



南開大學
Nankai University

Do Leave Policies meet family needs in China: COVID-19 challenges and opportunities

Prof. Fan Wu

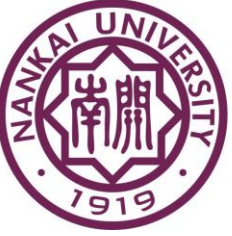
Department of Social Work and Social Policy, NanKai University

laurelwu915@163.com

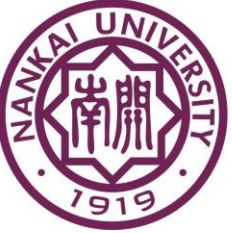


南開大學
Nankai University

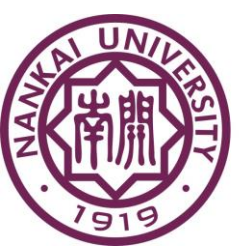
- Current COVID-19 situation in china:
 - After an average of two months of quarantine (mostly from the end of January to the end of March of 2020) and a semester of online class for students (from March to June), now Chinese people's lives have gone back to normal.
 - COVID-19 in china has been basically under control by the end of April.



- Now still maintaining epidemic prevention and control measures around the whole country:
 - Monitoring temperature in public places.
 - Wearing a mask in an enclosed space.
 - Implementing semi-closed management in schools and universities.
 - Keeping social distance in restaurants and cinemas, etc.
 - Free or paid PCR testing when needed(nearly 20 dollars).

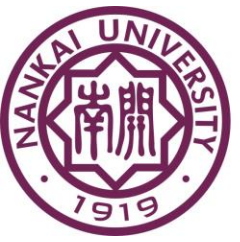


- During the pandemic, there is no change in China's leave policy (only a few which mostly temporary)
- Leave policy in china is more affected by two-child policy and family changes in recent years.
- My presentation will put the COVID19 into the whole context.



CONTENTS

- Background: family changes and two-child policy
- What we are doing : family policy (leave policies) responses?
- New challenges in the time of COVID-19
- What we should do next?



南開大學
Nankai University

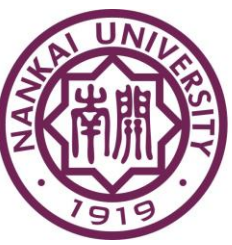
Background:

Family Changes and Two-child Policy in China

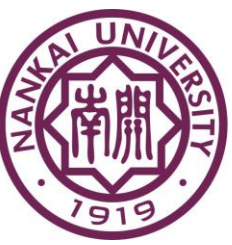


□ China:

- With the most population in the world(1.38 billion)
- With the largest number of families in the world(about 402 million)
- With the smallest family size in developing countries (average family size is, 4.79 in 1975,3.96 in 1990 and 3.02 in 2012)
- Almost a hundred million one-child families(universal two-child policy from the end of 2015)
- Ageing process (255 million in 2020, elderly care)



- Emergence and rapid growth of new family types
 - Grandparents-grandchildren families(left-behind families)
 - Single-parent families
 - 23.9 million in 2010
 - DINK families
 - a total 3.44 million in 2010
 - Families of unwed youth aged over the average marriage age
 - Premarital cohabitation(2000-2012:32.6%;1990-1999:12.1%)



南开大学
Nankai University

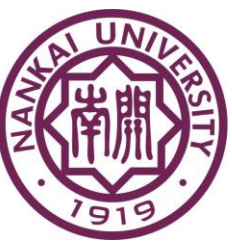
□ Weakened family functions

- Lack of time and human resources in family

- Caring function

 - Childcare deficit

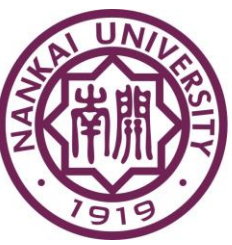
 - Elderly care deficit



□ Impacts of universal two-child policy

□ At the macro level

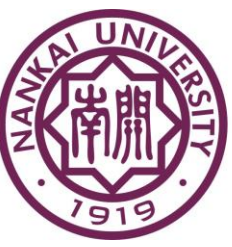
- To delay the time to reach peak of population size (Zhai, Li & Chen, 2017),
- To relieve the shortage of labor forces (Wang & Ge, 2016)
- Not to change the ageing process (Luo, Cheng & Zheng, 2016)
- A small effect on TFR (Chen, 2016; Yang, 2016): the number of births increased in the past two years, but less than expected.



