

Taiwanese Perception Towards Chinese Policy: A Survey of Youth Opinions on China's Family Planning

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Abstract:

China's official position towards Taiwan has always been "peaceful unification without giving up the possibility of military intervention." Under this metanarrative, numerous studies of cross-border social and economic issues have been conducted. While maintaining special historical and geo-political bonds with China, Taiwan has its own political system and critical views towards China's claim and position. This paper aims to determine the attitude of younger generation Taiwanese and Chinese towards mainland China's domestic polityin respect of family planning. We asked the respondents to sample surveys for their opinions towards China's birth control policy, also known as the "One-child Policy" and its impact on China. The survey results indicate that while many of the respondents agree that this policy helped China solved some serious challenges caused by a fast growing population; social issues like gender discrimination, forced abortions, and so on were not dealt with, and this is overwhelmingly perceived by the respondents from both Taiwan and China. Furthermore, we conducted T-test between several variables and found that "gender did not affect their opinions towards the policy", but their "origin of place" did play a role in influencing their opinions.

Keywords: Youth attitude, Taiwanese' attitude towards China, One-child policy.

Introduction

China has the world's largest population and is now the second largest economy after the United States. Nearly one fifth of the people on earth are influenced by its domestic policies. Ever since the founding of the new country in 1949, several nation-wide movements have been witnessed and stunned the world, such as the "Great Leap Forward": "Cultural Revolution": "Reform

Great Leap Forward: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Leap_Forward

Culture Revolutions: http://www.history.com/tapics/cultural-revolution

Reform and Opening-up: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_economic_reform

and Opening-up". Some of these, though controversial, contributed profoundly to the prosperity as well as setbacks experienced in China. A typical example is the birth control policy adopted in China, also known as the "one-child per parent", "one-child policy "or "family planning" policy (Howden & Zhou, 2014).

Still suffering the aftermath of the Culture Revolution that ended with the Mao's demise in 1979, China introduced a new national policy of population and family planning in response to the dire need for natural resource conservation and economic development. Back then, China had merely 7% of the world's arable lands while hosting nearly one-quarter of its population. This policy applied to the Han ethnic majority, allowing them to have only one child per couple, while minority groups are subject to their own local policies. Urban residents and government employees were particularly affected, with a few exceptions for government officials above a certain rank. Some other exceptions included families whose first child was born with disability; they might be able to have a second one. People who chose to abide by the policy received certain rewards while those who violate it are legally liable and will face corresponding penalties in accordance with the National Population and Family Planning Law (National People's Congress of the People's of China, 2002).

The outcomes produced by the implementation of this policy were "phenomenal" in many aspects. First and foremost, it greatly contributed to the slow down in the rapid growth of Chinese population, and significantly reduced fertility. China experienced an 80% population growth rate from 1950 to 1980 and the fertility rate exceeded 6 children per woman in the mid-1950s. This had fallen to less than 3children per woman by the late 1970s, and further The role of social media in tourism is particularly significant and the impacts of social media use by tourists, destinations and tourism providers are manifold (Gretzel, 2018; Sigala & Gretzel, 2018). Social media have changed the way tourists search for information and plan their trips, experience and document reduced to 1.94 in women over 35, and 1.73 in women below 35 by 2001. It has been estimated that since the introduction of the policy, over 200 million births (the Chinese government claimed that up to 400 million births had been prevented as of 2011) were avoided between 1979 and 2009, despite the controversies raging over its implementation methods, such as violation of human rights, sex discrimination, forced abortions, and so on. In 2015, the National People's Congress decided to open-up the policy, allowing a second child from January 1st, 2016.

Many studies have examined the "One-Child Policy" related issues in various aspects. Ding & Hesketh investigated family size and fertility preferences after the implantation of the policy in China. Ebenstein particularly presented the gender imbalances by analyzing the "missing girl" phenomenon in China. Rene employed different ethical perspectives to evaluate this aspect of the policy and its implementation. A number of other social issues such as elderly care, singleton behaviors have also been thoroughly studied as being results of the policy's implementation. Economic related concerns were also addressed by different Chinese scholars like Tian, and Jang & Zhang (1994).

