



Did Fluctuations in Marital Stability Change Female Fertility Behavior?

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Abstract

The coexistence of population aging and declining birthrate makes the population age structure rapidly ageing, and the relaxation of fertility policies has not accurately stimulated the factors that inhibit the number of births. This article intends to provide explanations for fertility behavior from fluctuations in marital stability, using the China Comprehensive Social Survey (CGSS) 2012, 2013, and 2015 three rounds of survey data, introducing the revised implementation of the 2011 "New Marriage Law" and adding a Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD) as identify strategy. The results of the study show that fluctuations in the stability of marriage have reduced the willingness to bear children and the fertility level. The willingness to bear children has declined to a smaller degree than the fertility level. Therefore, the divergence between the fertility level and the childbirth willingness has shown an expanding trend.

Keywords: Marital Stability Fertility Behavior RDD

Since the 1990s, China's aging process has accelerated. In 2018, the population of 65 years and over accounted for 11.94% of the total. At the same time, the family planning policy, which has been strictly enforced for a long time, has greatly curbed the growth of birth rate and has gradually formed a birth inertia. In 1990, the birth rate of China was 21.06‰. By 2019, the birth rate was only 10.48‰.

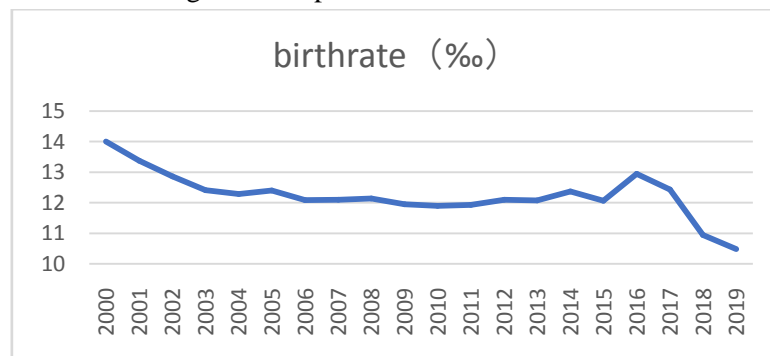
Table 1 Change of Population Age Structure in China

Year	Ratio of 0-14 years old (%)	Ratio of over 65 years old (%)	Child Aged Ratio (%)	Median Age (year)
1953	36.3	4.4	12.2	22.7
1964	40.7	3.6	8.8	20.2
1982	33.6	4.9	14.6	22.9
1990	27.7	5.6	20.1	25.3
2000	22.9	7	30.4	30.8

Data Source: http://www.gov.cn/test/2005-07/26/content_17363.htm

While responding to the problem of population aging, the fertility problem implied by the problem of declining birthrate also needs urgent attention. From Figure 1, it can be seen that the birth rate of China has been declining continuously. Even after the "comprehensive two-child" policy in 2016, the birth rate only rose briefly and then continued to decline significantly.

