

Dignity Defense Model : A Study on the Structural Mismatch in Employment of Female University Students in China and Its Shaping Mechanism on the Decline in Fertility Rate

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Abstract

Millions of female university graduates in China face a severe shortage of standardized "two-day-office jobs" each year, a structural mismatch that exacerbates employment pressure. Based on empirical data from the Anhui provincial civil service examination, this paper proposes a "dignity-defense-oriented reproductive decision-making model": Faced with the gap between high career expectations and reality, female university students, out of dignity defense and risk aversion to maternal punishment, prefer survival strategies such as "slow employment" and the "civil service exam craze" to marriage and childbearing, thus significantly suppressing the overall birth rate. To address this dilemma, it is recommended to reconstruct the university employment quality evaluation system and disciplinary structure, introduce national policies to reduce maternal punishment, and promote a shift in the macro-market towards women's self-indulgent consumption.

Keywords

Employment of Chinese female university graduates; university student employment; dignity-defensive reproductive decision-making model

Introduction

Background

Currently, female university graduates in China are facing a significant structural employment dilemma. According to a 2022 survey on university graduate employment, the rates of job offers and contract signings for male graduates were 54.4% and 22.2% respectively, while the corresponding figures for women were 41% and 10.4%, showing a significant multiple difference. (Zhilianzhaopin, 2022) A survey conducted by members of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in 2023 further revealed that nearly 50% of unemployed graduates in the province were female liberal arts graduates, with accounting majors accounting for 6.2% and Chinese language majors for 4.5%, while the market supply of positions corresponding to these majors was significantly insufficient. Some scholars even believe that currently, less than 50% of female university graduates in China may find jobs directly related to

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their majors, and even fewer decent jobs.([Jiangsu Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference,2023](#))

This paper argues that female university students' employment preferences regarding weekends off and office work environments may be a key endogenous variable leading to employment mismatch. Taking a 2023 questionnaire survey conducted by members of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) at two universities in Nanjing as an example, data shows that nearly 40% of female university graduates preferred organizational forms such as large and medium-sized state-owned enterprises and industry leaders, which typically have relatively standardized labor systems and job security. Given the insufficient attention paid to the correlation mechanism between such employment preferences and employment difficulties in existing research, and the significant gap in relevant empirical data, this study aims to deeply analyze the tension between female university graduates' employment expectations for weekend-office office jobs and the actual employment pressure through systematic surveys and empirical analysis. Based on this, this study will further construct a theoretical model to deduce the potential transmission effects of such employment preferences on fertility intentions and birth rates.

literature review

The literature review in this paper is mainly divided into three parts.

The first part is a literature review on the employment difficulties faced by female college students in the United States. Currently, female college students in the United States occupy a dominant position in the higher education system, accounting for as much as 60% of recent graduates. However, this group also faces severe structural employment difficulties in the labor market. According to a research report released in 2023 by the US data research institution LIGHTCAST, based on 125 million occupational profiles, during the statistical period, as many as 47% of American female college students had "non-degree-dependent" jobs (i.e., jobs that do not require a college degree), while the corresponding proportion for male college students was only 37%. Further employment data by major category (see Table 1) shows that the difference in employment quality between genders exhibits significant disciplinary heterogeneity: in STEM fields, the employment performance of male and female college students is relatively balanced; however, in humanities and applied disciplines such as social sciences, business administration, public administration, psychology, and education, the actual employment quality and matching degree of female college students are significantly weaker than that of male students.([Scott Bittle,2023](#))

Table 1. 2023 LIGHTCAST Report: Actual Employment Situation of Male and Female College Students in Different Majors in the United States

major	Probability of underemployment in first job within five years of graduation (female)	Probability of underemployment in first job within five years of graduation (male)	Gender gap
engineering	19%	19%	0%
Computer Science	twenty two%	20%	-2%

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Communication Studies and Journalism	25%	twenty two%	-3%
Social Sciences	31%	twenty four%	-7%
Mathematics and Statistics	32%	25%	-7%
Foreign languages, literature and linguistics	28%	25%	-3%
English Language and Literature	30%	26%	-4%
Physical Sciences	32%	27%	-5%
Business, Management, and Marketing	34%	27%	-7%
Visual and Performing Arts	34%	28%	-6%
Public Administration and Social Sciences	39%	31%	-8%
psychology	39%	31%	-8%
Education	38%	31%	-7%

In response to the above phenomenon, existing literature mostly conducts attribution analysis from the perspective of the professional selection mechanism in higher education. Studies have shown that American universities generally implement a highly free professional selection system and advocate a decision-making model based on personal interests. Influenced by this mechanism, female college students are more inclined to choose non-STEM majors, which leads to them facing higher structural frictions and employment barriers in the labor market; in contrast, male college students show a stronger preference for STEM majors, thus gaining a relative advantage in the job market. (Aidan Li,2025)(Attewell P, Witteveen D,2023)

The second part is a literature review on motherhood punishment. “Motherhood punishment” refers to the systemic disadvantages and career development obstacles that women encounter in the labor market due to their responsibility for childbirth and family care. Li Q et al. (2024) systematically reviewed 24 empirical studies on “motherhood punishment” in the Chinese context from 2013 to 2024, and pointed out that working mothers in China mainly face four dimensions of punishment effects: declining income level, reduced labor force participation rate, career development obstacles (such as slow promotion, forced transfer to low-return positions) and physical and mental health damage. Its deep-seated causes not only include traditional gender norms, solidified family role division, human capital interruption caused by childbirth and statistical discrimination by employers, but also the combined effects of work-family conflict and China’s unique institutional and cultural factors (such as intergenerational care support, policy environment and urban-rural dual structure). (Li Q, Zhong X,2025) In terms of quantitative measurement of motherhood punishment, Zhang M et al. used the event study method to conduct longitudinal tracking of first-time mothers based on panel data from the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) from 2011 to 2017. By comparing the labor market performance of men and women over several