Through the review of literature, we spotted a gap in the perspectives of the "singleton" generation themselves, even though few studies have addressed this issue from the domestic viewpoint. For instance, a case study was conducted in Shanghai of perceptions of the "One-Child Policy", and another survey was conducted focusing on certain groups of Chinese university students in regard to their opinions towards this policy. However, there is not yet any literature available for a comparative look at the perceptions of Taiwanese and Chinese focusing on the singleton generation, to the best of our knowledge.

This study aimed to fill this gap by conducting surveys to determine the perspectives of the two regions in regard to the "one-child policy" and related social, and economic issues, to determine the younger generation's attitude. Furthermore, this paper examines some the factors such as "gender", "origin" to see whether they have affected their perceptions towards this national policy of China. This would provide further information on how the younger generation of Taiwan differs in opinions compared to that of China.

Methodology

In this study, we first designed the survey questionnaires, and then we conducted sample surveys. After collecting the survey results, we conducted data analysis with regression analysis, based on which the discussion and conclusions are developed.

Questionnaire Design

We have designed and selected the questions through consulting a focus group of 8 people from both Taiwan and China who were born after 1980°. Their education backgrounds were from undergraduate, graduate school, and post-graduate school (PhD) levels. Then we asked about their concerns about the

⁶The "One-Child Palicy" came into effect since 1980, therefore people were born thereafter are considered the singleton generation in China.

topics and issues regarding the "One-child Policy," and its impacts on China in terms of social and economic aspects. Based on the focus group inputs, we then refined the contents of the questionnaires.

We have designed our survey to be in two parts . Part one collected the basic information of the respondents such as birth year, gender, nationality, participants and educational level. Part two surveyed the attitudes or opinions of the respondents towards this policy in terms of economic and social impacts; with the topics derived from the focus group discussions.

The questionnaires (refer to Appendix 3) adopt the Likert Scale of 1 to 5 measuring model, respondents were asked to state their opinion based on general perspective, national view, and national economic view. In consideration of respondents who may not have been familiar with the One-Child Policy even with the given summary at the beginning of part two, this survey is designed to start off with easier questions that would gradually let the respondents to pick up the controversial issues in China.

Survey Distributionand Data Collection

The data were collected during one month in the winter of 2014, through traditional hardcopy printouts combined with an online version of the survey via Google Documents. Two universities from Taiwan and Japan were chosen as the survey distribution sites. Ideally, one Chinese university would be better for collecting Chinese correspondents, however due to financial constraints and internet accessibility', this was not feasible at the time.

As a result, we have chosen National Taipei University of Technology for Taiwanese respondents, and Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University for Chinese respondents. By the end of collection period, a total of 270 responses were collected with 207 Taiwanese respondents and 61 Chinese respondents and 2 incomplete responses. Given the size of the survey sites, these two groups of students account for 10-15% of their total student population, and are thus considered statistically significant. And these survey results were all digitized into Microsoft excel files, and used for the following data analysis.

Data Analysis

Among the valid 268 responses, the youngest was born in 1999 and the earliest birth year was 1984. All of them are born after or during the "singleton

^bMany Internet service providers such as Google and related services like facebook cannot be accessed in China.

⁶Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University has proximately 50% international students, among which, the Chinese student group is the second largest with a total number of around 550.

generation" period. A total of 245 respondents were born after the 1990s, also known to many as the "post-90ers". Young people of these ages are generally in the college or late stage of high school, where their perceptions and understandings towards their livelihoods and society begin to develop and mature. Over 56% of the respondents were female (150), and 44% were male (118). "Gender" was used as a dependent variable in the regression analysis with other variables, to determine if it affects opinions towards the One-child Policy. A majority of the respondents were from Taiwan at 78% (201), and 57 respondents have Chinese nationality, accounting for the remaining 22%. "Nationality" is also considered as a key independent variable for the later regression analysis, aiming to find out if people's places of origins affect their attitudes or opinions towards China's national policy (see Figure 1).