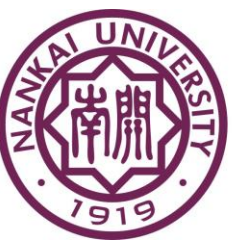
□ At the micro level

- To change decision-making mechanism of childbearing.
- A very complicated process to decide whether to have the second baby or not .





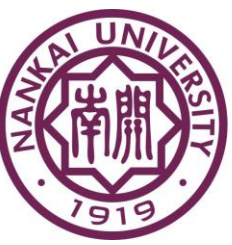
- A national survey (National health and family planning commission, 2016)
 - The main reasons why the Chinese people do not want the second child are respectively financial burden (74.5%), too much involvements (61.1%) and lack of caregivers (60.5%).



南開大學
Nankai University

What We Are Doing :

Family Policy(**leave policies**) Responses



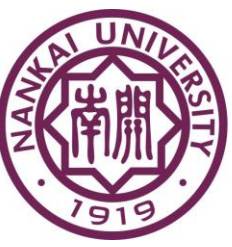
- After two-child policy, “Population and Family Planning Law ” has been revised and set two new rules:
 - To extend maternity leave
 - 98 days at national level
 - At provincial level, all provinces have extended the length of maternity leave by 30 days to 90 days(from 128 days to nearly one year).
 - To clarify paternity leave
 - At provincial level, the length of paternity leave is from 7 days to up to 30 days(most provinces are 15 days).



南开大学
Nankai University

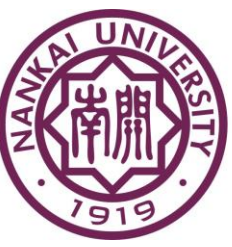
□ Aiming to provide formal childcare

- Trying to provide formal care for children under 3 years old.
- Needs assessments conducted by National health and family planning commission.



- In May 2019, the general office of the State Council issued “Guidance on Promoting the Development of Care Services for Children under 3 years old”
 - By the end of 2025, a care service system covering urban and rural areas will be basically established.

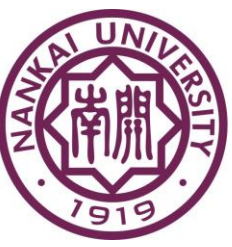
- In Sept. 2020, Shanghai government issued “Three-year plan of care services for children under 3 years old in Shanghai(2020-2022)”
 - By the end of 2022, the coverage rate of public care agencies for children under 3 in Shanghai will reach 85%.



南开大学
Nankai University

□ New family policy including the leave policies

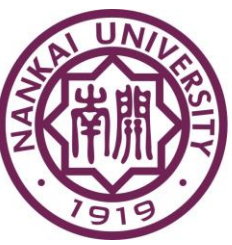
- Mainly including taxation, cash allowance, housing support, maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, care leave, provision of formal childcare, support for working parents etc.



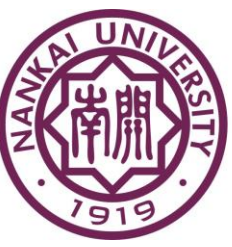
- By now, totally 57 policies directly or indirectly related to family issues in China at national level (covering implicit and explicit family policy)

Table 1 Distribution of Family Policies in different Fields (frequency/proportion)

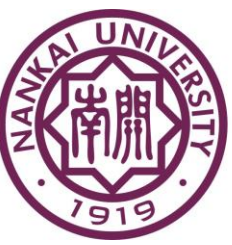
Types of Social Policies	Financial Support	Employment	Children	Family-planning	Others	Total
Particular Law	0	0	0	1 (100%)	0	1 (1.8%)
General Law	0	3 (21.4%)	7 (50%)	0	4 (28.6%)	14 (24.6%)
Particular Regulation	5 (71.4%)	0	0	2 (28.6%)	0	7 (12.2%)
General Regulation	2 (10%)	5 (25%)	11 (55%)	2 (10%)	0	20 (35.1%)
Social Program	3 (20%)	0	7(46.7%)	5 (33.3%)	0	15 (26.3%)
Total	10 (17.5%)	8 (14%)	25 (44%)	10 (17.5%)	4 (7%)	57 (100%)



- **Policies for children** :to protect children and to improve the well-being of children, especially to protect vulnerable children including orphans, the disabled, and those with AIDS.
- **Policies for poor families**: to offer a safety net for low-income families through institutional arrangement(low-rent housing system, maternity insurance and cash for home-based elderly care).



