

The impact of parenthood on the gender division of paid and unpaid work in China

It is widely acknowledged that gendered division of labors exists all over the world. Women are supposed to take more burden of housework and childcare, parenthood increases women's time spent on unpaid work and decreases the time in paid work, while men's time use is hardly impacted by parenthood. In Europe, the division of paid and unpaid work between couples is structurally unequal (Cunha & Atalaia, 2019). Women underrepresent in the labour market, 12% less than men (EU commission, 2017), and they share more unpaid work when they are employed. Even in more egalitarian societies, like Scandinavian countries, women still share more burden of unpaid work. In Asia, the division of paid and unpaid work is more distinct. In Japan, there is a sharp gendered division of unpaid work that women do more than 75% of the housework and caregiving, while men usually have heavy workload and long working hours in the paid work (OECD, 2017). Similarly in South Korea, the labour participation rates of women are at low level, and they reduce working hours and even withdraw from the labour market after having children, and the unequal share of unpaid work increases significantly after having children regardless of the employment status of the women (Kim, 2019).

This unequal gendered division of paid and unpaid work is regarded as a classic explanation for the low fertility rates in those societies (Goldscheider et al., 2015; McDonald, 2000.). Women who take dual burden of paid and unpaid work reduced their fertility intentions. However, this unequal share of labours seems not having a significant association with low fertility in China (Yang, 2017), although Chinese women are taking dual burdens from heavy workload from labour market and from household. Different from its neighbors Japan or Korea, the labour participation rate of women in China is relatively high and the working time in paid work is also long. But previous socialist policy and central planning economy provided a women-friendly working environment including free childcare organized by state-owned companies. Women were encouraged to participate in labour market and contribute to the social development like men. Additionally, the family planning policy led to a small family size that many households only had one child that limited the burden of childcare for the mothers. Also, the retirement age for women in China is rather early (at age of 50 or 55) which makes grandparenthood available.

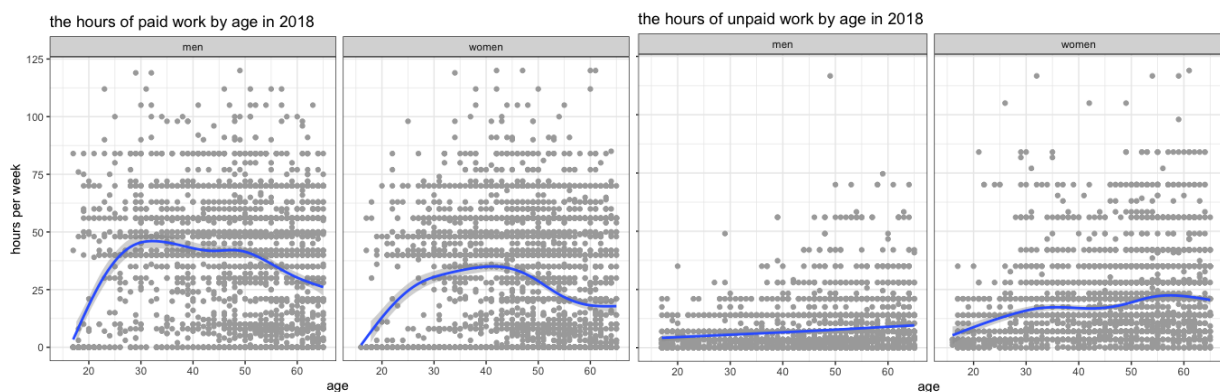
However, there are a lot of new challenges along with the market reforms and policy changes that threaten the previous gender egalitarianism in China. Firstly, there is growing gender discrimination and motherhood penalty in the market-oriented economy (Zhou, 2019). Secondly, the rising cost of childcare makes mothers sacrifice their time in paid work but to take care the children. The development of local economies weakened the labour activities of women who had very young children (Zhao, 2018). Thirdly, the two-child policy and recent three-child policy exerts more pressure for working women than men. The existing traditional ideology of gender role from Confucian culture conflicts with the egalitarian modern value from socialism and feminism in current China. It is unclear how Chinese young couples have adapted to this changing circumstance. How do couples divide paid and unpaid work after the birth of children, especially after the birth of the second child?

Previous literature focuses on women's economic status of motherhood but seldom take men's division of labours into account as a jointed family decision. And these studies use the data

before 2016 that could not response to the new changes like new family planning policy. In this paper, we consider the divisions of paid work and unpaid work of couples as an integral decision for the families to face the new changes and to welcome the newborn babies. We will test whether there is a more gendered division of paid and unpaid work to what extent such divisions can be influenced by the parenthood in the post two-child and towards three-child period. Another contribution of this work is that we treat this division of labours dynamically. We compare the changes of division in paid and unpaid work between couples before and after having children and we further compares the changes by parity. Also, we noticed that the workload at paid work and unpaid work plays an important role as the divisions, and the workload at work will impact the division of unpaid work.

This paper will use a longitudinal survey, China Labor-force Dynamic Survey (CLDS) to answer the question, how couples divide their time in paid and unpaid work in recent China and how the parenthood impacts this division. This survey uses a longitudinal design to trace the labour activities of working-age population every two years in China. We use the most recent two waves in 2016 and 2018 to investigate whether there is a new change of gendered division of labours in China. There are 7029 individuals in total and 1520 couples participates in both waves. It asked the current number of children for women whose age is under 52 and time use in paid and unpaid work for both wife and husband which allow us to compare the changes of division of labours by the parity of birth.

Figure 1 The workload of paid and unpaid work for men and women in different ages in 2018



We can see from figure 1 above that there is smaller difference in working hours of paid work compared to the unpaid work of women and men in China. Both men and women work for long hours per week, while women retired earlier than men. There is only a small increase of unpaid work for men by age while women spend as twice as time in unpaid work compared to men especially when they get older.

We compared the workload of paid and unpaid work for wife and husband in paired data and calculated the share of women's work using their working hours per week divided by the total hours spent by the couples. And we use four categories to distinguish the parity from birth of the first child, the second child, the third and more children and we compared these groups to the couples who did not have a new birth of child from 2016 to 2018. We use the changes of the share of women's work at paid and unpaid work in 2016 and 2018 as dependent variables in two separate models and take the different transitions of parenthood as independent variables. We controlled total workload of paid and unpaid work in the family and the division of work in 2016. The preliminary regression results show that the first child did not decrease the share of paid work for wife, but the second child decreased the share of paid work for women largely

(-0.39, $p < 0.001$). For the unpaid work, the birth of first child increased 0.15 ($p < 0.001$) in proportion of share in unpaid work for women, while the birth of second child or the third child did not show large differences. These findings will be further examined by different models, and we will take household income, living arrangement with grandparents, the type of job into account in the next step.

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