

Alleviating the problem of declining fertility and ageing population - the country's childcare policy

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Abstract:

This paper mainly to describes how childcare policies have alleviated the decline in fertility and population aging to a certain extent in five countries, Japan, South Korea, Germany, Italy and Iceland. Firstly, Five reasons for choosing these five countries to study childcare. Secondly, it gives a specific explanation of childcare policies, puts forward how the government implements childcare policies in these five countries, and analyzes whether childcare helps to improve the country's fertility rate and alleviate the aging of the population. Finally, it is concluded that childcare policies can alleviate the population problems of the country to a certain extent, but also increase the economic pressure on the people. The childcare policy studied in this article is mainly to Provide a specific solution to some countries with population problems, which can appropriately use childcare policies to alleviate the problems of declining fertility and population aging.

Keywords: childcare, fertility, age population

1. Introduction

Population problem is a general term for all kinds of contradictions arising in the process of population. It generally refers to various problems affecting the survival and development of the population. It includes the problems of survival and development arising from the interaction between population and society, population and economy, population and nature. In essence, the problem of population is the mutual adaptation between human production and reproduction and material material production and reproduction. Population growth and economic growth are interdependent and mutually restrictive. If the relationship between the two is not coordinated, it will hinder a

country's prosperity and social progress. At present, most developed and developing countries are facing the population problem, so solving the population problem is a problem that these countries attach great importance to. Child care policies can help mitigate fertility and population aging, but child care policies alone cannot solve a country's demographic problems. In my work, I mainly studied the help of child care policy to the country to solve the population problem and the drawbacks of this policy.

2. Main Body

"Is childcare a waste of money for the nation?"
The main theme of this article is that childcare can

partly mitigate the problems of declining fertility and ageing populations. The study selected five geographically diverse countries: Japan, South Korea, Germany, Italy and Iceland. The reasons for choosing these five countries are firstly that they are all developed countries; Second, they all have declining fertility rates and aging populations; Third, they are medium-sized countries with a land area of 100,000 to 500,000 square kilometers. The fourth is in the top 40 in terms of real GDP in 2022. These are the main reasons for choosing these five countries.

Previous studies have proposed many policies to alleviate the population, such as strengthening the labor force, improving the pension insurance, etc. (Lee and Lee 2013) This paper mainly analyzes the maternity subsidy extended by childcare to provide a more comprehensive solution. The significance of this study is that childcare can effectively alleviate the economic and social pressure on families to have children, so that more families will be willing to have children. Firstly, introduce the specific childcare policy; secondly, explain the impact of childcare; Thirdly, analyze whether the childcare is helpful to the fertility rate; Finally, this report will find out whether childcare can help population problems and put forward relevant policy recommendations.

The child care policy promotes the healthy physical and mental development of children. During this period, it can effectively promote the development of children's emotional, cognitive and social abilities. It can also help parents balance work and family. With the development of modern society, more and more parents need to go out to work, so the childcare policy can alleviate the economic and social pressure of both parents to a certain extent. The government will formulate relevant policies, and the society will reduce the discrimination or unfair treatment of new parents. Child allowances were initially established as preventive measures to protect families with children from falling into positions of economic disadvantage, and were designed to increase the welfare of families and children. Likewise, maternity leave and parental leave programmes were created to protect employees, promote gender equity, or achieve the effective use of the labour force. Thus, we can understand that the programmes originally sprang from and were a part of labour market or employment policies (Hantrais 1996).

At the same time, the government will also prepare child allowances. The government will also prepare some subsidies for the family accordingly, and give the father and mother of the newborn in the family certain leave to balance the family. Third, child care can promote social and economic development. The childcare policy will provide some convenient services for children and also contribute to social and economic development. It can provide em-

ployment opportunities for the society, such as the emergence of childcare institutions, but also laid the foundation for children's preschool education, and provided talent security for future economic development.

Akashi City of Japan launched the "Five free policies to support childbirth" in 2011. Firstly, from primary school to middle school, children's school meals are free. Second and above children's kindergarten care fee is free. thirdly, free medical care for children up to the age of 18. Fourthly, public facilities such as playgrounds built for children are free to use. Finally, free diapers for the fifth child up to the age of 1. In Germany, the government provides a series of subsidies and benefits to encourage childbirth: firstly, all working mothers can apply for maternity allowance, from 6 weeks before the birth to 8 weeks after the birth, a total of 14 weeks (if the birth is premature or multiple births can be extended to 12 weeks after the birth, a total of 18 weeks), the amount of maternity allowance is the average after-tax hourly wage of 13 weeks before the birth; parental leave is a common welfare for parents. Within the age of three, parents can stop paying to stay at home with their children. At the same time, during this period, parents can apply to the federal government for parental leave subsidies, the standard is 65% to 67% of the average net income before leave, the minimum guarantee is 300 euros per month, and the subsidy limit is 1800 euros. The third child pension, until the child reaches the age of 18, each child can receive a child pension of 250 euros per month, if the child continues to pursue higher education after the age of 18, the child pension payment period will be extended to 25 years old. The fourth housing children's fund can help alleviate the economic burden brought by the rapid rise in house prices and rents in the housing market, and the German government also provides 12,000 euros per child housing children's fund for families with poor living conditions and ordinary incomes. In order to encourage the birth of children, South Korea mainly provides generous maternity benefits and subsidies, including child care subsidies, including the education and childcare expenses of children over the age of five will be raised from 350,000 won per month to 550,000 won. Secondly, strengthen health care services, including the provision of quality pre-pregnancy, pregnancy and postnatal health care services, as well as increase the obstetrical and pediatric medical strength. Thirdly, the implementation of flexible working system and support for returning to work after childbirth, for parents with children aged 8 or under the second grade of primary school, each of the paid parental leave of up to one year, the parental leave can be divided into three times. Fourthly, when applying for housing, families with children under the age of 2, including pregnancy, can get more priority opportunities to buy homes