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years before and after childbirth (covering core indicators such as income, labor participation rate and working hours), the study confirmed the significant existence of maternal punishment: after having their first child, the relative income of Chinese women decreased by about 21.4% compared with that of men. It is worth noting that although this punishment effect is still significant in China, its magnitude is significantly lower than that in most developed countries, such as Austria and Germany (about 65%) and the United States and the United Kingdom (about 40%). This reflects that China's specific family support system and labor market structure have a certain buffering effect on maternal punishment. (Zhang M, Wang Y, et al. 2024)

The third part is a literature review on the impact of female college students on the birth rate. Regarding the relationship between women's education level and fertility rate, Cai Z et al.'s research based on data from the American Community Survey (ACS) shows that for every 10% increase in income for highly educated women, their number of children only decreases slightly by 0.01 to 0.02, indicating that the inhibitory effect of income growth on fertility rate is limited. (Cai Z, Winters J V. 2024) Existing literature mostly explains this from the perspective of "opportunity cost" theory: women's higher education level will simultaneously increase their expectations for quality of life and the "quality" of their children, thereby increasing the comprehensive cost of childbirth and raising children, leading to a decline in the willingness to have children. However, existing research often ignores the "expectation rigidity" of women when facing employment difficulties. Xu K's research shows that contemporary female college students generally refuse to be compatible with lower expectations when facing the gap between reality and employment. Even if the actual employment does not meet expectations, they would rather choose to become "NEETs" and actively withdraw from the labor market. This proactive unemployment behavior caused by the frustration of employment expectations significantly prolongs the period of women's economic independence, thereby having a profound inhibitory effect on the overall birth rate. (Zhouxiaomeng, Feixintong, 2022)(Xu K, Zhang D, Wang M. 2025)

Structural Calculation of the Supply Size of Female College Graduates in China and " Double-weekend Office" Positions

Calculation of the Supply Scale of Female College Graduates in China in 2025

This article's estimate of the size of Chinese female university graduates in 2025 covers three academic levels: associate degree, bachelor's degree, and master's degree. Given the relatively small number of doctoral graduates and their highly specific employment paths, they are not included in the statistics and discussion of this article.

According to publicly available data from the Ministry of Education in 2022, women accounted for 55.0% of all undergraduate graduates. Based on the research findings in relevant literature regarding the "continuous increase in the proportion of women among college graduates in recent years," this paper estimates the following characteristics of female graduates in 2025: approximately 3.55 million female undergraduate graduates (56.5%), approximately 2.58 million female associate

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degree graduates (54.3%), and approximately 585,000 female master's degree graduates (50.0%).
(State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China,2025)

According to relevant research, the proportion of Chinese female college students choosing humanities and social science majors is more than double that of male college students, while the proportion choosing engineering majors is lower than that of male college students. This result is similar to that of American female college students, and it is also reflected in employment.(Xu Minbo, Zeng Meng,2024)

Reference data sources for recruitment websites

The empirical data in this paper mainly relies on web crawling technology to obtain data from representative mainstream recruitment platforms in China (such as Zhaopin.com , 51job.com, BOSS Zhipin, and Lagou.com), covering the period from 2022 to 2024.

The original dataset underwent standardization, deduplication, and structuring to ultimately extract the online recruitment supply and demand database required for this paper. This data can dynamically and objectively reflect the job demand characteristics of the domestic labor market in recent years.

According to data from China's National Bureau of Statistics, the average weekly working hours in China are 48.2 hours. This indicates that most jobs in China offer only one day off per week. Therefore, if a company offers a two-day weekend, it will most likely state this in its job posting.

Traditional office jobs specifically refer to administrative or similar positions, which are relatively few in number. This article defines office jobs more broadly, specifically as positions that require sitting in an office and are not sales-related.

The relevant raw data is as follows:
Table 2 .2022-2024 Job postings offered to recent graduates by recruitment websites
2022 : Job postings offered to recent graduates by recruitment websites

project	Number of positions	Average lower limit of monthly salary	Average monthly salary ceiling
Recruiting general job positions with a college degree or above	168322	5687	9216
We are hiring office workers with a college degree or above who work on weekends off.	17970	5455	8789
Hiring office staff with a bachelor's degree and weekends off.	6130	5927	9 481
We are hiring office staff with master's degrees and weekends off.	2 90	8 494	1 3619
Recruiting office workers with a college degree or above, working on weekdays and weekends off.	1 50352	5 484	8 786
We are recruiting office workers with a bachelor's degree or above and a non-weekend work schedule.	5 2110	6 200	9,853
Office jobs with weekends off for male	5 03	5 580	9 153

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graduates only			
Office jobs with weekends off for female graduates only	1 070	5 706	9 343

Table 2023 Job postings offered to recent graduates by recruitment websites

project	Number of positions	Average lower limit of monthly salary	Average monthly salary ceiling
Recruiting general job positions with a college degree or above	89580	5 917	9 530
We are hiring office workers with a college degree or above who work on weekends off.	1 2833	5 662	9 167
Hiring office staff with a bachelor's degree and weekends off.	5 581	6 407	1 0352
We are hiring office staff with master's degrees and weekends off.	3 34	9 320	1 6302
Recruiting office workers with a college degree or above, working on weekdays and weekends off.	76747	6 101	9 808
We are recruiting office workers with a bachelor's degree or above and a non-weekend work schedule.	39063	7 213	1 1427
Office jobs with weekends off for male graduates only	302	5 902	9 792
Office jobs with weekends off for female graduates only	439	6 274	1 0342