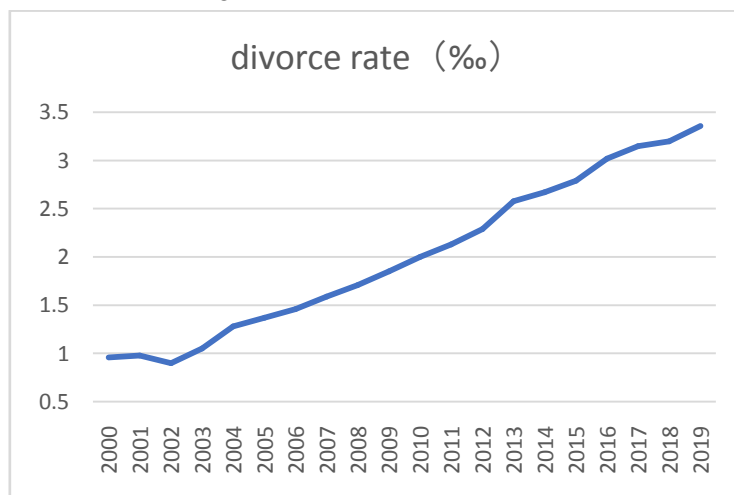
Figure 1 Population Birthrate in China



Data source: *China Population and Employment Statistical Yearbook 2000-2020*

The rapid development of economy and society as well as the continuous emancipation of social concepts have significantly changed people's traditional concepts of family. For a long time, the family value of Chinese residents who have been deeply influenced by traditional Confucian thoughts is extremely important, and family relations have shown terrific stability. The superior family status of male has greatly restricted female family members. Therefore, the divorce rate of China has been in a lower position in the world for a long time. However, in recent years, the effective liberation of gender concepts, the continuous improvement of per capita education level and women's social status have brought a strong impact on the traditional concept of marriage and family. With the divorce rate rising year by year (Figure 2), the fluctuation of marriage stability greatly led to an impact on people's sense of security in marriage firstly. In particular, the revision and implementation of "New Marriage Law" in 2011 has anewarranged the family property of both parties. Based on this, the objective and universal rise in divorce rate may bring more insecurity to women in marriage, and this psychological feeling is very likely to reduce women's fertility in married life. At the same time, the experience of divorce leads to the interruption of married life, which directly squeezes women's childbearing opportunities and childbearing time, thereby further reducing the number of women's childbirth, resulting in the phenomenon that the birth rate of such women is lower than their willingness; however, if those child-bearing period women experienced divorce and re-enter the marriage after re-searching, the new married life may cause them to have more children to maintain the new marriage relationship. Therefore, fluctuations in marital stability may have an uncertain impact on women's willingness to bear children and the number of births.

Figure 2 Divorce Rate in China



Data source: *China Statistical Yearbook of Civil Affairs 2000-2020*

Based on this, this article intends to explain the changes in women's fertility behavior from the perspective of fluctuation in marital stability. The rest of the article is arranged as follows: the first part is a literature review, the second part is the theoretical deduction and research hypotheses, the third part is the research design, the fourth part is the empirical research, and the fifth part is the conclusions and policy recommendations.

1. literature review

Marriage and childbirth, as the core issue of family research, are inextricably linked between the two. When studying the influence of marriage on fertility problems, the existing literature has confirmed that there is indeed a correlation between them (Ye Wen, 2010; Zheng Zhenzhen, Li Yuzhu, Liao Shaohong, 2009). This type of analysis mostly added marriage status as a control variable in the model. The results of regression analysis show that even if a series of influencing factors are added in the model, marriage still has a statistically significant impact on the decision-making of family willingness of fertility and fertility behavior. Its impact is mainly reflected in the direct impact of marital status on fertility (Chen Wei, JinYongai, 2011; Zhou Fulin, 2005; You Danzhen, Zheng Zhenzhen, 2002), the degree of matching between the two parties of the family affects the fertility by affecting the stability of the marriage (Li Jianxin, Wang Xiaolong, 2014), and the relationship between fertility and marital stability (Xu Qi, Yu Jianning, QiuZeqi, 2013).

