

Study on the Impact of Gender Imbalance on the Stable Development of Society

-- Anhui Province as an Example

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Abstract

With economic development comes significant demographic change and an increasingly serious gender imbalance. As the impact of gender imbalance continues to grow and deepen in society, there is an urgent need to conduct targeted research and treatment on it. The impact of gender imbalance on social stability and development in China is derived from the imbalance in the gender structure of the population, and is universal and systematic in nature, manifesting itself in different groups, arenas and levels of society. This paper presents the impact of gender imbalance on social stability and development based on data and specific situations in Anhui Province, in order to make the situation of gender imbalance more concrete and to help researchers understand the issue more clearly and deeply.

Keywords

Demographic Structure; Sex Ratio; Imbalance; Stable Development; Impact.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

On 11 May 2021, under the leadership of the Party Central Committee with President Xi Jinping at its core and with the strong support of various government departments, the 7th National Population Census was successfully completed. According to the data released by the National Bureau of Statistics, in terms of gender structure, the male population was 723.34 million, accounting for 51.24%, while the female population was 688.44 million, accounting for 48.76%. The sex ratio of the total population (the ratio of males to females, using females as 100) was 105.07, with the number of males and females increasing compared to 2010, while the sex ratio of the total population remained basically unchanged. The sex ratio at birth was 111.3, a decrease of 6.8 per cent compared to 2010.[1] The gender ratio at birth was 111.3, down 6.8 per cent from 2010. The imbalance between men and women seems to have eased, but a comparison of the specific population figures shows that the situation is still serious. This demographic phenomenon is the cumulative result of long-standing demographic policy developments in the country, see Figure 1.

China's fertility policy can be broadly divided into four stages. The first stage was from the 1950s to 1970, when China's fertility policy was based on the Soviet Union's population policy and was basically permissive. The second stage was from the early 1970s to 2000, when a leading group on family planning was set up to implement the one-child policy, and the one-and-a-half-child policy was also relaxed for rural areas. The third stage was from 2000 to 2010, when the economic situation changed and China's population and family planning policies were reformed, with the main task of population and family planning work shifting to stabilising low fertility levels and improving population quality. The fourth stage of policy development is from 2010 to the present, based on the previous practice, China has basically reduced and stabilised

the fertility level, but the ensuing series of population development problems have focused the attention of society on the hot spots of population quality, gender balance, population ageing, etc., and the state has begun to gradually adjust and improve the population fertility policy.