Table 2024 Job postings offered to recent graduates by recruitment websites

project	Number of positions	Average lower limit of monthly salary	Average monthly salary ceiling
Recruiting general job positions with a college degree or above	1 89433	6 661	1 0609
We are hiring office workers with a college degree or above who work on weekends off.	1 6222	6 121	9 844
Hiring office staff with a bachelor's degree and weekends off.	6,947	6,945	1 1145
We are hiring office staff with master's degrees and weekends off.	4 096	9 746	1 5250
Recruiting office workers with a college	173211	6,490	1 0262

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degree or above, working on weekdays and weekends off.			
office workers with a bachelor's degree or above and a non-weekend work schedule.	7 9942	7 057	1 1056
Office jobs with weekends off for male graduates only	50	6 183	9 904
Office jobs with weekends off for female graduates only	2 17	7 420	1 1715

The characteristics of online recruitment positions targeting recent graduates are mainly reflected in three dimensions: supply structure, educational premium, and gender restriction. First, in terms of the supply and demand structure, "office positions with weekends off" show a significant structural scarcity in the overall recruitment demand for those with a college degree or above, remaining at a very low range of 8.56% to 14.33% between 2022 and 2024. Although the absolute number of office positions with weekends off for those with higher education (Master's degree) was extremely scarce in 2022 and 2023 (290 and 334 respectively), it experienced an explosive growth of 4,096 positions in 2024.

Secondly, in terms of salary characteristics, the salary premium brought by higher education is strong, with the upper and lower limits of monthly salary for master's degree holders in positions with weekends off significantly exceeding those of bachelor's and associate's degree holders over the three years. However, if we compare with those with equivalent education, we can find that the average salary of bachelor's degree holders in "non-weekend, non-office positions" is slightly higher or the same as that of bachelor's degree holders in "weekend, office positions" in most years. This reflects that weekends off and a comfortable working environment have a certain substitution effect on cash salaries in the labor market.

Finally, looking at the dynamic evolution of gender-restricted positions, the number of office jobs with explicit gender restrictions and weekends off has shrunk dramatically over the past three years. Specifically, the number of "male-only" positions plummeted from 503 in 2022 to 50 in 2024, while the number of "female-only" positions also decreased from 1,070 to 217. However, it is worth noting that among these remaining gender-restricted positions, the average salary range for "female-only" positions has been higher than that for "male-only" positions for three consecutive years, and showed a more significant salary advantage in 2024.

The estimated number of office jobs with weekends off that China can provide each year.

Data from recruitment websites

Table 3 2022-2024: Average Statistics of Job Positions Targeting Fresh Graduates with Associate's Degrees or Higher from Recruitment Websites

project	Total number of positions	Number of office positions with weekends off	Total percentage of office positions with weekends off	The percentage of office jobs with two days off per
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				week for master's degree holders
2022	1 68322	1 7970	1 0.67%	0.2 %
2023	8 9580	12833	1 4.32%	0.3 %
2024	1 89433	1 6222	8.5 %	2.1%

The sample distribution reveals a significant bias in online recruitment data: the majority of job postings come from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), while the proportion of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) or those with a high degree of non-marketization is severely low. This is primarily because large and medium-sized enterprises typically have their own independent recruitment ecosystems, making it difficult for third-party platforms to fully observe the increase in these high-quality positions. Under this data constraint, the proportion of office jobs with weekends off is only 8-14% , confirming the extreme scarcity of such standardized positions in the real labor market.

Meanwhile, statistics on positions requiring higher education (graduate degree) show that while they command a significant salary premium, their proportion in the total pool is negligible. This indicates that the rational expectation of university graduates seeking high-quality positions through higher education is facing a high risk of disappointment. With the continued increase in the supply of labor at the higher education level and the relative shrinkage of high-quality positions, the downward mobility of graduate students towards undergraduate and associate degree positions is becoming increasingly common. This not only exacerbates the employment squeeze on lower-educated groups but also leads to a downward shift in the competitive focus and structural involution in the overall recruitment market.

Estimation of the number of two-day-off office jobs from different sources

The "two-day-office-per-week" office jobs that are steadily released in China each year mainly come from the following five sectors: civil servants and public institutions, central and state-owned enterprises, large private enterprises (represented by internet companies), foreign-invested enterprises and international organizations, and small and medium-sized private enterprises.

Civil service positions are comprised of central and local levels. Aside from some frontline law enforcement and duty positions, the vast majority are standardized non-manual office positions. In 2025, the central government and its affiliated institutions planned to recruit 38,100 civil servants through the national civil service examination, with approximately 70% of these positions limited to recent graduates. Textual analysis of the job restriction conditions in the national civil service examination recruitment guidelines shows that standard two-day-off office positions account for approximately 75%. Based on this, it is estimated that the national civil service examination releases approximately 19,000 such positions for recent graduates annually. Related data shows that in 2026, the total number of local civil servants recruited through provincial civil service examinations in more than 20 provinces across the country reached 125,901, with approximately 70%-80% of these positions open to recent graduates. Considering the characteristics of grassroots positions and making structural adjustments, it is estimated that local civil service positions can provide approximately 90,000 two-day-off office positions annually.