- **Policies for one-child families:** compensation (allowance) for those birth-control families, especially for rural families with single daughter or two daughters.
- **Leave policies:**
 - Maternity leave, paternity leave,
 - Childcare support especially after the two-child policy, **stronger support for family to encourage the family having the second baby,**
 - Encouraging enterprises to give paid or unpaid care leave when their elderly parents are in hospital.



南开大学
Nankai University

- A comparative study of leave policies
 - China
 - EU Average
 - OECD Average
 - Selected countries
 - Two dimensions: fertility, support level for family
 - France, Germany, Portugal, Sweden, Japan, United States

Table 2 Paid Leave Entitlements Available to Mothers, 2016

	Paid maternity leave			Paid parental and home care leave reserved for mothers		
	Length, in weeks	Average payment rate (%)	Full-rate equivalent, in weeks	Length, in weeks	Average payment rate (%)	Full-rate equivalent, in weeks
OECD average	10.5	—	—	30.2	—	—
EU average	21.8	—	—	43.8	—	—
France	16.0	94.2	15.1	26.0	14.5	3.8
Germany	14.0	100.0	14.0	44.0	65.0	28.6
Portugal	6.0	100.0	6.0	24.1	59.6	14.4
Sweden	12.9	77.6	10.0	42.9	57.7	24.7
Japan	14.0	67.0	9.4	44.0	59.9	26.4
United States	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
China	14.0+	100.0	14.0	—	—	—

Data are from OECD Family database(<http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>)

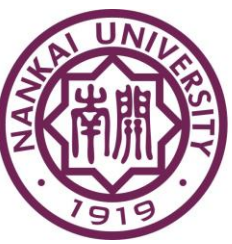


Table 3 Paid Leave Entitlements Available to Fathers, 2016

	Paid paternity leave			Paid parental and home care leave reserved for fathers		
	Length, in weeks	Average payment rate (%)	Full-rate equivalent, in weeks	Length, in weeks	Average payment rate (%)	Full-rate equivalent, in weeks
OECD average	1.0	—	—	7.1	—	—
EU average	1.4	—	—	4.9	—	—
France	2.0	92.8	1.9	26.0	14.5	3.8
Germany	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.7	65.0	5.7
Portugal	5.0	100	5.0	17.3	43.6	7.5
Sweden	1.4	61.2	0.9	12.9	77.6	10.0
Japan	0.0	0.0	0.0	52.0	58.4	30.4
United States	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
China	2.3	100	2.3	—	—	—

Data are from OECD Family database <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>;

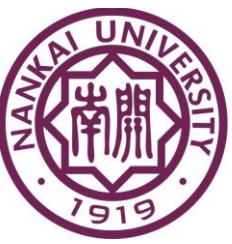


Table 4 Enrolment Rates for 0-5 Years Old in Pre-school Education ,2014

	0-2 years old		3-5 years old
	enrolment rates	Average hours in a usual week	enrolment rates
OECD average	38.1	29.8	83.8
EU average	36.5	30.3	85.0
France	51.9	32.3	100.3
Germany	32.3	—	97.0
Portugal	47.9	37.6	87.9
Sweden	46.9	30.8	94.3
Japan	30.6	—	91.0
United States	28.0 (2011)	—	66.8
China	4	—	77.6

Data are from OECD Family database <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>;

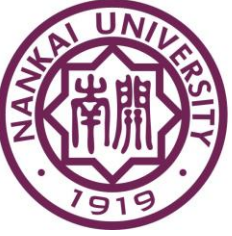
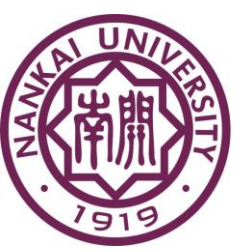


Table 5 Days of paid annual leave (working days)