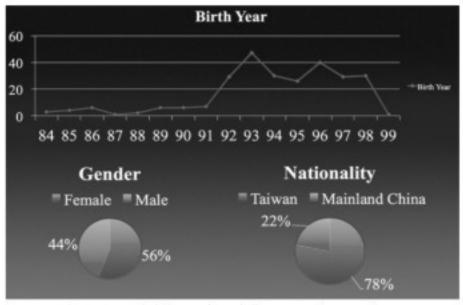


Figure 1: Basic information of the surveyed respondents

Most of the respondents had received at least high school level of education (refer to Figure 2). The majority of the respondents were in their high school (102) and college (140) life, accounting for over 91.5% of the total surveyed respondents. A total of 26 respondents had a Master's and above education level when asked the number of their siblings in the family, and the number of their uncles and aunts in the family, about 26% of the respondents said they had no siblings. This suggests the likelihood that most of the surveyed Chinese respondents were "singletons" themselves (22% of the total respondents). About the number of uncles and aunts, the responses suggest that there are more than one in the family, suggesting that most of their parents are not single child themselves (refer to Figure 2).

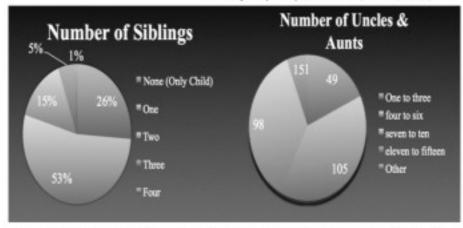


Figure 2 :Number of siblings, uncles and aunts in the respondents' families

About 88% of the respondents had prior knowledge of the "One Child Policy," thus the follow up questions regarding their perceptions towards effects of this policy are considered reliable. When asked about the respondents' opinions towards the policy and its major impacts on China's demographic development and social livelihood, more than half (64%)agreed that it helped to control China's fast growing population, and only a small share of responses negate this notion (13% Disagree and Strongly Disagree). This result suggests that the benefits of China's policy for population control are recognized in both mainland and Taiwan (refer to Table 1). When asked about whether they thought that this policy helped to reduce the household economic burden, about 47% of the respondents said yes, 34% took a neutral view, and 20% said no. However, an overwhelming 91% of the residents did not agree that this policy helped to reunite the ethnic groups in China, since it doesn't apply to them (only 9% agreed or strongly agreed with this notion).

| Question Description | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|----------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------|
| It helps stabilize China's fast growing population significantly | 3 | 32 | 61 | 144 | 28 |
| It helps reduce the parenting costs and burden for average household | 6 | 52 | 91 | 106 | 14 |
| It contributes to the unification of different ethnic groups in China since this policy doesn't apply to the minority ethnic group | 43 | 113 | 87 | 21 | 4 |

Table 1 Survey results regarding the respondents' opinions of the policy

In the next section of the questionnaire (refer to Table 2), we asked the respondents for their specific opinions regarding the social, economic and environmental impact of the one-child policy. In terms of health care and traffic situation, more people held a rather neutral negative view (at 75% and 79% respectively) of its impacts. When it came to education access however, more agreed with the notion that the policy created more access to education in China (72% including neutral opinions). This suggests that the overall benefits of this policy in education have been recognized by the larger part of the surveyed respondents.

However, despite the favorable opinions towards access to education, the responses suggest a slightly unfavorable attitude towards increased employment opportunities with 39% disagreement, 32% neutral, and 29% agreement rate. This might appear anti-intuitive at first, since more education should lead to better employment. However on a more careful thought, more education accessibility may not guarantee job outcomes (refer to Table 2).