Recruitment in public institutions is characterized by significant localization and decentralization, with each legal entity possessing independent recruitment authority, making [Type here]

precise statistics difficult. In 2026, the number of publicly recruited positions in various public institutions nationwide was estimated at 200,000 to 250,000, with approximately 50% to 65% open to recent graduates. Because this system includes a large number of non-traditional office positions such as teachers (education) and medical staff (medical), after excluding these professional and technical positions, the estimated annual number of office positions with weekends off in Chinese public institutions is approximately 100,000 to 150,000.

state-owned enterprises (central and state-owned enterprises) also exhibits a decentralized characteristic. According to data disclosed by the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, in 2022, state-owned enterprises nationwide recruited over 760,000 college graduates (of which central enterprises absorbed 368,000).

(Administration Commission of the State Council, 2022) Given that central and state-owned enterprises are mostly concentrated in the energy, manufacturing, and construction sectors, their job portfolios have a high proportion of front-line blue-collar workers. If the number of two-day-off office positions provided by central enterprises is converted with a relatively high conversion weight of 50%, and assuming that the total number of state-owned enterprise recruitment has remained dynamically stable in recent years, the final estimated range for the number of two-day-off office positions that central and state-owned enterprises can provide annually is 300,000 to 500,000.

The total number of positions in large private enterprises is also difficult to observe directly, but it can be estimated through representative industry data. Large Chinese internet companies typically recruit around 150,000 new graduates annually . Due to their concentrated R&D and management functions, the proportion of weekend office positions is calculated using a high-sensitivity range (50%-70%). Other large private enterprises typically offer 300,000-400,000 new graduate positions annually . Constrained by traditional industry characteristics, their weekend office positions are estimated with a flexible ratio of 30%-60%. Overall, the estimated number of weekend office positions recruited annually by large private enterprises in China ranges from approximately 110,000 to 350,000.

Foreign-invested enterprises and international organizations have relatively small recruitment scales, absorbing an average of 50,000 to 150,000 Chinese college graduates annually. Based on the highly standardized white-collar job characteristics of foreign-invested enterprises, the estimated supply of their two-day-office office positions is approximately 30,000 to 100,000.

While small and medium-sized private enterprises (SMEs) have a large number of jobs, the proportion of office-based positions with weekends off is generally low. According to the "2026 Campus Recruitment White Paper" by 51job, a Chinese recruitment website, SMEs with fewer than 500 employees contributed 68.7% of the positions for recent graduates. Combined with data from the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, a total of 12.681 million positions were offered in the spring of 2026. If we assume, as is customary, that campus recruitment accounts for 60% of the total annual recruitment, the total number of recent graduate positions in SMEs is approximately 4-5 million. Referring to the big data distribution characteristics of the online recruitment market, the absolute number of office-based positions with weekends off in SMEs is estimated to be between 400,000 and 1 million.

The final statistical table is as follows:

Table 4. the range of office jobs with weekends off available in China each year

civil servants	public institutions	State-owned	foreign companies	medium and large	Other small and	Summarize
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		enterprises		private enterprises	medium-sized enterprises	
110,000	100,000 - 150,000	300,000 - 500,000	30,000 - 100,000	1.1- 350,000	400,000 - 1,000,000	1.05-2.21 million

Results and Discussion

This section systematically reviews and calculates the three core dimensions of data affecting the employment of current female college graduates:

First, on the supply side, the 2025 cohort of female university graduates in China exhibits both a high base and a high level of education. It is estimated that approximately 3.55 million women will hold bachelor's degrees, 2.58 million will hold associate's degrees, and 585,000 will hold master's degrees. With the advancement of gender equality and the overall improvement in women's education levels, this group demonstrates a stronger desire for professional self-actualization, and their employment expectations are generally anchored towards standardized, high-welfare modern white-collar positions.

Secondly, on the supply-side constraints, empirical results from online recruitment big data show that "office jobs with weekends off" that perfectly match employment expectations are in significant structural scarcity in the overall labor market.

Finally, in terms of total quantity calculation, the total number of "two-day office positions" released annually across different systems and levels in China has narrowed to between 1.05 million and 2.21 million.

Given that the supply of these positions faces competition from both genders across society, female university graduates encounter a severe structural oversupply dilemma in the standardized labor market. This paper argues that the structural mismatch between the high career aspirations of female university graduates and the scarcity of standardized positions is a deep-seated institutional and market factor hindering their successful employment. This structural unemployment problem is not simply a matter of supply and demand imbalance, but rather a product of the massification of higher education, institutional barriers in the labor market, and micro-level gender psychology. This provides a solid practical foundation and theoretical prerequisite for the subsequent introduction of the difference-in-differences (DID) method to empirically test recruitment data within the system and for constructing a "dignity-defensive reproductive decision-making model."

Correlation Analysis of Mismatch Between Expectations of Job Characteristics and Employment Performance of Female College Graduates

Analysis of the Mismatch Effect of Employment Expectations for Female Graduates Based on the Difference-in-Differences Method

Empirical Evidence on Women's Preference for "Two-Day Office" Positions Based on Data from Anhui Provincial Civil Service Examinations (2022-2025)

To verify the strong preference of Chinese female university students for standardized "office-with-days-office" positions in their career choices, this paper uses micro-level application data from the Anhui Provincial Civil Service Examination (provincial exam) from 2022 to 2025 for empirical analysis. It should be noted that in 2022, the examination dates for various provinces across the country were staggered, allowing candidates to apply multiple times across provinces, resulting in a generally high competition ratio in the initial period. However, since 2023, many provinces across the country have implemented a unified examination time (joint examination system), limiting candidates' opportunities for cross-provincial re-selection, leading to a policy-driven decline in overall application enthusiasm in subsequent years. Against this backdrop of macro-institutional change, a deeper analysis of the competitive landscape of gender-restricted positions can more accurately capture the true career anchoring behavior of female graduates. Data analysis shows that female candidates' preference for " double-weekend -office" positions is strongly confirmed in the following three dimensions:(In this article, the term "double-weekend office positions for civil servants" refers to job positions that do not require frontline law enforcement duties.)