	Statutory minimum	Public holidays
OECD average	—	—
EU average	—	—
France	25	11
Germany	20	9-13
Portugal	22	12
Sweden	25	11
Japan	10	15
United States	0	10
China	5	11

Data are from World Bank "Doing Business: Measuring Business Regulation" Database;

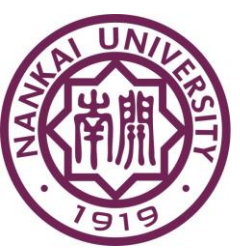


南開大學
Nankai University

- Where China is?
- Beyond the average level
 - Length of maternity leave
 - Payment for maternity leave
 - Payment for paternity leave

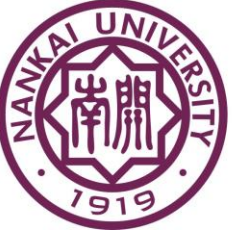


- Reach the average level
 - Length of paternity leave
 - Flexibility in use
 - Entitlement (limited coverage)
 - Formal childcare provision for 3-5 years old
 - Cash allowance only for vulnerable families



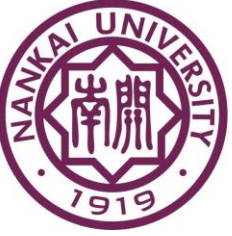
南開大學
Nankai University

- Under the average level
 - No paternal leave
 - No tax relief/refund for normal families with children
 - Lack of childcare agencies for children under 3 years old
 - Weak support for family-work balance



南開大學
Nankai University

New challenges in the time of COVID-19



南開大學
Nankai University

- No survey but some typical cases chosen from mass media or by online interview to explore the main problems Chinese family meet in the time of COVID-19 pandemic.



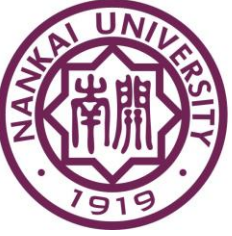
- **Case 1:**
- Location: Beijing
- Family: wife (Auditing Bureau staff,40), husband(private enterprise employee), only-child (2 years old)
- **Problem:** The couple stay home with the child during quarantine, in April they get back to work but childcare agency still close, nobody can help the family care the child.
- **Solution :** 《关于因防控疫情推迟开学企业职工看护未成年子女期间工资待遇问题的通知》（Human resources and Social Security Bureau of Beijing）：Enterprises should arrange employees to take care of their children at home based on flexible working time.

<http://liuyan.people.com.cn/threads/content?tid=7278787>



- **Case 2:**
- **Location:** Wuhan
- **Family :** Fangfang(girl, 11)live with mother (dad died) and grandparents. In February mother and grandparents were diagnosed with COVID-19 .
- **Problem:** Fangfang is a close contact and cannot be sent to relatives and friends' homes. Mother worried that Fangfang would be cross-infected if staying the hotel for quarantine, so finally Fangfang stay home alone.
- **Solution :** Mother bought a lot of frozen dumplings, and asked friends to help her to order or deliver meals for Fangfang.

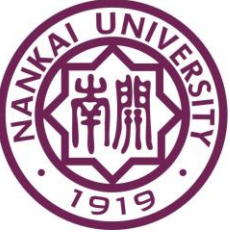
<https://new.qq.com/rain/a/20200219A06WMZ00>



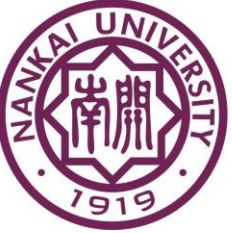
- **Case 3 (online interview) :**
- **Location:** Tianjin
- **Family :** child (girl, 3), wife (private enterprise manager,44), husband (doctor in a public hospital).
- **Problem:** Husband had been working during the epidemic outbreak, in the end of March wife get back to work. The family has been hiring a babysitter from rural area in Hebei. However at that time the babysitter wasn't allowed return to Tianjin.
- **Solution:** The child are taken care of by grandparents temporarily. Now the babysitter has returned to the family.