In terms of social issues like "increased security and reduced crime", "reduced poverty rate", "increase pension upon retirement", and "create better genes for the next generation", most of the respondents tended to be neutral or to disagree on those notions (at 87%, 78%, 84%, 88% respectively). These responses indicate that more people think that the implementation of China's one-child policy did not produce that many social benefits as some people proclaimed it would. When it comes to the environmental benefit of having "less pollution in the natural environment", a close margin is seen between those who agree and who don't, at 39% and 34% respectively (see Table 2).

| Question Description | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|----------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------|
| Better health care distribution | 11 | 112 | 78 | 58 | 9 |
| Better traffic control | 13 | 122 | 77 | 48 | 8 |
| Better education accessibility | 11 | 64 | 70 | 108 | 15 |
| Better employment opportunities | 17 | 88 | 87 | 65 | 11 |
| Increased social security and reduce crime | 32 | 131 | 71 | 29 | 5 |
| Reduced poverty rate | 49 | 101 | 61 | 45 | 12 |
| Increased amount pension upon retirement | 30 | 112 | 84 | 36 | 6 |
| Creates better genes for the next generation | 86 | 103 | 48 | 22 | 9 |
| Lessens pollution to the natural environment | 22 | 70 | 70 | 80 | 26 |

Table 2 Opinions regarding the social, economic and environmental benefits

The 80% of the respondents agreed with the notion that this policy has created gender imbalances between male and female births particularly in the rural parts of China. It is also one of the major consequences faced in Chinese society these days due to the increasingly difficulty for marriage, partially contributed by the male-female ratio (more males than females). This causes some serious social issues like forced abortions or related violations of human rights, partially due to the preference for males over females in rural areas. The highest ratio of nearly 83% is seen regarding this notion; only 5% of the respondents disagreed. This indicates that the majority of the people have reached a consensus on the consequence of this policy (refer to Table 3).

When it comes to the potential economic and social problems such as "create a labor shortage in the coming decades," nearly half of the respondents (48%) agreed with the notion. Over 68% of the respondents agreed that there will be more burdens in terms of elderly care when the singleton generation grow up, since they have normally four parents (two from each side) and at least one baby to raise in one family (see Table 3). These results show that the economic and social impacts or consequences have been commonly perceived and agreed upon by the people of the two regions.

| Question Description | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|----------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------|
| Created gender imbalance due to preference of male births, particularly in rural area | 5 | 12 | 36 | 104 | 111 |
| It created social problems like forced abortions and violation of human rights | 3 | 11 | 32 | 121 | 101 |
| It created labor shortage in the coming decades due to population control | 7 | 46 | 86 | 113 | 16 |
| It created more burden to the elderly care when the child grow up | 1 | 24 | 60 | 136 | 47 |

Table 3 Opinions regarding the social and economic consequences

Furthermore, we conducted T-test to examine whether the factors such as "gender" and "place of origin"would affect respondents' opinions regarding the one-child policy. This test was used to determine the differences of two groups of variables. We used SPSS software for running the test, and the results are seen in Table 4):

| Factor | Sig. | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference |
|-----------------|------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Gender | .973 | .275 | 08207 |
| Place of origin | .087 | .000 | .8387 |

Table 4 T-test of selected factors with other variables

Note: For full test refer to Appendix 2

When we use "gender" as a factor (or variable group), the significant (2-tal) =0.275>0.05, there is no difference between males and females regarding their attitudes towards the policy. When "place of origin" is a factor, the significance of Levene's Test = 0.0807 <0.05, so the variance between the two groups are the same. In addition, significance (2-tail) = 0.000 < 0.05; so there is a difference between Chinese and Taiwanese perceptions of the one-child policy.