through the “Limited supply of newborns” project. Firstly, Italy provides a one-year maternity leave for pregnant women, during the pregnancy and maternity leave, women enjoy 90% of the full salary, in addition, women also have the right to suspend work during maternity leave, if they decide to return to work, the employer needs to provide a safe and suitable working environment. Italy also provides an optional five-day nursing leave for fathers. Secondly, the vaccines required during pregnancy are provided free of charge to women in their second pregnancy, and post-natal care and counselling are provided free of charge after delivery. Thirdly, Italy provides a one-time delivery allowance, second, after the baby is born, parents can apply for a child living allowance, in addition, each more child in the family, will get a higher dependency subsidy. Fourthly, Italy provides free kindergarten education, providing basic education for children between the ages of 3 and 6, second, Italy also provides grants to cover the cost of primary and secondary school for children, in addition, Italy also provides university scholarships for families and tuition waivers for low-income families. Since 2003, Iceland has had a unique childcare system in the world. Firstly, couples are given nine months ‘leave to take care of newborns, and parents who work full time can get 80% of their salary during the parental leave. Secondly, Iceland provides a large number of nurseries and kindergartens, and provides financial subsidies to care for families to cover related expenses; The third is the provision of female employment, which provides women with more benefits and support, making it easier for them to combine work and family responsibilities. In 1991, a new day-care act was passed in Iceland. This law has further established the educational and pedagogical aspects of institutional day-care. The concept “day-care institution” was changed into “playschool”. A new curriculum was also established where children’s play was defined as an educational tool. In addition, the job title of professionally trained staff was changed from “nanny” (*fóstra*) to playschool teacher (*leikskólakennari*). The regulation concerning family day-care (which was earlier under the jurisdiction of municipalities) was established in 1992 as part of the Social Services Act and is regulated by the Ministry of Social Affairs (Broddadóttir et al. 1997). It can be concluded that the development of day-care in Iceland has been deeply connected with the idea of education. (Olafsson 2015)

3. Conclusion

According to the policies implemented by the governments of the above five countries, it can be concluded that the fertility rate of the five countries has increased to a certain extent. The fertility rate of Japan is only about

1.3%, while the fertility rate of Akashi City has reached 1.6%, which is one of the highest fertility rates in Japan. According to this data, it can be concluded that childcare policies can alleviate population problems to a certain extent. For Germany, because the social pressure is too great, the corporate elimination system is too serious, people do not have the energy to have children, even if there is a very good birth policy. For South Korea, because the cost of living is too high, the pressure of the workplace is too great, the growth of Korean women’s ideas, more and more women because of the family is not valued and refuse to have children, so South Korea’s fertility rate is getting lower and lower. The fertility rate needed to maintain a constant population is 2.1, compared with Italy’s total fertility rate of 1.25. This is due to a decline in the number of Italian women aged 15-49 and pressure to buy a home, making people reluctant to have more children. But for Iceland as a country, childcare policy doesn’t seem to make much difference. According to possible analysis, because Iceland is a country with a small population, most people are closely related, and there is even an APP to check whether people are related to each other, which has also reduced the fertility rate of Icelanders to a large extent.

Through reading and consulting materials and literature, it is concluded that the above childcare is helping families to ease the financial burden of childbearing and raising children. At the same time, considering the welfare of both parents, it effectively protects the rights and interests of pregnant women and the harmony of the family, and helps children to live in a happy and healthy environment. To sum up, a series of subsidy policies, to a certain extent, promote family equality, encourage family reproduction, and provide equal educational opportunities, so that children can grow up with a good economic foundation and social help, but also improve the parents’ fertility willingness, further increase the fertility rate and slow down the population aging problem.

There are other very serious problems in society that are preventing fertility from rising. Increasing childcare means that the state must raise taxes, which to some extent adds to the economic pressure on people, causing them to spend more time at work, but also does not alleviate the demographic problem. Therefore, my policy suggestion is that the state should reduce the welfare of childcare policy to a certain extent, to reduce people’s tax pressure and life pressure on the other hand. In East Asian countries, the state needs to promote the status of women, formulate laws and regulations to make the status of women and men equal, the state and society need to do not discriminate against women, try to give women a safe living environment, so that women have the right to choose whether

to give birth.

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