1.1 direct impact of marital status on fertility

Marital status is an important factor that affects fertility behavior. Different marital status such as unmarried, remarried, divorced, widowed, etc., have different effects on the willingness to childbirth and fertility behavior. For a long time, under the influence of traditional Confucianism, China has not been a country with a high divorce rate, and family relations have also shown extremely high stability. With the transformation from traditional society to modern society, the size and structure of the family have undergone major changes, and the stability of marriage and family during the same period has also been greatly reduced. The rapid increase in the divorce rate in recent years is an effective example (Li Jianxin, Wang Xiaolong, 2014). Since the reform and opening up, especially in the context of accelerating social transformation in the new century, China's divorce rate has continued to rise. The crude divorce rate at the beginning of the reform and opening up was only 0.2‰, and by 2018 it has risen to 3.2‰ (China Civil Affairs Statistical Yearbook 2019). Since the interruption of the marriage relationship formed by divorce will inevitably have a corresponding impact on the individual's willingness to bear children and the level of fertility, the promulgation and implementation of the New Marriage Law in 2011 has affected the redistribution of the property distribution of both parties after divorce. The property rights of women have been importantly affected. Therefore, the experience of divorce may lead to a significant decline in women's willingness to bear children and fertility levels, so as to reduce the costs they need to bear when divorcing. Women naturally pay more energy and time than men in raising children and caring families; in addition, with the continuous openness of social concepts, remarriage is more common than before, and the search and matching time of individuals is shortened. Therefore, individuals who have experienced divorce are most likely to remarry. After remarried, to maintain the stability of the new family, "unwanted birth" makes the individual's fertility level higher than his original willingness; at the same time, the continuous increase of the divorce rate in the macro environment makes individuals have a new understanding of the stability of marriage in modern society. On the one hand, fluctuations in the stability of marriage make individuals enter marriage more cautiously, thus further squeezing the time of childbirth. On the other hand, individuals in order to avoid having to bear less child costs when encountering divorce, thus further reduce their willingness to childbirth and fertility.

1.2 the degree of matching between the two parties affects the fertility

Chinese society pays attention to the perfect match for marriage for a long time from traditional perspective. Both parties of marriage show similar matching phenomena in terms of age, social status, occupational background, education level, etc., and the degree of matching for marriage will affect individual's internal willingness and level of fertility by affecting the stability of marriage. Taking the age in matching for marriage as an example, Li Jianxin and Wang Xiaolong (2014) used the 2010 China Family Dynamics Tracking Survey (CFPS) to establish a discrete Logit model. The analysis found that the different marriage ages of couples will have different effects on marriage stability. In mainstream families the husband's age is 1-4 years older than the wife does not have a significant impact on the risk of divorce. While the husband is more than 3 years younger than the wife makes the risk of divorce significantly higher, and the husband is more than 10 years older than the wife makes the risk of divorce significantly reduce. The fluctuation of divorce risk will further affect the family's willingness to bear children and the fertility level. The increase in divorce risk will significantly reduce the family's willingness to bear children and lower the family's fertility level. Because the increase in family divorce risk will inevitably manifest itself in the relationship between husband and wife, thus the family's fertility decision would be affected.

In addition, the perfect match for marriage of education level will also have an uncertain impact on the family's willingness to bear child and fertility level. There is a view that it will magnify the negative effect of education on childbirth and the "second child" childbirth (Liu Zhangsheng, Liu Guihai et al., 2018). Another view is that families with higher education levels tend to have more harmonious relationships between the couple, so there may be a positive correlation between education and fertility (Cherlin A J., 2016). On one hand, in view of the traditional similar-matching model, the education level of both parties in the marriage is relatively consistent in most cases. Families with higher education levels will face higher opportunity costs of childbirth. The willingness to bear children and the level of childbearing are therefore relatively low. For young parents who have given birth to children and are in childbearing age, they need to work harder in the face of high child-raising costs, thereby further increasing the marginal opportunity cost of having a second child. This further weakens the willingness to have a second child in such families (Zhou Changhong, Zhou Jianfang, 2001).

While Li Jianxin and Wang Xiaolong (2014) believe that generally speaking, higher education levels may increase the possibility of divorce, because individuals with higher education tend to have more independent financial ability which makes it easier to divorce when dealing with marriage problems. Therefore, the way of matching for marriage implied by education level leads to a decline in family willingness to bear children and fertility levels through the reduction of marital stability. On the other hand, the extension of years of education postpones the age to enter marriage. Marriage parties with higher education levels usually belong to late marriages. Such individuals usually have a longer time to search for marriage partners, and they formally enter marriage with their counterparts. The two have a longer time to get along with each other in the family, so the two often have a closer relationship within the marriage, and the marriage stability is relatively high (Zhou Xiaoyan, 2002). Therefore, in the post-demographic transition period, many studies on the fertility phenomenon in developed countries have found that the implied matching for marriage behind the education level has led to a higher fertility level in such families (Zhao Menghan, 2019).