Conclusions

According to the survey results, the majority of the respondents, despite their place of origin, are aware of the national population policy adopted in China known as the "One-Child Policy". This indicates a universal acknowledgement of such nation-affecting policies implemented in China. All the respondents were born after the policy's put into effect in 1979, thus they were directly affected by this policy as "singletons" in China, or were their peer's generation in Taiwan who appear to have more than 1 sibling in their family. Nearly all the respondents' parent's generation was not affected by this policy.

Regarding the overall effect of the policy in terms of population control and the overall "benefits" such as parenting cost reduction, increases in education opportunities, and the like; most respondents hold affirmative views. However, more of them tend to disagree with some of the "benefits" that have been projected to couple with the policy; namely, ethnic group unifications (due to the fact that they were exempted from this policy) and more job opportunities for the "singleton generation". Most of them either disagreed or strongly disagreed that this policy actually helped to improve genetic conditions for the "next generation" (the singleton generation). When it comes to reducing environment pollution, their opinions were almost even, with only a slight amount (10 respondents), that were affirmative on this notion.

Indeed, from a country's point of view, Mainland China had to operate population control policy to prevent over capacity. Younglings caught in the age of "one-child policy" timeline, though have agreed with the benefits China received. But to be in their shoes, regardless of how much improvement China has made since 1979, the 'singleton' generation may not want to be a part of the policy they live in, as they will bear the burden to care for their elders and their children in the near future.

As pointed out, the majority of the surveyed respondents agreed that various social problems like forced abortion, social injustice and foreseeable nation-wide problems such as a shortage of labor, as well as elderly relative care have been seen as the outcomes of this "one-child policy" in China. Needless to say

the impacts apply to rural regions of the country where labor intensive work is most needed to sustain the foundation of agriculture necessities, as well as tradition and customs. Downsizing the whole country through policies was deemed an effective way to resolve population issues, but by limiting the policy for a certain period or within districts might have brought about a better outcome.

Last but not the least, the gender of the respondents did not seem to affect their perceptions towards this national policy of China. However, their places of origin did play a role in their judgment, as indicated by the data analysis. Under the "One China-Two System" proclamation made by the Chinese government, how their policy affected the people of the two regions, and how their policies are perceived in Taiwan should also be considered by the top-level policy makers.

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Appendix 1Collected Survey Results

| Question Description | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|----------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------|
| It helps stabilize China's fast growing population significantly | 3 | 32 | 61 | 144 | 28 |
| It helps reduce the parenting costs and burden for average household | 6 | 52 | 91 | 106 | 14 |
| It contributes to the unification of different ethnic groups in China since this policy doesn't apply to the minority ethnic group | 43 | 113 | 87 | 21 | 4 |
| Better health care distribution | 11 | 112 | 78 | 58 | 9 |
| Better traffic control | 13 | 112 | 77 | 48 | 8 |
| Better education accessibility | - 11 | 64 | 70 | 108 | 15 |
| Better employment opportunities | 17 | 88 | 87 | 65 | - 11 |
| Increase social security and reduce crime | 32 | 131 | 71 | 29 | 5 |
| Reduce poverty rate | 49 | 101 | 61 | 45 | 12 |
| Increase amount pension upon retirement | 30 | 112 | 84 | 36 | 6 |
| Creates better genes for the next generation | 86 | 103 | 48 | 22 | 9 |
| Lessen pollution to the natural environment | 22 | 70 | 70 | 80 | 26 |
| Creates gender imbalance due to preference of male births, particularly in rural area | 5 | 12 | 36 | 104 | 111 |
| It strengthens the bond of a family since less children are born within per family | 3 | 11 | 32 | 121 | 101 |
| It creates labor shortage in the coming decades due to population control | 7 | 46 | 86 | 113 | 16 |
| It creates more burden to the elderly care when the child grow up | 1 | 24 | 60 | 136 | 47 |

Appendix 2 T-test run by SPSS

1. Male and female (Gender)

| Gender of respondent | z | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mear |
|----------------------|-----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| female | 150 | 3.0422 | 59239 | .04837 |
| umension male | 118 | 3,1243 | 63125 | 11850 |

