



# Looking at China's Fertility Rate from the "Involution": What Measures can be taken to Alleviate the Declining Fertility Rate in China?

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**Abstract.** This article mainly discusses in detail another important social issue, that is, the decline of China's fertility rate. In the article, the main causes and factors of the decline in fertility rate are classified as "involution". The meaning of the inner volume is probably due to the unhealthy competition caused by the large number of people, the resulting work and employment pressure, the poor employment environment, the rising cost of employment and education make people have no energy to consider the next generation. People have been squeezed out of their wallets and hearts by the high cost and low salary of the city, and have been busy since. The paper gives two solutions from imitating foreign countries and domestic countries respectively. Imitating Japan's practice of diverting young people to the countryside, away from areas with high employment pressure, and increasing the importance of lower-level jobs, providing higher salaries and educational environments, China, like Germany, has already had a fertility problem before becoming a developed country. The implications and significance of this should make us ponder.

**Keywords:** Involution, Employment pressure, Academic inflation, Fertility rate.

## 1 Introduction

China's fertility rate has fallen off a cliff since 2000. The number of births was 8.52 million, in 2020. By 2021, it has declined to 7.52 million. The number of deaths was 10.41 million, 270,000 more than in 2021. The birth rate was 6.77 per thousand, down 0.75 thousand points from 2021. The death rate was 7.37‰, an increase of 0.19 thousand points; The natural population growth rate was -0.60‰, a decrease of 0.94 thousand points. National Bureau of Statistics [1] calculate out China officially entered the era of negative population growth. Compared with the generation replacement level of 2.1, China's total fertility rate in 2021 was about 1.15, and in 2022, it has dropped to less than 1.1, which is exactly low. As the increasing fertility rate disappears, the fertility rate will further decline. If the total fertility rate remains low, China's population will fall into continuous negative growth.

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According to the plan of Yuwa Population's China Population Forecast Report 2021, China's total population will drop to 1.264 billion in 2050 and 685 million in 2100, accounting for 6.5 percent of the world's total, from 18 percent now.

Today, as Song talks about the rapid decline in China's fertility rate has become an inevitable and serious problem [2]. Since May 31, 2021, the Political Bureau meeting of the CPC Central Committee issued a further optimization of the fertility policy, one couple can have three children policy and supporting measures have not played a good role in restoring the fertility rate. So what measures can be taken to alleviate the declining fertility rate in China?

## 2 Hypothesis

As mentioned above, the big drop in the number of woman who intends to give birth is the biggest contributor to the decline to fertility. So what is it that is causing so many age-appropriate women to stop having children? It is due to the large employment pressure in China and the excessive educational capital. Here are some evidences to prove this point. China Youth Daily reveals that around 600,000 Chinese people lost their lives from excessive amounts of work. The same youth unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds rose to 19.9%. As Lei [3], in China, people call it "involution." In other words, if people can solve the problems of employment pressure and education costs, perhaps more age-appropriate young people will have more energy to devote to childbearing from liang [4].

## 3 Argument

As an anthropological term said by Liu, the involution was originally used to refer to the problem of Asian agricultural societies that engaged in intensive farming for a long time without achieving economic breakthroughs, as Cheng talks about the relationship between fertility and "involution" can be explored in two parts[5], from the perspective of the education system and employment pressure respectively. Young Chinese, who are fiercely competitive in various industries, see a connection between their sense of powerlessness in the face of competition.

According to the latest statistics, Education Bureau of China, 10.71 million people applied for the national college entrance examination in 2020, 400,000 more than last year.

The entry of admissions and the pass rate have increased year by year, but it is far less than the increase in the number of applicants. Domestic educational resources are increasingly scarce, the pressure of parents and children is increasing, and the involution is becoming more and more serious.

Education internalization means that due to the overall income locking (enrollment rate locking), in order to obtain limited educational resources, the competition mode is homogeneous. It leads to fierce and ineffective competition among students of the same age, educational institutions of the same type and parents of the same period, and increases the marginal cost of compete. In large cases, marginal returns remain the same

or even decline[6]. The expansion of education leads to more intense internalization of the highly educated class. Because of the production mode and industrial structure of different societies are very different, so the requirements for the quality of labor force are also very different. Highly educated people are often reluctant to work in "low-end" manufacturing and service jobs, keen on "public examination" further study and entrepreneurship, the number of college graduates in 2022 exceeded 10 million (10.76 million), and the number of college graduates in 2023, the volume continues to climb. The serious disconnection between higher education and the job market has led to the "oversupply" of highly educated talents, and the degree of internal involution is getting worse and worse

Expansion of education eventually led to a society in which a large part of the upper and middle classes enrolled in higher education were continually enrolling. However, a small number of middle and lower classes who are isolated from higher education give up the internal study or even choose to lie flat[7]. How can young people, who are in such a competitive situation and cannot guarantee their own daily expenses, devote their attention to the next generation, who will waste more resources, asked by Zheng[8].

The internalization of education is particularly obvious in China. In order to realize educational equity, the government has continuously introduced new policies such as "double reduction". On the surface, the academic burden of primary and secondary schools has been reduced, and the open extra-curricular academic tutoring classes have even disappeared, but has "involution" really disappeared? In fact, Cui said as long as the ceiling of high-quality education resources has not increased[9], the "college entrance examination baton" has not stopped waving, the employment window is still small, parents will not only lie down, but also invest more in this, after formal training courses are forcibly banned, similar to "tutoring" [10].