Table 5. the Anhui Provincial Civil Service Examination from 2022 to 2025

Table of Anhui Provincial Civil Service Examination 2022 Registration and Written Examination Admission Scores

project	Number of positions	Average competition ratio	Average score required for interview
All positions	3 225	5 4.72	6 7.23
Recent graduates can apply for the positions.	2689	59.78	6 7.61
Office jobs with weekends off	2031	63.55	68.07
Office jobs that do not have weekends off	658	48.13	66.12
Female-only office jobs with weekends off	5	108.8	70.39
Female-only non-weekend	1 3	4 9.1	6 8.09

office jobs			
Office jobs with weekends off for men only	38	27.25	64.92
Office jobs for men only, no weekends off	2 80	2 7.22	6 4.98
Office work position with no restrictions on hours or weekends off.	263	128.5	7 0.28
Office work position with no restrictions on weekends off.	3 6	1 59	7 0.46
Office jobs with weekends off in the city	341	97.35	70.79

Table of Anhui Province Civil Service Examination 2023 Registration and Written Examination Admission Scores

project	Number of positions	Average competition ratio	Average score required for interview
All positions	3 458	2 1.85	6 7.40
Recent graduates can apply for the positions.	2 881	2 4.37	6 7.84
Office jobs with weekends off	2044	2 7.63	6 8.85
Office jobs that do not have weekends off	837	1 5.97	6 5.10
Female-only office jobs with weekends off	0	-	-
Female-only non-weekend office jobs	1 5	1 6	6 6.67
Office jobs with weekends off for men only	3 0	8.53	6 6.11

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Office jobs for men only, no weekends off	1 95	1 1.69	6 4.21
Office work position with no restrictions on hours or weekends off.	2 35	5 4.73	7 0.27
Office work position with no restrictions on weekends off.	3 9	2 7.03	6 7.47
Office jobs with weekends off in the city	758	34.58	70.10

Table of Anhui Provincial Civil Service Examination 2024 Registration and Written Examination Admission Scores

project	Number of positions	Average competition ratio	Average score required for interview
All positions	4 110	5 4.89	6 4.46
Recent graduates can apply for the positions.	3438	59.57	64.92
Office jobs with weekends off	2 669	6 4.58	6 5.58
Office jobs that do not have weekends off	7 69	4 2.23	6 2.59
Female-only office jobs with weekends off	11	56	66.27
Female-only non-weekend office jobs	1 5	5 4.3	6 4.27
Office jobs with weekends off for men only	4 6	2 8.91	6 3.73
Office jobs for men only, no weekends off	2 72	2 9.01	6 1.49

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Office work position with no restrictions on hours or weekends off.	1 71	1 66.96	6 7.25
Office work position with no restrictions on weekends off.	4 64	5 0.19	6 3.26
Office jobs with weekends off in the city	1026	82.71	67.12

Table of Anhui Province Civil Service Examination 2025 Registration and Written Examination Admission Scores

project	Number of positions	Average competition ratio	Average score required for interview
All positions	4 117	2 5.23	6 5.72
Recent graduates can apply for the positions.	3 571	2 6.61	6 6.03
Office jobs with weekends off	2 585	3 0.16	6 7.01
Office jobs that do not have weekends off	9 86	1 7.36	6 3.36
Female-only office jobs with weekends off	5 3	5 3.11	6 8.02
Female-only non-weekend office jobs	4 3	2 2.05	6 4.60
Office jobs with weekends off for men only	8 2	3 4.16	6 7.29
Office jobs for men only, no weekends off	3 30	1 2.03	6 2.36
Office work position with no restrictions on	1 59	7 7.89	6 8.11

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hours or weekends off.			
Office work position with no restrictions on weekends off.	twenty four	1 9.97	6 4.65
Office jobs with weekends off in the city	1 020	3 5.69	6 8.05

Based on empirical data from the Anhui Provincial Civil Service Examination over the past four years, gender-specific positions exhibit a significant "asymmetric" competition in the weekend office job market. Horizontal comparisons show that female candidates are far more concentrated and face greater competition for these positions than male candidates: in 2022, the average competition ratio for "female-only" weekend office positions reached 108.8, with the minimum interview score jumping to 70.39, while the corresponding "male-only" positions had a competition ratio of only 27.25 and a minimum interview score of 64.92. Vertically, even after the implementation of the joint examination policy, this preference remains strong. In 2024 and 2025, despite a significant increase in recruitment for "female-only" weekend positions, the average competition ratio remained high at 56 and 53.11 respectively, and the minimum interview score consistently remained above 66. This directly reflects the extreme overcrowding among women for weekend office positions, and their continued pursuit despite the diversion of candidates to other positions.