Independent Samples Test

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | for Equality of nees | | | - | T-test for Equality of Means | y of Means | | |
|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------|--------|---------|-----------------|------------------------------|------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| | | | | | | , | 3 | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | idence Interval of the Difference |
| | F | Sig. | | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Difference | Difference | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | 1001 | 973 | -1.094 | 266 | 275 | 08207 | .07503 | -22981 | 99990 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -1.086 | 243.499 | 279 | 08207 | .07561 | -23 100 | 98990 |

2. Place of origin (Taiwan and China)

| | | | Inde | spendent S | Independent Samples Test | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|--|--------------|------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------|---|----------------------------|
| | Levene's Test Vania | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | | T | T-test for Equality of Means | y of Means | | |
| | | | | | | , | 2 570 | 95% Confidence Interval of th Difference | a Interval of the sence |
| | F | Sign | 1 | JIP | Sig. (24siled) | Difference | Difference | Lower | Upper |
| X Equal variances assumed | 090 | 2007 | -6.404 | 366 | 000 | -53705 | .08387 | 70217 | -37192 |
| Equal variances not assumed | 0.00 | | -6352 92.251 | 92.251 | 000 | -53705 | 08454 | -,7049 | -36914 |

Appendix 3

Survey Questionnaire - One Child Policy

Disclaimer:

I. Participant's background

Thank you for agreeing to take part in our survey "One Child Policy". The aim of this study is to observe and understand the opinion of people's respondent to this system now operating in China on behalf of Ritusmeikan Asian Pacific University, Japan. This survey should only take 3-4 minutes to complete. Be assured that all answers you provide will be kept in the strictest confidentiality.

| i. raiticipant s background. | | | |
|---|----------------|--------|----|
| 1. Birth year 19 | | | |
| 2. Gender: Male / Female | | | |
| 3. Current Education Level: | | | |
| a. High school | | | |
| b. University degree | | | |
| c. Masters | | | |
| d. Others () | | | |
| 4. Place of Origin/Nationality: | | | |
| a. Mainland China | | | |
| b. Taiwan | | | |
| Number of siblings in your family: | | | |
| a. None (Only Child) | | | |
| b. One | | | |
| c. Two | | | |
| d. Three | | | |
| e. More than four | | | |
| Number of siblings your parents have added toget | ther: | | |
| a. One-Three | | | |
| b. Four-Six | | | |
| c. Seven-Ten | | | |
| d. Eleven-Fifteen | | | |
| e. Others:(specify) | | | |
| II. One Child Policy | | | |
| The "One- Child Policy" is a policy used in China to | stabilize popu | lation | |
| growth. In which a family can have only one child. | | | |
| Have you heard about this policy before taking this | s survey? | | |
| | Yes | / | No |
| | | | |

What are your opinions regarding the "One-Child Policy", please encircle the suitable answer:

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|----------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------|
| It helps stabilize China's fast growing population significantly: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| It helps reduce the parenting costs and burden for average household: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| It contributes to the unification of different ethnic groups in China since this policy doesn't apply to the minority ethnic group: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please encircle your opinion of the implementation of the "One-Child Policy" from a nation's view:

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|----------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------|
| Better health care distribution | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Better traffic control | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Better education accessibility | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Better employment opportunities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | - 5 |
| Increase social security and reduce crime | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Reduce poverty rate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | - 5 |
| Increase amount pension upon retirement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | - 5 |
| Creates better genes for the next generation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Lessen pollution to the natural environment | 1 | 2 | - 3 | 4 | - 5 |
| Creates gender imbalance due to preference of male births, particularly in rural area | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please encircle your opinion of the implementation of the "One-Child Policy" in terms of national economy.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|----------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------|
| It creates labor shortage in the coming decades due to population control: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| It creates more burden to the elderly care when the child grow up: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |