

# Identifying Factors Behind The Decline In Women's Labor Force Participation Rate In China

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**ABSTRACT:** The working rate of Chinese women fell from 73% in 1990 to 64% (CBR) in 2014. Currently, the women's labor force participation rate in China is declining. Therefore, this study will determine what causes the decline of the Chinese female labor force. In the 21st century, the proportion of men and women in jobs has become increasingly unbalanced. The significance of the research is to find out why sex and the proportion of women in the workplace are becoming more and more unequal, and how to change this situation. This paper analyzed 19 papers searched from CNKI. This paper found three factors that account for the decline in women's labor force participation rate in China: Chinese family education, Chinese marriage, and Chinese society.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of China's reform and opening up, there were 31.28 million female workers, but now there are only 610000 left in the 21st century, about 7.5% of the total. Currently, the women's labor force participation rate in China is declining. This article will study why the number of Chinese women participating in labor has decreased in the 21st century, and find out the main factors. This research can let the scholars of this research field have a better and deeper understanding of the reasons behind the phenomenon of women labor force participation rate declining. And it is projected to lay the theoretical foundation for future relevant studies. Existing studies show diverse research outcomes on this topic. Most of the previous studies are from the economic perspective, some of them focus on the social perspective. However, among

them, the papers tend to include theoretical knowledge and do not elaborate in combination with contemporary and historical conditions. This article took "China's female work rate", "China's one-child policy", "China's female marriage" and "China's female native family" as the keywords and searched the articles from 2000 to now on China National Knowledge Internet. Through screening, a total of 20 articles were included in the analysis scope of this paper.

## 2. FACTORS BEHIND THE DECLINE IN WOMEN'S LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE IN CHINA

The specific classification of the papers can be seen in Table 1. For this study, this paper will summarize the factors from three perspectives: family, marriage, and society.

**Table 1.** Analysis of those 19 Paper about Why is the labor force participation rate decreasing.

Number of Paper	Context of Research Topics	References
6	The concept of Chinese family education in the process of growth	[1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6]
6	Gender status in marriage	[7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [12]
9	Specific policies in the institutional environment	[1], [2],[13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19]

### 2.1 The Concept of Chinese Family Education in The Process of Growth

After the implementation of the one-child policy in China, the number of well-educated women in China has increased, so the number of women with higher education in China is increasing all the time [1]. However, the

education that Chinese girls receive from their parents is different from that of boys, which has an unequal relationship.

#### 2.1.1 The Impact of China's One-Child Policy on Girls

China has implemented a family planning policy since

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1979, and basically, all families in China have only one child [2]. It is precise because of this that girls born in the implementation of the one-child stage are considered to be the happiest group of people. Their parents can use all their resources to educate their girls, rather than giving resources to their brothers [3]. At the same time, it also makes parents spend more money on their daughters' education and health, so the number of women who can receive high-quality teaching in China has increased. Also, a girl under the one-child policy is the only generation of girls in Chinese history who can fully have all the love of their parents [4].

### **2.1.2. Education of Chinese Parents**

In modern Chinese families, mothers still teach their young daughters the "marry a good man, not a good career" mantra [3]. Because in the past, Chinese mothers were trained according to the standard of cultivating girls to become good wives and mothers when they grow up, it's no big deal for Chinese girls not to want to study. In terms of educating children, fathers have different requirements for their children. For example, fathers tend to dote on and tolerate girls, but demand that boys be strong from an early age [5]. It is precise because Chinese girls are taught "gender inequality" in childhood that even those children who receive unequal education will continue to stereotype their children when they become parents. It is precisely because of parents' education that children of different genders are aware of the different responsibilities caused by their gender at an early age so that when they choose family and work in the future, they will also reflect on their childhood learning in their own choices [6].

## **2.2. Gender Status in Marriage**

In modern China, men are generally responsible for the family income, while women are responsible for staying at home and dealing with household chores [7]. Even if the wife has a well-paid job, there is no one to take care of the children after she gives birth, so the woman must give up her job and become the caretaker of the children and the family. This leaves the wife unable to work as a member of the family and the husband struggling to provide for the family [8]. There are many factors contributing to this situation, which will be listed in detail below.

### **2.2.1. Men and women under marriage in ancient China**

In ancient times, men occupied a dominant position in society, and patriarchy gradually transitioned to patriarchy. In the patriarchal clan period, the family was dominated by men. At the same time, it also makes men the main productive force. Women's life and work are only limited to the family, focusing on family work and taking care of family members, such as taking charge of housework and childbirth. Since then, women have retreated to subordinate positions in society and family [9].

### **2.2.2. Marriage Relationship Between Parents And Children**

In ancient China, women could not decide on their marriage affairs and could only get married with the permission of their parents. In ancient China, girls lived with their parents before marriage. If their father died, everything in the family would be arranged by the girls' brothers, such as their marriage [9]. Girls are generally not allowed to go out before the age of 15, but they will get married directly at the age of 15. Marriage is for the sake of family succession, not for men and women to like each other. Therefore, many women have become a tool for men to reproduce. Married girls need to listen to their husbands, and their main task is to do housework, have children and take care of the elderly [10].