The emergence of the "senior nanny industry" has directly raised the threshold for ordinary families to obtain educational resources, and further increased the educational capital.

So to solve this problem, I've come up with two possible policies. First is the so-called local regeneration program, which I found attractive when I looked up and compared the employment problems in China and Japan. The two basic goals of "promoting population flow to local areas" and "enabling young people to realize their aspirations to marry, have children, and raise children", talked by Wang[11], can effectively curb the competitive pressure in the same area, and divert a large number of college students to non-urban areas with relatively low labor force, living standards, and pressure to reduce employment pressure. Fast-paced, high-pressure living environment in big cities will exacerbate young people's late marriage, late childbearing or even no marriage, infertility, resulting in a decline in the overall fertility rate of society as Cao mentioned above. China should prevent excessive population gathering in big cities[12], actively play the role of provincial capitals, local cities and towns as "dam", retain and attract young people and avoid the phenomenon of metropolitan polarization. Optimize infrastructure construction, increase investment in infrastructure construction in provincial capitals and local towns, and improve the quality of life and public services in their localities, including the improvement of roads, traffic, medical care, etc. By nurturing

and supporting the development of local industries, providing diverse employment opportunities, attracting young people to choose to stay in these places, and providing local employment opportunities, so that they can get a good education, development and growth in the local area.

Organize various community activities to provide rich social and recreational resources, increase the attractiveness of living in these places, formulate policies and measures conducive to promoting local economic development and attracting talents, such as tax incentives, entrepreneurship support, introduction of talents, etc., to attract young people to stay in these places and participate in the local development. According to the survey, after the implementation of this policy, the re-productivity of the population in Toyo Takata City has increased since 2014. In other words, Toyo Takata City has effectively increased the fertility rate by providing continuous support to young people, encouraging young people to get married, reducing the cost of childcare, and creating an environment that combines work and childcare. According to the latest total fertility rate data released by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Hokkaido General Research and Investigation Association, the total fertility rate of Toyoko Takata City has increased from 1.64 in 2013-2017. Therefore, I think this scheme is relatively feasible.

The second proposal to increase subsidies to reduce the cost of education, and to subsidize the wages of blue-collar jobs in which there is a shortage of workers, and to increase the support of corresponding majors in universities, the country can add more professional facilities to colleges and universities. Having more facilities can effectively promote the enthusiasm of students. At the same time, increased funding and improved equipment can enable students to have more professional qualifications, which is their access to greater employment opportunities and Windows. In France, for example, the minimum age for compulsory schooling will be lowered from six to three, and the length of compulsory schooling will be extended to 13 years. China has only nine years of compulsory education, which is lower than the world level. According to the "2020 Statistical analysis of the Development of the construction industry", by the end of 2020, the number of people employed in China's construction industry was 53,669,200, 2,143,800 fewer than in 2018. In recent years, the share of workers under 40 has fallen to less than 30%, and under 30 to less than 10% [13]. Worker age "fault" phenomenon is serious. Therefore, it is not only necessary to improve the education level and professional quality of the corresponding occupation, from Wang [14], opinion to strengthen the professional level of college students, but also to increase the salary, just like the professional high-salary labor in Germany, which can encourage young people to join these jobs and reduce the employment pressure.

At the same time, in the work can also raise the minimum wage: the government can adjust the minimum wage to ensure the basic income level of the bottom workers and ensure that their wages match the increase in the cost of living, strengthen the supervision and punishment of wages paid by enterprises, and ensure that enterprises pay wages on time and in full. At the same time, a sound labor legal system and rights protection channels should be built to protect the legitimate rights and interests of workers and support the development of small and micro enterprises, which are often the

main source of lower-level labor positions. The government can support the development of small and micro enterprises through tax and fee reduction, loan guarantees and other measures to improve their business capacity and thus improve the wages of lower-level workers. Schools should also encourage students to do practical internships and provide opportunities to connect students with professional fields. Through internships, students can learn the latest skills and knowledge in the industry and understand the requirements and norms of the professional environment. It is equally important to cultivate students' comprehensive qualities, which can be achieved by setting up interdisciplinary courses. For example, engineering majors and liberal arts majors can be formed into teams for project cooperation, which can not only cultivate professional ability, but also cultivate the sense of teamwork, establish cooperative relations with foreign universities, carry out teacher and student exchange visits, academic exchanges and other activities, provide a broader international vision and learning opportunities, and understand the foreign professional environment and working methods. So as to improve their professional quality.

## 4 Conclusion

China's fertility rate continues to fall has become a problem that cannot be ignored. Among them, the main incentive is the employment pressure, the industry volume, there is no energy and capital to give birth.

Therefore, I would like to make two suggestions to the government:

1. Imitate the local regeneration program implemented in Japan, divert urban people to the countryside, revitalize the local economy, create more jobs and avoid overcrowding.
2. Implement international standard 12-year compulsory education, strengthen education subsidies, improve the professional quality of college students, conduct more professional technician training, increase the salary and treatment of technicians, attract college students to these positions to create jobs and economic value, and avoid blindly pursuing individual majors, resulting in employment pressure. I think these suggestions can effectively curb the employment rate problem, and therefore will play a good role in coping with the decline of China's fertility rate.

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