1.3.The impact of fertility on marital stability

Marriage and childbirth are interrelated. In addition to marriage matching and marital stability, which will affect the willingness to bear children and the fertility level, another type of research also shows that the family fertility level also affects the stability of marriage. Empirical research shows that the relationship between children and marital stability is very complicated. First of all, not under all conditions, the child factor has a positive effect on marital stability (Waite & Lillard, 1991). Although children, as an important investment in marriage by both parties (Becker, 1973; Becker et al., 1977), to a certain extent, they can enhance the relationship and interdependence between the couples (Durkheim, 2000; Waite & Lillard, 1991). Couples with children have a lower risk of divorce; however, in the process of raising children, due to differences in parenting concepts or trivial matters in life, the couples are more likely to have intramarital quarrels than those without children, which adversely affects the stability of the marriage. Secondly, as the children grow and subsequent children are born, in the dynamic family life course, the influence of children on marital stability will change accordingly (Heaton, 1990). With the increase of children's age, the positive effect of the child factor on marital stability is declining, and the increase in the number of children makes the marginal effect of the child factor steadily weakening and its role in maintaining marital stability is also declining. Finally, there are also gender differences in the influence of child factor. Studies have found that boys are more conducive to maintaining the stability of marriage (Morgan et al., 1988). Especially in the context of boys' preference from Chinese traditional perspective, women's family status is lower, so the more of girls raised in the family may lead to more unstable marriage relationships.

From the perspective of Chinese context, Xu Qi, Yu Jianning, and QiuZeqi (2013) analyzed the impact of whether to give birth before marriage, the number, gender, and age of children on the risk of divorce between the couples, and examined the differences between urban and rural areas. The results of the study show that giving birth before marriage is not conducive to the stability of marriage. Having more children is beneficial to marital stability, but the marginal effect is diminishing. Younger children have a protective effect on the stability. Couples with boys have a lower risk of divorce. The impact of child factor on divorce risk is significantly different between urban and rural areas: children in rural areas have a stronger protective effect on marriage than in cities, and married couples with boys are more stable. This is because childbirth before marriage is certainly selective. Under China's long-term relatively conservative traditional concepts, few couples would choose pre-marital childbearing. The spouses who choose to give birth before marriage are relatively open-minded. Therefore, when facing marital problems, they are more inclined to end marriage to solve the problem, which leads to an unstable marriage. Chinese always prefer a complete family, and tends to have a stable marriage relationship for raising children. Therefore, the more children raised and the younger the children, the couples hope to maintain a stable family to facilitate the growth of children. Especially under the long-term deep-rooted boy preferences, families with boys show more stability. In other words, the number of children born and gender structure have an effect on marital stability. The more children and boys they give birth to are conducive to promoting marriage stability. This research conclusion is consistent with Li Jianxin and Wang Xiaolong (2014).

On the whole, from an economic point of view, children are a special marital-specific capital, which on one hand can enhance the attractiveness of the current marriage and the stability of the family and marriage, on the other hand, it will increase the cost of divorce, so couples with children are less likely to divorce (Becker, 1973; Becker et al., 1977).

Different from other marriage capital, children are naturally owned by both parties, and the more children, the more property the couple has in common (Becker, 1973). Compared with divorced women without children, it is more difficult for those with children to remarry. After giving birth to children, the cost of divorce for women will increase (Chen Yanran, Qin Xuezheng, 2019; Teachman & Heckert, 1985).