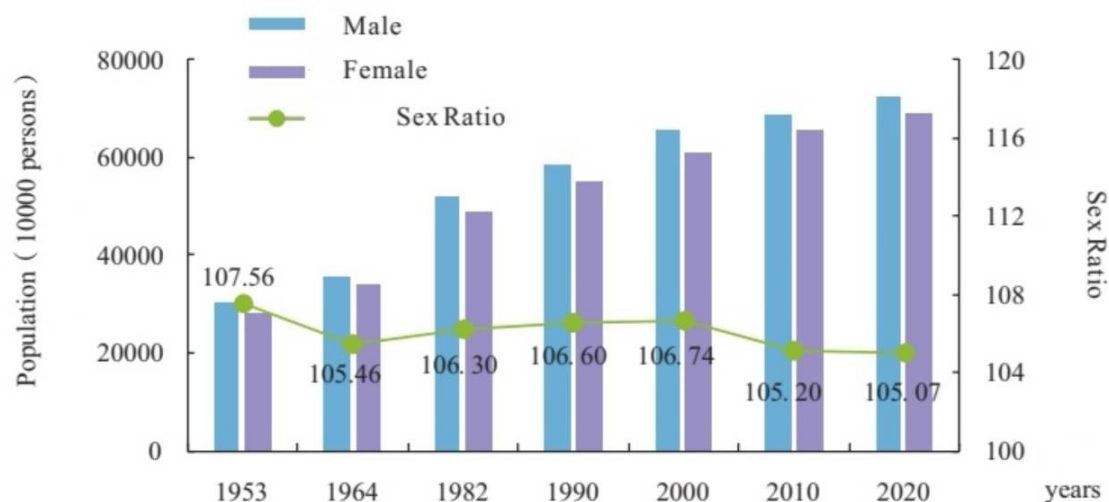


Figure 1. Gender composition of our population censuses

From the comprehensive two-child policy to the opening up of the third child, the State is gradually optimising its fertility policy, improving the quality structure of the population and implementing the scientific concept of development. However, the implementation of these policies has not fundamentally solved the current contradictions in China's population development. The gender ratio alone shows that the number of men exceeds the number of women by approximately 34.9 million, which inevitably affects the stability and development of society. It is important to explore the impact of the imbalance in the sex ratio and its causes, and to propose appropriate measures for social development.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The sex ratio at birth domain is a relatively independent and stable naturalised indicator that is difficult to disturb by other natural factors. Just as there are specific growth patterns for organisms in nature, human interference can lead to the imminent extinction of individual organisms. The large population base in China, and therefore the long-term abnormalities in the sex ratio at birth, reflect the abnormalities in the gender structure in the process of population development, and also confirm the abnormal conditions of social survival of both sexes.

1.2.1. Theoretical Implications

It confirms the serious imbalance in the sex ratio of our population and the impact of this phenomenon on the stable development of society.

It is conducive to enriching the study of population sex ratio, providing new data for research, and helping to advance the research process and digging deeper.

It is conducive to the improvement of research ideas on the imbalance of the sex ratio of the population and to the horizontal development of the research system in the field of population.

1.2.2. Practical Implications

It helps to publicise the negative impact of an imbalanced sex ratio on marriage, employment and law and order, and to popularise the idea of "equality between men and women", so that people are aware of the harm caused by an imbalanced sex ratio and at the same time reduce the idea of "preference for men over women".

A study of the population in rural and urban areas was conducted to document the current situation of the sex ratio in both areas and to illustrate the urban-rural differences in the sex ratio of the population, which will help to promote a balanced development of the sex ratio between urban and rural areas and to expand the scope of the study.

Although the study is based on Anhui Province, the results of the study are universal and can be applied to all parts of the country, thus contributing to the study of the imbalance between men and women and reducing the imbalance between men and women nationwide.

2. Basic Information on the Gender of the Population in Anhui Province

Since the 21st century, China has conducted three more population censuses, with the fifth census in 2000 showing that Anhui's sex ratio was 106.61, close to the national level, and the sixth census in 2010 showing 103.39, a decrease of 3.22 percentage points compared to 10 years ago. Both censuses were lower than the national level and ranked in the middle of all provinces, so the comparison is not significant. However, the direct comparison between the numbers of men and women makes us wonder where the "disappearing" women have gone. The imbalance in the gender structure leads us to wonder what happens to the men who are excluded from the balanced part of the structure. What impact will this have on the development of our society? In the context of the development of our population policy, we look forward to new conclusions, see Figure 2.

