

# **Does the Only-Child experience matter for women's fertility intention? Evidence from Chinese female migrants in Spain.**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In 1979, China launched the unprecedented population control program in the hope that it would control the fertility rate and reverse the population growth, thereby reaching an optimal population size for China's economic development (Council & Review, 2016; T. Wang, 2020; Y. Zhou, 2019). In the next several decades, despite a sharp decline in the total fertility rate (TFR) from 2.8 in 1979 to around 1.5 in 2010 (Cai, 2010; Feng et al., 2013; López & Veiga, 2020), the implementation of the family planning policy has had a profound impact on the state, families, and individuals in China, which received significant scholarly attention (Y. Chen & Huang, 2020; Shen & Jiang, 2020).

In this regard, recent studies have generated much valuable knowledge about the consequences of China's family planning, such as the low fertility (S. Chen, 2020; Europe, 2009; Zheng, 2019), the distorted sex ratio due to a strong son preference (Abrahamson, 2016; Y. Li & Jiang, 2019), as well as China's future population structure change (H. Li et al., 2019; F. Wang et al., 2017). However, only-child's fertility intentions have rarely been investigated in the immigration context, especially after the lifting the one-child policy from 2015, that permits all married couples to have two children (Bao et al., 2017).

Moreover, as immigrants play an increasingly important role in the demographic, social and cultural trends of European countries, the fertility patterns of immigrants have received considerable attention in the recent demographic literature (Kraus & Castro-Martín, 2018; Mussino et al., 2021; Mussino & Ortensi, 2018). However, while research has shown the persistence of patterns similar to those in the country of origin (i.e. non-migrant peers) among migrants (Carlsson, 2019; Mussino et al., 2021; Puur et al., 2018), there have been limited data and research on Chinese migrants' fertility studies under the European societies. By 2019, Spain has become the second largest destination country for Chinese migrants in Europe (IOM, 2019), and the Chinese community in Spain has increased from 12.036 in 1998 to 228.564 by 2021, making it the largest Asian community in the country (INE, 2021). However, despite its great presence in Spain, many of the studies are still limited to analyze their economic activities (Beltrán & Sáez, 2003) and family networks (Ortega, 2015), reproductive behaviors of this community have seldom been addressed. And to the best of our knowledge, studies on fertility intentions of Chinese women has never been carried out in the Spanish context.

For these reasons, in this paper we intend to examine the interaction between one-child policy and the institutional and social context of the host country on the fertility intentions of Chinese women in Spain. Specifically, this article addresses the following set of questions: Does the only-child background matter for women's fertility intention? Does the migratory experience in Spain affected their fertility preference? And how do both aspects interact with each other?

## **II. THEORETICAL FOCUS**

Fertility intentions play an important role in explaining contemporary fertility trends and are a reliable predictor of subsequent fertility behavior according to the theory of planned behavior (M. Zhou & Guo, 2020). A large body of research explains possible reasons for fertility preference, such

as the economic situation, child-rearing costs, women's educational level, and division of labor (Brinton & Oh, 2019; Cheng & Hsu, 2020; Liu, 2014; Papers et al., 2012; Wu & Zhao, 2020). Meanwhile, recent study also points out that in the early course of before marriage and parenthood, women's fertility expectations are associated with family background, and women from very large families (four or more siblings) expected a larger family size (Rackin & Bachrach, 2016).

In terms of migrants' fertility preference, earlier research indeed shows that there is a strong influence of past and current social environments in shaping migrants' childbearing patterns, indicating that adaptation to the destination country is an important force in shaping childbearing patterns among immigrant (Carlsson, 2019; Kraus & Castro-Martín, 2018; Kulu & González-Ferrer, 2014). Mussino (2021) more recently stressed that migrant women's fertility intentions vary by age at arrival and time since migration and that there are significant differences by country and geographical area of birth. Based on these considerations, we formulate the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1.* The only-child experience of feeling solitary contributes to a larger ideal family size.

*Hypothesis 2.* The migratory background in Spain leads to an adaptation perspectives toward fertility preference.

*Hypothesis 3.* We also expected that the absence of grandparental care for child under the immigration context contributes to a negative determinant on having a second child.

### **III. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

Since most of the previous fertility literature is either non-empirical, or quantitative research that uses survey data or focuses on fertility outcomes and there has been very little qualitative exploration of the childbearing decision process (Y. Zhou, 2019), this study is among the first to empirically examine and evaluate Chinese migrant women's responses and attitudes toward their family size planning in Spain.

In this study, we conducted 30 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with women who were born in the 1980s and 1990s, and who had spent at least two years in Spain. And the participants have been selected following a theoretical-intentional criterion. The interviews explored women's views on their reproductive decisions, namely how they decided to have their first or second child, or, if primiparous, whether they anticipated having a second child under immigration context. The dependent variables are intentions to become a mother, to have a second child, or to have a third child. To compare the effect of being the only-child on their fertility intention, we also incorporate participants who have siblings, in the hope that it would contribute to a comparative analysis. We approached the women, explained the purpose of the study and asked for their consent to be interviewed and tape-recorded. And to protect the identity of the participants, the names in this paper are pseudonyms. The sociodemographic characteristics of the women interviewed are summarized in Table 1.