### **2.2.3. Chinese Women's Family Status After China's Reform**

In the current family, the gender relationship has reached a certain degree of equality. For example, both husband and wife will undertake part of the housework. But women still do more housework than men. Women not only have to work outside the home, but also undertake domestic work in the family but this is considered a normal phenomenon in society [11]. The first is the inequality between men and women caused by traditional ideas. Then, because of the physical and psychological differences between men and women, it is generally believed that women are more suitable to do the housework. Two thousand years of history in China.

### **2.2.4. Family Orientation in The Early Stage of Marriage in China**

There are 70% of Chinese women generally believe that men are the ones who need to provide the family income and an apartment all the time. It's also because women are taught that "if a man can't afford a house, he's not qualified to have a family" [12]. Therefore, a Chinese man will try his best to buy a house in China, where housing prices are expensive, to prove that he is a reliable man who can afford to marry. It also represents the need for modern Chinese women to concentrate on their families rather than their careers. This also leads to the fact that in the post-marital relationship, men are more suitable for responsible for making money, while women are responsible for taking care of the family [7].

### **2.2.5. The Role Changes of Modern Women in The Family**

The family identity of modern Chinese women has always been "daughter", "wife" and "mother" [8]. In the family, women's responsibility for the family has always been greater than that of men. In the hearts of most mothers, children, the elderly and husbands are in the first place, while their own needs are in the second place. Therefore, when the family members whose mothers rank first need help, women will do their best to help the family.

Women have made sacrifices in their careers for the former, such as giving up their jobs [11].

### **2.3. Specific Policies in The Institutional Environment**

In China, the local government is encouraging women to attach importance to their family harmony. The influence of the Chinese government will also have an impact on Chinese society [13]. Chinese society is also drawn by its past. In ancient China, "men are superior to women" was emphasized, so it was difficult for people to change their deep-rooted ideas, and women gradually returned to the direction of family work, which became the choice of most married women in China. This makes the decline in China's female Labour force a reality.

#### *2.3.1. Chinese Women in The 20th Century*

In the early 20th century, in order to let Chinese women go out of their families and carry out social labor. The government has set up "baby nurseries", "nursing homes" and other social institutions to undertake the main work of the family. But, in the late 20th century, during China's economic reform, the government reduced economic subsidies for families with children, which also reduced the number of working women in China. At the same time, it makes it difficult for the women who do not have children and who do have children to find jobs.

#### *2.3.2. Chinese Women in The 21st Century*

Although many people believe that Chinese women workers in the 21st century have more qualifications. However, both society and family have become Chinese women at the same time.

##### 2.3.2.1. Public Support

In China, public support for women is insufficient because women have a heavy burden of care in the family [14]. According to the statistics of China's National Bureau of Statistics, only 2.7% of children under the age of 3 are mainly cared for by nursery institutions during the day, and 63.7% are cared for by their mothers. In addition to taking care of children, married women also devote themselves to taking care of the elderly and patients at home every day. This makes married women spend an average of 120 minutes a day on housework, so many women can't continue their original work, because of their long housework time [2, 15]. This also makes Chinese society not recognize that women and men have the same working ability.

##### 2.3.2.2. Economic Status

It seems that in the family, both men and women, who earn more money, have a greater voice. However, according to the data from China's National Bureau of statistics, economic status and family status are not positively

correlated. Even women's success in the workplace has reduced the gap between men and women in family income [16]. However, the roles and responsibilities of many high-income women or strong women in family life have not changed. It seems that in a family, women are naturally responsible for raising children and taking care of the elderly [17]. Therefore, even in families with a more equal economy, women are still more responsible for the burden of family life than men, so women's limited energy cannot be fully committed to work [18].

##### 2.3.2.3. Social Post

Although Chinese women now have a high status, gender segregation and gender discrimination still exist in the workplace. Even if the occupations that women can be competent for have increased, on the whole, the professional status and number of working women have not been significantly improved [19]. So, modern society is still a male society.

In Chinese society, many jobs require "limited recruitment of men", because they know that women can't devote enough time and energy to the workplace like men [1]. In China, companies need to continue to pay women their wages during their maternity leave, and many women choose to resign from the company directly after taking their leave and go home to take care of their children [19]. It also makes men more likely to be in the workforce than women, because many companies are reluctant to hire a woman.

## **3. CONCLUSION**

In the 21st century, there are three main reasons for the decline in women's work rate in China. First, after the Chinese government removes childcare, Chinese mothers need to resign from their original jobs and join in the work of taking care of children, which reduces the working rate of Chinese women. Second, Chinese women have been in a lower position in the marriage relationship at the early stage of marriage, they need to spend more time on the task of educating their children later than men. Lastly, because the idea of inequality between men and women in ancient China is deeply engraved in the hearts of the people, it is difficult for the Chinese people to change the influence of their inherent ideas, making it difficult for men and women to be equal in work and life. As a result, many women can no longer carry out their original work because of their children after pregnancy. In future academic research, when studying the decline of female labor participation rate, future scholars can focus on the main factors of the decline of female labor participation rate according to the social situation at that time and can summarize and report the cases of several main factors.

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