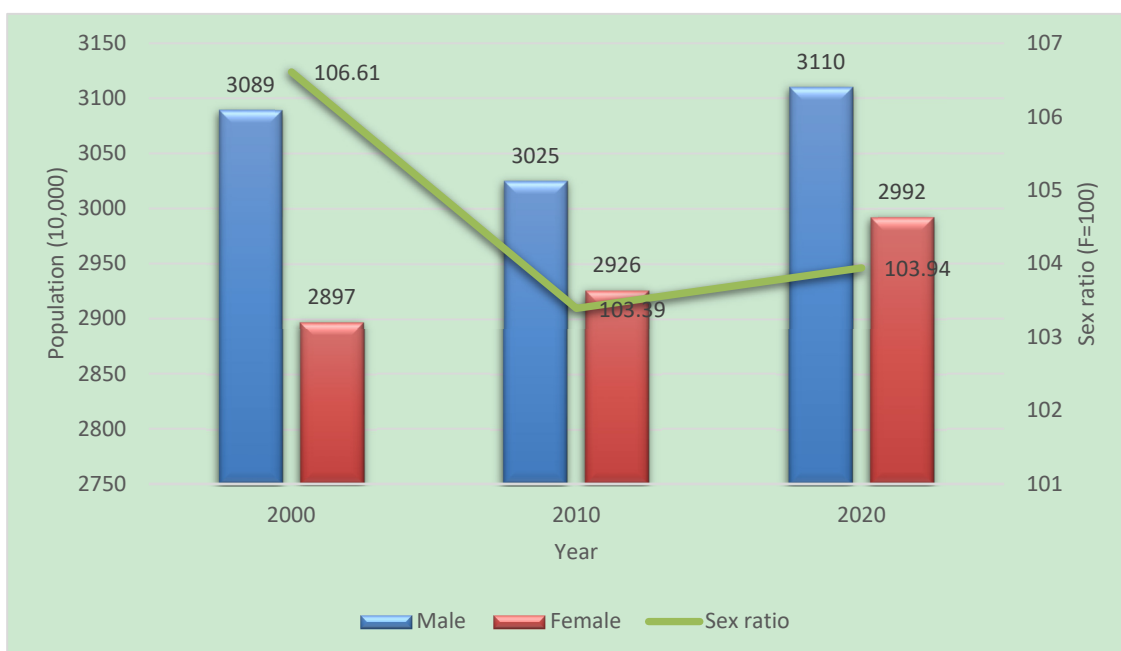


Figure 2. Gender composition of the last three censuses in Anhui Province

3. Causes of Gender Imbalance

The current imbalance in the sex ratio in our country is not the result of natural selection, but is determined by long-term social gender selection. People interfere with natural reproduction

according to their own gender preferences, artificially eliminating the chances of survival of many women. The patriarchal ideology that is ingrained in people's minds is the reason why men outnumber women by a wide margin.

3.1. Loss of Control of Sex Testing Technology for Newborn Babies

Prior to 2000, where there was a gender preference, people chose to have more males to control the number of males born and to choose the survival rate of females born according to family circumstances. Under this trend, the number of males and females was skewed, but not out of control. However, the implementation of family planning policies has not only increased the preference for boys, but has also eliminated the use of multiple births as a means of determining the birth of male babies, leading to direct medical determination of the sex of the baby, which has led to many female babies being born dead or facing death at birth, and a dramatic reduction in the number of females compared to males.

This phenomenon has only been reduced with the development of social thinking and the improvement of the legal system, but there are always people who take advantage of loopholes in the legal system or take the risk of committing crimes.

3.2. Conflict between Ethics and Law

In the face of both intellectual and moral poverty, some parents believe that it is their parental right to control their children's lives, and that children have become 'commodities', which must have a 'value', but a value of The "commodity" must have a "value", but there is a difference between high and low value. The 'use value' of a boy is to provide for his old age and to carry on the family tradition, whereas the value of a girl to these parents is obviously no more immediate or developmentally beneficial than that of a boy. It is only natural that girls are discarded, traded or even killed as the ultimate destiny of most girls.

Although the law gives infants personhood, states that no one has the right to deprive them of their lives, and explicitly prohibits the commission of potential crimes, in the mindset of some parents, ethics prevails and the law cannot prevent them from becoming murderers. Dr. Mu Zhi Kun of the Centre for Population and Development Studies at Renmin University of China pointed out that procreation is the most basic human act and must be based on an "ethic of responsibility" for children and society.[2] The ethics of responsibility Strengthening the rule of law and moral education and improving the relevant laws are important for maintaining the sex ratio at birth.

3.3. Irrational Social Structure

Although social progress requires equality between men and women, in some areas women's social rights are less guaranteed than those of men. In terms of social employment, there are more obstacles for women than for men. Even though labour protection laws are constantly being amended and improved to guarantee women's rights to a certain extent, marital pregnancy can still be a hidden source of discrimination against women in employment.

In traditional agricultural societies, where men were the main source of labour for family production, the preference for boys was more pronounced; after the reform and opening up of China in 1978, rural areas were produced under the household contract system of responsibility, with one family as the basic unit of production and machine crops not yet widespread, in which the labour advantage for men was more pronounced.

In modern society, on the other hand, machines replace most of the labour force and the role of men in this is weakened. And China has promulgated a series of laws and regulations on the protection of rural women's rights and interests in land, such as the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, the Marriage Law and the Law on Rural Land Contracts.

However, the current law does not effectively protect women's rights and interests in some instances. For example, in specific rural contexts, the Organic Law of the Villagers' Committee gives the village committee the power of villagers' self-governance, and in cases of disputes over rural women's land rights, it is generally the village committee that decides that women will be passively deprived of their contractual rights in the collective when they leave the rural collective (e.g. when they marry). The forced erosion of women's economic rights has, in part, resulted in their inability to achieve social equality with men.