Regarding intra-group preferences for job attributes, women and men exhibit drastically different career choice logics. Within the "women-only" job pool, "office jobs with weekends off" significantly outranked "office jobs without weekends off" in terms of cut-off scores and competition ratios. In 2025, the cut-off score for weekend-off positions (68.02 points) far exceeded that for non-weekend-off positions (64.60 points), with a competition ratio 2.4 times higher. Conversely, men showed significantly lower sensitivity to work environment and weekend-off attributes. In 2024 and 2025, there was almost no significant difference in competition ratios between the two types of men-only positions, and there were even instances where non-weekend-off positions had slightly higher competition ratios. This stark contrast in data statistically confirms that the composite attribute of "office jobs with weekends off" has a very high utility weight for female candidates, while it is not a primary consideration for male candidates.

examination schedule in 2023 further validated the robustness of the aforementioned career preference mechanism. While the unified examination led to a sharp drop in the overall provincial average competition ratio and a precipitous decline in the competition ratio for positions without weekends off, those with weekends off in office settings demonstrated remarkable resilience. In particular, urban office positions with weekends off, which are the main source of female applicants, saw their minimum interview score only slightly adjusted by 0.69 points despite a more than doubling of the number of available positions. This phenomenon indicates that Chinese female university graduates, when choosing jobs within the system, exhibit a highly consistent and stable preference for office positions with weekends off, transcending macroeconomic policy fluctuations and changes in job supply. This rigidity in scores and competition, maintained even under

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institutional constraints, provides robust micro-data support for constructing a "dignity-defensive employment model."

Empirical Analysis Based on Difference -in-Differences (DID) Method

To more rigorously identify female college students' explicit preference for "office jobs with weekends off" and to eliminate interference from other unobservable confounding factors, this paper introduces the difference-in-differences (DID) method.

The implementation of a unified provincial civil service examination (joint examination system) in many provinces across China in 2023 brought an external policy shock, disrupting the traditional pattern of staggered examination times and multiple applications across provinces. This policy significantly increased the opportunity cost of applying across provinces, leading to... The competitive landscape of the provincial civil service examination in 2023 underwent structural changes (the average competition ratio across the province plummeted from 54.72 to 21.85). If female college students have a strong and rigid preference for "office jobs with weekends off," then when faced with a large-scale diversion of applicants due to the joint entrance examination policy, the application popularity of such positions should show strong "resistance to decline" or a reverse reservoir effect; while positions lacking this attribute will see their competition intensity collapse significantly in sync with the overall market.

Table 6 Model Aspects and Calculation Methods

project	definition
Treatment group (Treat=1)	Office positions with weekends off available for female college students = Office positions with weekends off exclusively for women + Office positions with no restrictions on three aspects (women, women, and children) with weekends off.
Control group (Treat=0)	The total number of non-weekend office positions across the province is used to depict the overall market competition environment for non-weekend office positions.
Time variable (Post)	Take 1 for 2023-2025 and 0 for 2022.
Outcome variable	ln (average competition ratio). The competition ratio of the processing group is weighted and combined according to the number of positions, and a simple average is not used.

each treatment group is weighted by the number of positions; $\ln(\text{competition ratio}) = \alpha + \beta_1\text{Treat} + \beta_2\text{Post} + \delta(\text{Treat} \times \text{Post}) + \varepsilon$

The relative competition ratio increased from 2.66 times in 2022 to 4.13 times in 2025, indicating that the overall competition for processing groups relative to non-weekend office positions has increased.

Table 7 of difference-in-differences results

index	2022 (before processing)	Average values for 2023–2025 (after processing)	Changes/DID Results
Treatment group: ln (average competition ratio)	4.853	4.451	-0.403
Control group: ln (average competition ratio)	3.874	3.123	-0.751
DID interaction item δ	-	-	0.349
Relative change ($\exp(\delta)-1$)	-	-	41.7%

Table 2. DID results with 2022 as the year before processing and 2023–2025 as the year after processing.

The results showed that the log competition ratio in the treatment group decreased by 0.403, from 4.853 in 2022 to an average of 4.451 from 2023 to 2025; while in the control group it decreased by 0.751, from 3.874 to 3.123. Because the control group showed a larger decrease, the DID interaction term was 0.349.

After indexing the coefficient, the competition ratio of the treatment group relative to the control group increased by approximately 41.7%. This means that, compared to 2022, the two-day-office office positions available to female university students after 2023 will be more competitive than the total non-two-day office positions.

Table 8. changes by year

Later years	Women can apply for a two-day weekend competition ratio	Total non- weekend competition ratio	Relative competition ratio	Logarithmic DID relative to 2022	Changes relative to 2022
2023	54.73	15.97	3.43 times	0.253	28.7%
2024	160.25	42.23	3.79 times	0.354	42.5%
2025	71.70	17.36	4.13 times	0.439	55.1%

Table 3. Annual DID Results (with 2022 as the base year)

Looking at the annual figures, the relative changes in 2023, 2024, and 2025 were +28.7%, +42.5%, and +55.1%, respectively. The continuous increase in the relative competition ratio indicates that the trend of increasing relative attractiveness of office positions with weekends off is ongoing.

This empirical result shows that the pursuit of the core security attribute of "weekends off + [Type here]

office" by female test takers has a high degree of cross-cycle stability, making them spontaneously act as a "reverse reservoir" for the overall population flow when facing external crises.

Using 2023 as a dividing point, this paper merges the "women-only two-day-office office positions" and "three-no-restriction two-day-office office positions" into a single set of two-day-office office positions available to female university students, using all non-two-day-office office positions as a control group. Logarithmic difference-in-differences results based on the average competition ratio show that the Treat×Post interaction coefficient is 0.349. Under descriptive comparisons with other conditions unchanged, the competition ratio of the corresponding treatment group relative to the control group increased by approximately 41.7%. Looking at the annual changes, the ratio of the two competition ratios increased from 2.66 times in 2022 to 4.13 times in 2025. This indicates that after 2023, the competition for two-day-office office positions available to female university students relative to all non-two-day-office office positions has increased.

Through a double-differences model with dual filtering, the study successfully ruled out the systemic macroeconomic trend of a cooling trend in the 2023 joint entrance examination, confirming that the specific composite attribute of "office jobs with weekends off" exhibited extremely strong demand stickiness under policy shocks. This stickiness directly reflects, at the macro level, the unshakable "dignity defense" preference of Chinese female university graduates in their career choices. Even in the face of significant policy changes and shifts in the competitive environment, female candidates maintained a stable preference for this type of job, profoundly reflecting their core value orientation in their career decision-making.

Micro-level data on the employment difficulties of female college students in China

The following are some micro-level data reflecting the employment difficulties faced by female college graduates in China in recent years.

In January 2026, Henan Agricultural University (a top 200 university in China) in Henan Province, China, recruited 10 full -time student counselors (a unique profession in China, where the government stipulates one counselor for every 300 university students, responsible for all student affairs). The requirements included a master's degree and membership in the Communist Party of China (a relatively high requirement). Ultimately, 2,580 men and 6,664 women applied, meeting the eligibility criteria .

In January 2026, Xuchang University in Henan Province, China (ranked among the top 500 universities in China) , recruited 11 full-time student counselors, requiring a master's degree and membership in the Communist Party of China. Ultimately, 444 people applied for 6 male counselors and 1,112 people applied for 5 female counselors .

In April 2026 , Shanghai, China, recruited community workers (temporary government jobs with meager incomes). Some positions, which were limited to women, attracted more than 300 applicants for a single job.

2025, Hangzhou Binjiang District recruited auxiliary police officers (temporary police workers with no personal law enforcement power and meager income). One position was restricted to women, and 329 candidates who passed the review competed for one position.

Expected Utility Function for Employment of Female University Students in China

To explain the employment dilemma faced by Chinese women regarding their expectations for high-quality, weekend-office jobs, as previously observed, we can quantify the trade-off between female university students and "slow employment/taking civil service or postgraduate entrance exams" versus "taking a grueling job" using the following expected utility comparison formula, based on the von Neumann-Morgenstein expected utility theory (EUT).

Expected Utility Function for Employment of Chinese Female College Students

$$EU_{stay} = \sum_{t=0}^T \delta^t [U_{leisure} + \theta \cdot P_{success}(t) \cdot U_{future_job}] - C_{study}$$

$$EU_{work} = \sum_{t=0}^T \delta^t [(1 - \lambda) \cdot U_{low_job} - \beta \cdot D_{psych}]$$

Rational decision-making conditions: Female college students will choose "delayed employment/civil service exam/graduate school exam" only if and only if they are in that situation $EU_{stay} > EU_{work}$

Formula explanation:

1. EU_{stay} **Expected utility of slow employment/ exam preparation**
2. $U_{leisure}$ The positive effects of leisure and psychological buffering. In an environment free from workplace exploitation , individuals gain emotional value and physical and mental well-being benefits.
3. $P_{success}(t)$ The probability of successfully passing the civil service exam/graduate entrance exam or finding a good job at a given time. This is a function that accumulates over time. t
4. U_{future_job} The extremely high lifelong utility brought by high-quality future jobs (within the public sector/large companies with weekends off). This is the core motivation for them to wait.
5. θ Confidence in the future. The stronger the family support and the better the educational background, θ the higher the confidence level, and the more willing the individual is to gamble on the future.
6. C_{study} The direct costs of exam preparation (materials fees, training course fees) and the psychological pressure from peers who are already working.
7. EU_{work} **Expected benefits of condescending to work in a sweatshop**
8. U_{low_job} The meager material utility of jobs with only one day off per week, low pay, and no social security. Since the salary is barely enough to survive, its marginal utility is extremely low.
9. λ Workplace Risk Loss Rate. Jobs with only one day off per week often come with extremely high layoff rates, the risk of unpaid wages, and health depletion, λ resulting in significant losses and drastically reducing actual take-home pay.
10. D_{psych} The psychological gap leads to a loss of dignity. For highly educated women, engaging in low-end, repetitive labor can cause significant cognitive dissonance and feelings of shame, β amplifying this psychological distress.
11. δ^t Time Discount Factor. Represents the present value of future money and happiness.

[Type here]

This formula reveals a harsh reality: **as long as U_{future_job} The benefits of working within the system/a good job are substantial enough, and D_{psych} If the sense of shame about going to a sweatshop is strong enough, then the expected utility of "doing nothing" will far outweigh that of "busy doing nothing".**

In the current employment environment, U_{low_job} single days off and low wages are drastically reduced, while λ the risks of layoffs and D_{psych} psychological distress are amplified. Therefore, rational female college students will decisively choose EU_{stay} to "slow down their employment" to buy an option for a better future, rather than wasting their youth and dignity in a sweatshop job.

Theoretical Derivation of the Dignity-Defensive Fertility Decision-Making Model

Dignity-Defensive Fertility Decision-Making Model

Building upon the empirical results of the previous discussion on the gender supply structure and standardized job capacity in higher education, this paper innovatively proposes the "Dignity - Defense Fertility Decision Model" (DDFM) , aiming to elucidate how micro-individual employment choices are transmitted to macro-level population risks. This model reveals how, against the backdrop of structural mismatch in the labor market, the risk coping strategies of female university graduates evolve into a "defensive survival mode," ultimately exerting a significant inhibitory effect on population reproduction. Its inherent evolutionary mechanism and logical closed loop are mainly composed of the following three dimensions.

First, a profound "structural clash" has emerged between the awakening of modern ideals and the constraints of job supply. With the release of the benefits of higher education for women, female university graduates have undergone a modern transformation in their class identity and gender consciousness, manifesting in a strong, rigid demand for "office jobs with weekends off" that symbolize independence, respectability, and institutionalized security. However, at the macro level, the capacity of such standardized positions has clear limitations. This structural mismatch between high modern career expectations and the limited supply of institutionalized jobs constitutes the logical starting point of the "dignity defense model."

