see the specific amount of subsidies and can enjoy many benefits such as free tubal surgery, children in school, medical care, etc., while the birth of a third child is only known to be subsidized, but how it is subsidized and how it benefits are not explained in more detail. The result is clearly a departure from the original intent of the three-child policy.

4.2 Implementing agency

The policy implementation agency, as part of the policy, has the potential to influence the effectiveness of policy implementation, from the implementing agency to the individual implementers, and to the entire policy implementation system.

4.2.1 Weak collaboration capacity among rural sectors, resulting in inefficient policy implementation

The three-child policy covers multiple aspects and requires coordination and cooperation among many village departments. For the birth of three children, insurance, and subsidies, it involves the joint participation of many institutions such as the statistics department, the financial expenditure department, the health and planning commission, and the village committee responsible for implementation; these departments have different interests and performance requirements, and naturally have different attitudes toward the policy and the strength of its implementation. The assignment of tasks by rural staff, the interpretation of policies by villagers and local officials, the difficulty and complexity of specific practical operations, etc. can lead to unclear division of labor and unclear responsibilities among the departments, which greatly pushes up the difficulty of policy implementation. In addition, the above-mentioned departments alone cannot guarantee that every newborn "third child" in rural areas of China will receive effective protection of rights and interests.

4.2.2 Lack of policy dissemination, which seriously affects the level of understanding of the policy by rural people

We can refer to the propaganda efforts during the "birth control" period. In the "birth control" period, the population explosion and many other ills are very thorough interpretation, from the village officials, small to local children will say "birth control is good, the government The government helps the elderly". Nowadays, people know little about the dangers of an aging population, and many do not even know that China has entered a society with a very small number of children. During the "birth control" period, slogans, slogans and TV commercials were everywhere to make people aware of the importance of birth control, and the effect of birth control was remarkable. However, the importance of three children for future retirement and effective labor supply is not well publicized nowadays, and the rapid development of TVs and computers and other electrical appliances in rural areas has not increased the publicity. In addition, during the "birth control" period, the simple temperament of rural people gave them a unique sense of "honor" and "accomplishment" for having an only child, believing that they had contributed to the country. Nowadays, the three-child policy has little spiritual incentive for people, and people do not have a sense of honor in the policy, so they are not motivated to respond to it.

4.3 Execution environment

Factors affecting the effective implementation of public policies should also include external social environment, and policy implementation must interact with social factors and be restricted by social environment [11]. The three-child policy in rural areas, as a birth control policy implemented in response to the aging population problem, will be affected by the macro environment.

4.3.1 Rural economic development restricts family fertility intention

The rural revitalization strategy has made historic achievements in the past few years, but there is still a big gap between the current rural economic development and the goal of ecological beauty, industrial prosperity and people's rich scenery. The lack of intensive rural industrial structure, the shortage of talent and labor force and the lack of fluidity of agricultural production factors restrict the sustainable development of rural areas. In addition, the low level of the rural economy contradicts the call to have a third child. Due to the historical isolation and the acceleration of urbanization, the gap between urban and rural areas is gradually narrowed, and the cost of living in cities to receive better education is higher, which leads to the relative rise of rural fertility costs. At the same time, the cost of having a child includes not only material costs, but also opportunity costs. Although raising children also brings benefits to the whole family, it also generates spillover benefits to the whole society from the perspective of externality. However, the current talent subsidy policy cannot alleviate the birth cost of rural families. Therefore, the desire of rural families to reduce the number of three children is understandable and needs more attention from the policy level.

4.3.2 Culture values

The three-child policy in rural areas mainly targets low - and middle-income families. The family's capital and social status have a strong influence on the willingness to have three children. At present, rural economic conditions do not support raising three children, especially poor families cannot meet the requirement of having three children. In addition, many families of childbearing age work outside the city, lack human capital and lack child-rearing ability. Rural women are the most directly affected group, and having three children puts a greater burden on families, leading to years of long-distance couples and unstable relationships. As a result, rural women are reluctant to have more children.

4.3.3 Social factors

Social stability is closely related to the implementation of public policies. When social problems increase, the difficulty of implementing public policies increases accordingly. In rural areas, social factors will affect the implementation of the "three-child policy". These factors mainly come from rural social structure and rural social security. First of all, changes in rural social structure factors

have a significant impact on the implementation of the "three-child policy". Since reform and opening up, great changes have taken place in the rural social structure of our country. Traditional clan organization gradually loses its power and replaces it with "hollow village", which causes the function of clan activities to weaken greatly. At the same time, due to the disappearance of inner belief, rural women of childbearing age are no longer forced by family forces to give birth, and their reproductive behavior is more rational. The change of rural social structure also leads to the stratification of rural society, including elite class, agent class, middle-level ordinary farmers and vulnerable groups. In this social structure, the mentality of keeping up with the Joneses encourages farmers to provide a better education environment for their children, which makes the cost of childbirth increasingly high. Due to economic pressure, most farmers choose to have fewer children, thus hindering the implementation of the three-child policy.

4.4 Target groups

The three-child policy in rural areas mainly targets low - and middle-income groups. Whether a low - and middle-income family has three children depends more on the family's original capital and the perception of social status. Rural families with sufficient economic capital have enough ability to raise three children, and these families prefer to get happiness through raising children. However, the current economic conditions in China's rural areas cannot support a family with three children, so poor families cannot meet the requirement of having three children. The human capital of a family can also affect the willingness of rural families to have three children. At present, many families of childbearing age work outside the home, resulting in less human capital in the family, family parenting ability is insufficient. Rural women are the most direct stakeholders of the three-child policy. With the acceleration of urbanization, there are more and more migrant workers in rural families. If three children are born, the parenting burden of each family will increase, women have to go back to the family to take care of the children, the couple for a long time in different places, resulting in marital instability, unequal social and economic status and other problems. Rural women are reluctant to have more children for a variety of reasons.

5. The Optimal Path of the Implementation of the Three-child Policy in Rural Areas

5.1 Clearing policy direction

Correct policy orientation is the starting point of effective policy implementation, which can prevent low efficiency and block phenomenon in the process of policy implementation. To clarify the policy orientation and encourage multiple births, we should gradually slow down or ban the encouraging policies related to the one-child policy, gradually reduce the space related to "the only child of Village residents" in government documents, and clarify a series of specific subsidies related to the three-child policy, so that Village residents can clearly and easily interpret the general direction of encouraging multiple births when they read the Regulations on Population and Birth control. The policy should optimize the allocation of resources and create more good rural child-rearing resources; We will actively promote the focus of rural real estate, maternal and child products, medical insurance and other industries to move closer to the three-child policy. This is not only a subsidy or assistance to the target group of the three-child policy, but also means that the three-child policy is the main melody of the current population policy and the general direction advocated by the country, and will continue to the long-term development in the future.

5.2 Strengthen inter-departmental exchanges and coordination

All departments should spontaneously establish a collaborative governance mechanism, exchange information regularly, communicate the obstacles in the work, summarize the process problems in the implementation, and reintegrate and reconfigure resources. From the village committee to the Commission of Health and Birth control, from the contact with the masses to the overall planning, we should seek a healthy development model, a scientific virtuous circle from the bottom up to promote theory through practice and then theory feedback practice. Strengthen the supervision of

executive personnel, raise the entry threshold of executive personnel, set up the inspection of quality and morality, and conduct regular review and assessment; Strengthen vocational training for leaders to learn relevant knowledge in this field; Expand the recruitment of personnel in this field, and cooperate with experts and researchers to provide professional guidance.

5.3 Creating a sound macro environment

With the rise of the new bearing concept, the rural areas of our country have been seriously affected by the low bearing concept in the course of carrying out the three-child policy. In order to cope with this situation, government departments should unite social groups and individual families and strengthen the ideological propaganda of the three-child policy. This requires village cadres to organize activities with local women to establish a correct view of fertility. Because different family environments will form different views on fertility, so in the publicity work, ideas should be gradually infiltrated according to the local economic development situation and folk customs. At the same time, to build a healthy concept of fertility also needs experts, scholars and authorities to speak out in time and actively advocate. Experts and scholars can act as think tanks to guide public opinion and to some extent drive policy implementation.

5.4 Improving the supporting policies for the three-child policy

Rural women need family economic support, manpower support and corresponding infant care support in the process of childbearing. First, we will increase subsidies for rural families to have a third child. At present, many provinces and cities have established clear subsidy system to optimize the birth policy. For example, the city of Panzhihua grants subsidies of 500 yuan per child per month to local families who have a second or third child until the child is 3 years old. Drawing on the experience of earlier cities, we will establish a sound rural maternity subsidy policy, increase maternity compensation, and provide support for family economic problems. Second, we will improve rural nurseries. Due to a general lack of childcare facilities in rural areas, some families have to send their children to the city for childcare, and the high cost of private institutions has led many families to give up their intention to have children. Therefore, the state should speed up the establishment of public nursing-care institutions to relieve the pressure of rural families. Finally, we need to improve women's reproductive rights. Rural women often face difficulties in career development after giving birth. The establishment of employment rights and interests mechanism can help women who have given birth get rid of the status of vulnerable groups. In addition, the cost of birth should be borne by the government, enterprises, families and other subjects.

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