3.4. Deficiencies in Traditional Social Practices of Marriage

It is a common practice in China in the last century to ensure the number of boys in the family by having more children. As a result, China's population and family planning policy met with a lot of resistance when it was first implemented, and although more and more one-child families are being born, this has also led to a more difficult retirement situation for families with only daughters in the future.

Of course, with the rapid development of the economy, some regions of the country have also seen a corresponding change in their marriage customs. For example, the practice of a man moving into a woman's home is a superfluous one, which protects the pensions of both parents when the man's family has a large number of children. For example, for the purpose of property inheritance and old age protection, the practice of double-headed marriages began to emerge in the 1980s in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, i.e. marriages are neither marriages nor superfluous marriages, and couples go in both directions and have children with both surnames. This practice also largely solves some of the conflicts that exist between the two marriages and families, but of course there are certain drawbacks, and it is still in the stage of implementing innovative improvements.

3.5. Omissions in Population and Family Planning Work

In the early days of China's family planning policy, the family planning departments focused most of their efforts on controlling the number of people at the expense of the healthy development of population structure and quality. The family planning and health departments did not give due attention to the under-reporting and under-reporting of female births, and the relevant government regulatory authorities did not exercise strict control over ultrasound and drugs. Abnormalities in the sex ratio of infants at birth are not corrected in a timely manner until the population size reaches the target, and then attention is paid.

4. Impact of Gender Imbalance on Stable Social Development

4.1. Impact on Socio-Economic Development

A demographic dividend is a situation in which a country has a large proportion of its total population of working age and a low proportion of its population of low and high age, providing sufficient labour savings for economic development and a situation in which the economy as a whole is characterised by high savings, high investment and high growth. An imbalance in the sex ratio leads to low fertility, and for most countries, especially developing countries, high fertility is an important support and source of the demographic dividend.

In the long run, low fertility will undoubtedly reduce the future labour supply and lead to the disappearance of the demographic dividend, however, this will also unleash a window of opportunity for the gender dividend. The gender dividend is an extension and expansion of the demographic dividend theory.[3] The term 'gender dividend' was first introduced in 2010 by Carmen Pages and Claudia Piras in their report 'The Gender Dividend: Making the Most of Women's Work', which refers to women's contribution to socio-economic development through higher rates of labour force participation. However, the gender imbalance not only results in a

loss of the demographic dividend, but also reduces the gender dividend, which is detrimental to sustainable economic and social development in the long run.

At the same time, the large number of elderly single men who have nothing to support them in society increases the burden of old age on society.

4.2. Impact on Social Morality and Order

As a direct result of the gender imbalance, there are far more men than women of the same age. In our society, where monogamy is guaranteed by law, an imbalance in the sex ratio means that the surplus male population will be unable to find a legal spouse and will have no children to support them as they grow older. Therefore, despite the moral and legal constraints of society, it is inevitable that people will face moral risks and transgress the boundaries of the law.

4.2.1. Marriage Squeeze

With men far outnumbering women of the same age, a proportion of men will inevitably be unable to find a mate from women of the same age and will turn to women of a younger age, and the phenomenon of older men having fewer spouses will proliferate, with older men crowding out potential spouses of younger men and men of the previous generation crowding out potential spouses of the next generation of men, leading to an intergenerational imbalance in marriage[4] This will lead to an imbalance in marriage between generations. At the same time, the developed areas will crowd out the less developed areas, and the urban and rural areas will crowd out the villages and towns, which will easily lead to the emergence of "bachelor villages".

Without social policy redress, the marriage squeeze will continue to be passed on to the next generation, leading to further social problems, including increased social injustice, increased social tensions and impeded social development.

The marriage squeeze will sift out some of the lower social status and lower income groups, resulting in high bride prices, sky-high property prices and a new wave of property speculation.

The marriage squeeze can also challenge the moral boundaries of a society's population indefinitely. In a context of low marriage rates due to gender imbalance, divorce rates also remain high. The issue of infidelity has always been a central theme. The skewed and unbalanced nature of marriage resources makes it easy for men and women to break the moral line, with negative social consequences. In remote areas, where resources are relatively scarce, the phenomenon of polygamy also occurs occasionally. The phenomenon of polygamy is difficult to eradicate due to the relatively weak awareness of the people in these areas, the weak awareness of the law, the supremacy of the male lineage and the scarcity of women. The challenges to social morality will intensify.

4.2.2. A Surge in Social Crime

Human trafficking has never been a phase, and even today, with such advanced detection techniques, cases of human trafficking are commonplace. With 34.9 million men at risk of not having a spouse, finding a spouse through irregular channels is not an act that can be completely stopped. The combination of the biological and social needs of single males has led to a greater number of unscrupulous individuals seeking to profit from the crime, leading to human trafficking.

Some single men, unable to access other social resources and repressed for long periods of time, may be tempted to commit sexual offences. At the same time, sexual offences are not only committed against women, yet there is a long-standing social perception that women receive too much attention, including blame, and that men's social appeals are often ignored when they are victimised, which can have a significant impact on the physical and mental health of both men and women.

Single men seeking relief from their desires support part of the sex industry, and by extension the soft sex industry, which affects the physical and mental health of young people in particular, and the state needs to devote more social resources to combating criminality and maintaining social stability.

5. Measures to Control Gender Imbalance

5.1. Social Policy

In some remote areas of the country, the social security system has lagged behind in terms of publicity as well as implementation, and active visits should be made to publicise and propose corresponding incentives and protection mechanisms. The policy for only-girl households or households with two daughters, as well as the pension insurance system and the minimum subsistence guarantee system, should be put into practice so that farmers are aware that it is possible for the state to help them with their old age. It is also necessary to protect the social interests of women and to improve policies that address the necessary social needs of women, such as maternity insurance, so that women's right to work or economic rights are not illegally infringed during childbirth.

The government has now introduced a comprehensive two-child and three-child policy in response to the low fertility rate and poor quality of births. However, given the economic level of the average family, many families find it difficult to raise a second or even a third child. The government can develop an appropriate social welfare system to ensure the smooth implementation of the fertility policy. For example, it should provide appropriate childcare subsidies and additional subsidies for families that have more girls.

5.2. Legal System

Article 39 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Population and Family Planning clearly stipulates that the use of ultrasound technology and other technical means to identify the sex of a foetus that is not medically necessary is strictly prohibited, as is the use of sex-selective termination of pregnancy that is not medically necessary. However, the penalty for violating Article 39 is only the confiscation of illegal income and a fine of several tens of thousands of yuan for the provider of the technology, and there is no clear punishment for parents who use ultrasound technology to identify the sex of their babies, and even if there were, the punishment would not be strong enough to deter parents who are willing to act. The government's "Regulations on the Prohibition of Non-medically Necessary Fetal Sex Identification and Sex-selective Artificial Pregnancy Termination", which came into effect on 1 January 2003, also legally prevented the unnatural death of fetuses due to gender preference, but its implementation has not been as effective as it could have been.

The Constitution of China stipulates equality between men and women as a basic legal norm, yet inequality persists. For women, economic independence and freedom of property is one of the guarantees of equality, and the fundamental way for women to achieve equality is to eliminate prejudices in people's minds, to improve their self-awareness and to act fairly and justly. In a democratic society, women's opportunities to participate in politics and influence national decisions are more extensive than in traditional societies, which is more conducive to the advancement of women in society. In today's society, however, women have far fewer opportunities to participate in politics than men, and there are clearly more men than women in the public service. This could be done by relaxing unnecessary restrictions on women in relevant areas and encouraging more women to show their power.

5.3. Social Promotion

The mass media and the Internet media should play an active role in guiding and serving the public, eliminating the misconceptions in social opinion that discriminate against women and

maliciously misinterpret the ideology of female power and male power, breaking the shackles of the ideology given to women by traditional society in front of the public, vigorously promoting the ideology of gender equality and the importance of a balanced gender ratio for social development.

The internet has a great advantage in the propagation of relevant ideas, but unscrupulous elements can also use this invisible platform to spread negative comments about women and stir up the momentum of confrontation between men and women. It is therefore important to step up efforts to clean up the Internet environment so that it does not become a breeding ground for social germs.

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