### **IV. EXPECTED FINDINGS**

Our preliminary findings show that fertility expectations were higher for women from only-child family, affected both by the feeling of solitary in their childhood and the historical regret in terms of fertility decision of their parents (for example, the involuntary abortion of their second child). Meanwhile, the result also shows that grandparental caring for child under the immigration context is an important determinant toward their family size planning.

**Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants**

Pseudonym	Year of birth	Educational background	Region of origin	City or village	Only-child or no	Current residence	Year of arrival	Marital Status at arrival	Current Marital status	Occupation	Nationality of the spouse	Age of the spouse	Number of children	Residence Permit
Chang	1998	Undergraduate	Hunan, Zhuzhou	City	Yes	León	2019	single	single	Teacher	/	/	/	Student visa
Yi	1994	Postgraduate	Hebei, Cangzhou	Village	Yes	León	2017	single	single	Teacher	/	/	/	Student visa
Wen	1988	PhD Candidate	Hunan, Hengyang	Village	No	León	2007	single	married	University staff	Spanish	36	One daughter	Spanish nationality
Meng	1996	Postgraduate	Beijing	City	No	León	2018	single	In a relationship	Teacher	Chinese	32	/	Student visa
Fei	1991	Doble Master	Shandong, Linyi	City	Yes	León	2013	single	married	Teacher	Spanish	35	/	Permanent residence
Zheng	1982	Undergraduate	Guilin	City	Yes	León	2005	divorced	married	Self-employed, magician	Spanish	60	One daughter and one son	Spanish nationality
Qiu	1991	Postgraduate	Yunnan, Yuxi	Village	Yes	León	2017	single	In a relationship	Teacher	Chinese	30	/	Student visa
Fang	1988	Postgraduate	Jiangxi	Village	No	León	2018	married	married	Teacher	Chinese	34	/	Student visa
Lu	1989	Doble Master	Shaanxi	City	Yes	Oviedo	2008	single	married	Housewife	Spanish	30	One daughter	UE Permanent residence
Linya	1996	Undergraduate	Chongqing	City	No	Salamanca	2016	single	In a relationship	Student	Spanish	31	/	Permanent residence
Ping	1986	High School	Fujian, Fuqing	Village	No	León	2008	single	married	Grocery store	Chinese	35	Two sons	Permanent residence
Dan	1986	Junior High School	Zhejiang, Wenzhou	Village	No	Albacete	2012	single	married	Unemployed	Chinese	42	One daughter and one son	Permanent residence
Wei	1980	High School	Zhejiang, Qingtian	Village	No	Albacete	1988	single	married	Alimentation shop	Chinese	39	One son	Spanish nationality
Ting	1993	Postgraduate	Jiangsu, Nanjing	City	Yes	Salamanca	2015	single	In a relationship	Student	Spanish	24	/	Student visa
Ying	1989	Postgraduate	Jiangsu, Nanjing	City	Yes	Salamanca	2009	single	married	Export Company	Chinese	31	One daughter	UE Permanent residence
Shan	1992	PhD Candidate	Guangdong,	Village	No	Madrid	2015	single	single	Teacher	/	/	/	Student visa
Qian	1996	PhD Candidate	Jiangsu, Suzhou	City	Yes	Madrid	2018	single	single	Student	/	/	/	Student visa

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Shiqi	1994	PhD Candidate	Chongqing	City	Yes	Madrid	2016	single	In a	Student	Chinese	27	/	Student visa
Dong	1996	Postgraduate	Heilongjiang, Yichun	Village	Yes	Barcelona	2018	single	single	Student	/	/	/	Student visa
Tian	1995	PhD Candidate	Hebei, Qinhuangdong	City	Yes	Barcelona	2017	single	In a relationship	Student	Chinese	31	/	Student visa
Yu	1997	Postgraduate	Ningxia, Yinchuan	City	Yes	Madrid	2016	single	In a relationship	Student	Chinese	26	/	Student visa
Yaqing	1997	PhD Candidate	Liaoning, Dandong	City	Yes	Barcelona	2019	In a relationship	single	Student	/	/	/	Student visa
Chen	1980	High School	Zhejiang, Qingtian	Village	No	León	2002	single	married	Grocery store	Chinese	43	Two sons	Permanent residence
Ran	1993	PhD Candidate	Hubei, Yichang	City	Yes	Madrid	2018	In a	married	Student	Chinese	33	/	Student visa
Song	1998	PhD Candidate	Anhui, Fuyang	City	Yes	Barcelona	2017	single	single	Student	/	/	/	Student visa
Yang	1992	PhD Candidate	Shandong, Taian	City	No	León	2015	single	In a relationship	Student	Chinese	28	/	Student visa
Hong	1996	Postgraduate	Hebei,	City	Yes	Valencia	2019	single	single	Student	/	/	/	Student visa
Ting	1995	Postgraduate	Jiangxi, Shangrao	Village	No	Madrid	2014	single	In a relationship	Teacher	Spanish	32	/	Student visa
Xin	1996	Postgraduate	Anhui, Tongling	Village	No	Barcelona	2019	In a relationship	single	Student	/	/	/	Student visa
Qing	1996	Postgraduate	Harbin	City	Yes	Valencia	2018	single	single	Student	/	/	/	Student visa

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