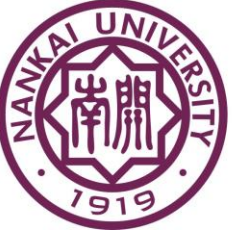
- **Case 4 (online interview) :**
- **Location:** Xuchang city(Henan province)
- **Family:** wife(civil servant,40),husband(policeman,42),twin(one boy,one girl, 8).
The family lives with grandparents during COVID19 pandemic.
- **Problem:** During the pandemic, the couple almost work everyday even at night and in weekends, and the twins are cared by grandparents. The biggest difficulty is the grandparents can't supervise homeschooling very well.
- **Solution:** Parents and children communicate through video phone call every day .



- During the pandemic, only a few policy actively respond the family's demands , which mostly are immediate and temporary.
 - One policy at national level (Provincial governments must implement the policy) by Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security in February 2020
 - “Stabilizing labor relations and support enterprises’ resumption of production during the COVID19 prevention and control) 《关于做好新型冠状病毒感染肺炎疫情防控期间稳定劳动关系支持企业复工复产的意见》
 - Enterprise should “help to solve the actual difficulties of employees meet” and “encourage flexible working time”.
 - Not mandatory, no detailed regulation.



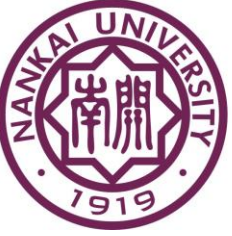
- Totally, 4 cities have their own care policy response during pandemic:
 - Beijing
 - Wenzhou, Ningbo and Hangzhou (Zhejiang province)
 - To encourage enterprises arrange one of parents stay home take care of kids based on flexible working time, provide care subsidies as well.



- A few enterprises have formulated their own policies, such as:
 - A property enterprise in Wuhan allows employees to take their children to work by opening an area within the company where children can learn and play.
 - During the closure of primary and secondary schools, a high-tech company in Shanghai encouraged dual-worker families to work online at home and take care of their children at the same time.

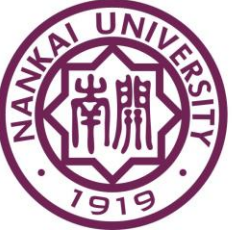


- Some Facts and characteristics:
 - Only a few policy responses across the country in the time of COVID-19.
 - Not mandatory and lack of detailed provisions.
 - Mainly to encourage enterprises to solve their own difficulties in caring for children by employees during the pandemic.
 - Mainly the families themselves to solve the difficulties in care
 - Very strong support for childcare from grandparents.
 - The occupation of parents has a great influence on the needs of childcare during the pandemic.
 - If parents lose their jobs during the pandemic and have no income, the problems faced by families will be even more serious.



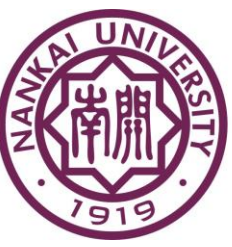
南開大學
Nankai University

- No matter whether there is COVID19 or not, families have universal needs in childcare /elderly care, which should be included in the future policy reform to provide effective support for normal family.

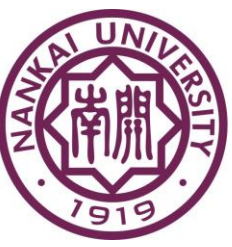


南開大學
Nankai University

What we should do next?

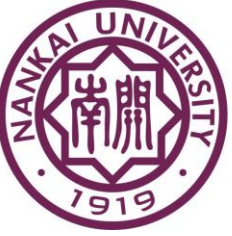


- Taking Chinese context into account
 - Cultural factors are crucial.
 - Only Extending length of maternity leave will reinforce mother's burden and have a negative influence on their career development(motherhood penalty).
 - If parental leave will be introduced, we must consider the risk that care responsibility of fathers might be transferred to the mothers.
 - How to encourage the father's involvement in childcare by policy is a big challenge.



南開大學
Nankai University

- **Strengthen gender equality**
 - Leave policy should be more gender-equality oriented.
- **Direct support for home childcare**
 - Very strong intergenerational support in China
 - Especially childcare giving from grandparents
- **The quality of formal childcare** for children under 3 is very important.



- Implications from international experiences
 - **Key support:** work-family balance(paid work and care responsibilities)
 - Gender equality : relatively low birth rate + low level of gender equality
 - Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and Portugal
 - Formal childcare is more effective than parental leave.
 - Working mothers are more likely to use childcare services (Eurostat, 2014).