Existing studies have demonstrated the influence of an individual's marital status on the willingness to bear child and fertility level. Under the profound influence of traditional Chinese thinking mode, compared to the unmarried, married individuals have a higher willingness and fertility level. However, in addition to the state of unmarried and married, the impact of marital stability on fertility should not be ignored. How the experience of divorce affects the individual's fertility decision-making, especially in the context of contemporary declining marital stability, the discussion of this issue is even more significant. Existing studies have systematically demonstrated the statistical correlation between marital status and fertility behavior, and also demonstrated the impact of fertility on stable marriage relationships from the perspective of children, but is there a causal link between the changes in marriage relationships and fertility behavior? As women are the main bearers of fertility behavior, how does the decline in the overall social marital stability affect their fertility behavior? After the adjustment of family property distribution in the New Marriage Law in 2011, when women's family bargaining power further declines, women will be even more disadvantaged in the face of the breakdown of their marriage. Does this have a further impact on women's fertility decision? This article intends to expand this perspective based on existing research, and explore the impact of the interruption of the marriage relationship, that is, the experience of divorce, on women's willingness to fertility, fertility level, and the difference between the two. Hoping to explain the changes of willingness to bear child and fertility level through the marital stability, as well as clarify the significant factors behind the contemporary declining birth rate.

2. Theoretical deduction and research hypothesis

As the stability of marriage continues to decrease in the whole society, individual's decisions in marriage will be affected accordingly. According to fertility economics, children, as a marital-specific capital, cannot be divided when their parents break down. While women are naturally more unable to give up their children. Therefore, in the context of a reasonable expectation of a decline in marital stability, women's decision-making on childbirth within marriage is more rational. In order to avoid bearing more costs for children when the marriage relationship breaks down, their willingness to bear children and fertility behavior will show a downward trend (Mo Weiqiao, 2019). The declining stability of marriage will inevitably bring psychological shocks to individuals in marriage or who will enter the marriage, reducing women's insecurities in the marriage. Reducing divorce costs, simplifying divorce procedures, and increasing divorce rates continue to stimulate the further reduction of marital stability to a certain extent (Yu Jia, Xie Yu, 2019). The revision of the "New Marriage Law" in 2011 made women's property distribution rights at a disadvantage in the face of the breakdown of marriage. According to the cost-benefit theory, under the premise that the marriage relationship reduces the individual's income reasonably, the rational individual will reduce the cost of the marriage. Since children naturally cause a greater cost burden on women, rational women tend to reduce their childbearing when they anticipate a decline in marital stability.

Since the willingness to bear children in this article refers to "without policy restrictions, how many children you would like to have", this willingness may be more restricted by the family planning policy implemented in the early stage, but not too much with individual characteristics. Therefore, the decline in marital stability may make individuals reasonably reduce their willingness to bear, but just a lower degree. Under the objective influence of the decline in marital stability, the actual fertility level of women may decline to a relatively large extent. As a result, the difference between individual willingness to bear children and fertility level has shown an expanding trend.

Based on this, this article proposes the following research assumptions:

Assumption 1: Decline in marital stability reduces willingness to bear children

Assumption 2: Declining marital stability reduces fertility level

Assumption 3: Declining marital stability widens the gap between the willingness and fertility level

3. Research design

3.1 Variable definition

3.1.1 Dependent variable

The dependent variables are the willingness to bear children, the fertility level and the difference between the two. The investigation and analysis of the willingness to give birth is an important aspect of predicting the future trend of population.

The willingness to bear children in this article refers to the ideal number of children of the interviewed sample without the intervention of the exogenous fertility policy.

Fertility level refers to the actual number of children born to the interviewed sample up to the time of the interview. It is the actual fertility level of the interviewed sample.

The difference between willingness and fertility refers to the gap between the number of children the respondent intends to have and the actual number of children.

3.1.2 Independent variable

The independent variable is marital stability, which refers to whether the interviewed sample has experience of divorce. It is a binary variable, that is, a divorce experience is represented as 1, or else is represented as 0.

3.1.3 Control variables

Due to the many factors that affect the willingness to bear and the actual family fertility decision, referring to the selection of control variables in existing research, the control variables in the article includes the years of education and occupation of both spouses, the years of education and occupation of both parents, family income, and a series of interviewed household information such as household registration status and house ownership.

3.2 Model and Data

Because there is a certain degree of endogenous problems between marital stability and fertility, including the omission of variables as well as mutual cause and effect. On one hand, from the perspective of traditional culture, economic development, family characteristics and other aspects, there are many factors affect the fertility quality, especially important influencing factors such as fertility culture, which are difficult to accurately quantify. On the other hand, the number of children also plays an important role in stabilizing the marriage relationship. The number of children born in the family, especially the number of boys, is important to the marital stability. Therefore, this paper adopts a Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD) for causality identification.

This article introduces the revision and implementation of "New Marriage Law" in 2011 as an instrumental variable into identification. The amendments of the family property distribution issues when the marriage relationship breaks down, make women's family bargaining power further decline, thus affecting the marital stability. According to research data from Sohu.com, the age group with a higher divorce rate in my country is between 30-40 years old. Therefore, the revised implementation of the New Marriage Law may affect people born after 1971. Based on these, this article may use the birth year of 1971 as the break point in the regression, and it is believed that women born in 1971 and later are treated by this exogenous policy. The specific model constructs as follows (refer to Zou Hong and Yu Kaizhi (2015) for model construction):

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{MarritalStability}_i + \beta_2 S + \beta_3 S^2 + \varepsilon_i$$

$$\text{MarritalStability}_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 D_i + \alpha_2 S + \alpha_3 S^2 + \varepsilon_i$$

Among them, Y_i represents the dependent variable, which respectively represents the number of their willingness to bear, the actual fertility level up to the time of the interview, and the difference between the two; $\text{MarritalStability}_i$ represents the marriage status of woman i , that is, whether they have had a divorce experience. If they have, assign a value of 1, otherwise it is 0; $S = (\text{birth year} - 1971)$ represents the difference between the birth year of woman i and the breakpoint; D_i represents the grouping variable, that is if the woman i is born in 1971 and later, then $D_i = 1$ means that it has been treated, otherwise it is 0;

This article adds the multi-order term of the difference between the birth year and the breakpoint to construct a nonlinear relationship for RD estimation, The order selection of multi-order items is judged by the AIC criterion (Zou Hong, Yu Kaizhi, 2015).

4. Empirical Result

The research data used in this article comes from the China Comprehensive Social Survey (CGSS) organized by Renmin University of China, taking into account the data integrity of core variables, such as "your current marital status" and "how many children would you like to have if there are no policy restrictions" and so on, and finally selected the survey data of 2012, 2013 and 2015. After excluding unmarried, cohabiting, widowed, and missing values, a total of 27015 sample data were obtained.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of variables

	All sample	Left 1961	1966	Cutoff 1971	Right 1976	1981
Marital Stability	0.049	0.030	0.037	0.039	0.047	0.056
Willingness to Bear	2.920	2.022	2.500	2.183	2.180	2.636
Willingness of Boy	1.078	1.063	1.057	0.977	0.965	0.974
Willingness of Girl	1.003	0.941	0.944	0.912	0.921	0.938
Fertility	1.802	1.816	1.623	1.499	1.472	1.279
Boy	0.971	1.001	0.885	0.780	0.739	0.696
Girl	0.831	0.809	0.737	0.719	0.733	0.583
Women's year of education	7.906	7.716	7.657	8.287	9.566	10.814
Husband's year of education	9.263	9.406	9.566	9.711	10.165	11.289
Number	27015	320	716	613	536	469

Data Source: CGSS 2012-2015

4.2 Empirical result

As shown in Table 2, the marital stability is significantly decreasing the willingness to bear, fertility quality and the difference between them, even though the impact on the willingness to bear is small. The way that marital stability affects the willingness to bear and the fertility quality may be that the overall increase in the divorce rate makes individuals feel more insecure when entering marriage, and individuals can reasonably expect that the marriage relationship is more likely to break down than before. In addition, the 2011 "New Marriage Law" was revised to modify the property distribution of spouses when the marriage relationship broke down, which led to the decline of women's bargaining power in the family. This disadvantaged position made women have to rebalance costs and benefits in their marriage. Considering that children are a special asset in the marriage relationship, and women will naturally bear more marriage costs from their children. Therefore, fluctuations in marital stability will inevitably change women's decision to bear in order to avoid bearing too much cost from children. Women reasonably choose to reduce the willingness to bear children and the fertility quality in the marriage relationship. However, since the willingness to bear children is not always completely converted into the fertility quality, the willingness to bear children is less affected by the marital stability, while the actual fertility quality is more affected.

Table 2 Impact of Marital Stability on Fertility

	Willingness to Bear	Fertility Quality	Difference
Marital Stability	-0.010*** (0.001)	-0.040*** (0.001)	0.014*** (0.001)
(<i>BirthYear</i> - 1971)	0.000*** (0.000)	-0.021*** (0.000)	0.021*** (0.000)
(<i>BirthYear</i> - 1971) ²	0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)
Dummy of Region and Year	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.041*** (0.002)	0.824*** (0.091)	0.629*** (0.114)
Number	26902	26902	26902
<i>R</i> ²	0.185	0.249	0.133

Note: the robust standard error is shown in brackets. ****p* < 0.01, ***p* < 0.05, **p* < 0.1.

4.3 Robust Test

Because the fertility decision of the family is ultimately affected by a variety of characteristics, such as the budget constraint of family income, the education level and occupation of family members, etc., this article adds the years of education and occupation of both spouses and the occupation of both parents in the benchmark regression. The estimated results are shown in Table 3.

According to Table 3, after adding a series of control variables, the influence of marital stability on fertility behavior decreased slightly, but it was still statistically significant. Compared with the influence of couples' years of education on fertility behavior, the impact of the marital stability on family fertility behavior is relatively small, but the impact of marital stability is still significant at the 1% confidence level. This regression result provides a multi-angle explanation for the downturn in the fertility level under the phenomenon of continued declining birthrate.

Table 3 Robust Test with More Control Variables

	Willingness to Bear	Fertility Quality	Difference
Marital Stability	-0.008*** (0.002)	-0.029*** (0.002)	0.012*** (0.002)
Women's Years of Education	-0.030*** (0.002)	-0.037*** (0.002)	0.015*** (0.002)
Women's Job	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Husband's Years of Education	-0.025*** (0.002)	-0.017*** (0.002)	0.002*** (0.002)
Husband's Job	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Father's Years of Education	0.002 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)	0.002 (0.003)
Father's Job	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Mother's Years of Education	-0.009*** (0.002)	-0.004* (0.002)	0.004* (0.003)
Mother's Job	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Family income	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Order of(<i>birth</i> – 1979)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dummy of Birth	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dummy of Region and Year	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	1.959*** (0.287)	0.958*** (0.229)	1.001*** (0.298)
R^2	0.329	0.197	0.127

Note: the robust standard error is shown in brackets. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

5. Conclusion

The continuous increase in the divorce rate in China for more than ten years has made people reasonably expect the marital stability to show a declining trend. The revision and implementation of the "New Marriage Law" in 2011 put women at a more disadvantaged property distribution in the face of the breakdown of their marriage. According to the cost-benefit theory, women have to re-evaluate the cost they have paid in the marriage relationship. Children, as a special marital asset, cannot be divided when the couples divorce, and women naturally bear more children's costs. Therefore, the decline in the expected marital stability makes women more reasonable to make decision to bear. That is, in order to avoid bearing more children's costs when the marriage relationship breaks down, women pretend to reduce their willingness to bear and fertility quality. The results of the study show that fluctuations in marital stability do have an inhibitory effect on the willingness to bear and the fertility quality, but the degree of suppression is not the same.

Individual willingness to bear is less affected by fluctuations in marital stability, and more of the interviewed samples still prefer to the gender structure of "sons and daughters", and the actual fertility quality is relatively more affected. Eventually, the degree of deviation between the willingness and the fertility quality is increasing due to fluctuations in marital stability.

Based on this, on the one hand, we should moderately increase the cost of divorce, in order to prevent the divorce phenomenon caused by the low cost of divorce, improve the marital stability of the whole society, and increase the confidence of individuals to maintain the marriage; on the other hand, improve the legislation, we should effectively protect the rights and interests of women in the marriage relationship, and refine the family property distribution arrangements in different divorce situations.

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