Secondly, faced with structural barriers in the labor market, the rational risk aversion of female university graduates has given rise to an "involutionary expression" of micro-defense strategies. To avoid non-standardized exploitation, gender discrimination, and potential "motherhood punishment" in secondary labor markets, this group has not chosen to compromise downwards, but rather has adopted strategies such as "slow employment," "suspended employment," "craze for government-affiliated positions," and extreme aversion to single- day-off jobs . From the perspective of rational choice theory, these behaviors are not essentially passive escapism, but rather a "dignity defense mechanism" constructed by women to safeguard their professional dignity and prevent career interruption.

Finally, the rigidity of marriage matching standards and the "compensatory suppression" of fertility intentions break the explanatory path of traditional family development theory. Traditional theory holds that individuals return to the family for compensation when they are frustrated in the external market, but this model reveals a reverse alienation path: as career expectations rise,

women's class expectations for mate selection and the marriage matching mechanism undergo a rigid leap in sync. In the absence of stable, standardized jobs to ensure economic independence, and out of extreme vigilance against the risks of "impoverishment due to marriage" and "career interruption due to childbirth", they tend to indefinitely postpone or even abandon marriage and childbirth, thus completing the transmission from employment defense to fertility suppression.

Dignity-Defensive Fertility Decision-Making Model Function

To demonstrate why the employment difficulties faced by highly educated women in contemporary China could become a powerful lever for triggering a collapse in the birth rate, this paper proposes the **"Dignity-Defense Fertility Decision Model" (DDFM)**. This model consists of two parts: an individual fertility decision function and a macro-level total birth rate based on the cumulative effect of these individual fertility decision functions.

Individual Fertility Decision Function

For a young woman with higher education, the probability (or strength of her desire) of ultimately choosing to have children can be determined by the following endogenous logic formula:

$$F_i = \Phi[U(\text{Work}_i) + \gamma \cdot U(\text{Family}_i) - C_{\text{risk}}(\text{Employment Difficulty})]$$

Formula explanation:

1. F_i : An individual's fertility intention/probability (Fertility Intention)

Meaning: Represents the i th The probability of a woman ultimately choosing to have children, or the strength of her desire to have children.

Explanation: It is not a simple "to give birth" or "not to give birth" decision, but a probability value between 0 and 1. The higher the overall utility within the parentheses, the closer F_i is to 1 (strongly want to give birth); when the overall utility is negative or extremely low, F_i approaches 0 (resolutely not want to give birth).

2. Φ : Decision Mapping Function

Meaning: A non-linear mapping function (typically used in economics) (Logit or Probit function).

Explanation: Its function is to transform the complex psychological trade-offs (utility values) of humans into actual probabilities of action. When the utility value in parentheses is extremely high, Φ will cause it to rapidly approach 100%; when the utility value is extremely low, Φ will cause it to plummet to near 0%. It reflects the "threshold effect" in human decision-making—not acting unless absolutely necessary, or completely giving up once the psychological barrier is crossed.

3. $U(\text{Work}_i)$: The utility of work.

Meaning: Part ii The positive benefits that women gain from their current profession.

Explanation: This is not just about salary, but also includes professional dignity, social status, personal fulfillment, and the identity of a "modern independent woman." If she has a decent job with weekends off and good prospects, this value is very high, providing her with the confidence to enter into marriage and have children.

4. $\gamma \cdot U(\text{Family}_i)$: Utility of Family

Meaning: The positive psychological benefits of childbirth and starting a family.

Explanation: This includes the desire to procreate, the joy of family life, and emotional attachment. γ (Gamma) is a weighting coefficient representing the degree to which a woman values family. If she strongly desires family, γ will be high; if she is a staunch career-oriented/non-marriage advocate, γ will be low.

5. $C_{\text{Risk}}(\text{Employment Difficulty})$: The risks and stigma associated with employment difficulties.

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Meaning: This is the core "penalty term" in the formula . It represents the potentially devastating cost of childbirth in the current harsh employment environment. This is a negative utility (hence the minus sign in the formula). It encompasses three levels of fatal blows:

- (1) Shame of falling into a lower social class: the psychological gap caused by not being able to find a good job and maintain a decent life.
- (2) Despair in the harsh environment: The quality of local employment is extremely poor, and once unemployed or having a child, it is almost impossible to find a decent job again.
- (3) Motherhood Penalty: Systemic exclusion of women who have given birth in the workplace (such as marginalization, job reassignment, or disguised layoffs).

Risk and Shame Cost Term Function

To more accurately understand how "employment difficulties" are hindering the birth rate, we will focus on **the risks and stigma costs (Crisk)** :

$$C_{risk} = \left(\frac{E_{expect}}{E_{actual}} \right)^{\alpha} \times \left(1 + \frac{100}{DEQI_{local}} \right) \times M_{penalty}$$

This formula explains how the three data leaps propagate step by step and ultimately trigger a surge in birth rates:

1. Class mismatch and expectation frustration factors $\left(\frac{E_{expect}}{E_{actual}} \right)^{\alpha}$

E_{expect} **The rigid career expectations and dignity level** formed by women after receiving higher education (i.e., office positions with a decent environment, labor protection, weekends off, and the ability to maintain the image of a modern independent woman).

E_{actual} **The actual value of the jobs** she can get in the market after graduation .

Mathematical Transmission: When the number of female college students explodes (Data 1), while pure office jobs with weekends off (Data 2) are extremely scarce, the E_{actual} situation will infinitely approach that of exploitative low-level jobs with only one day off per week or a state of zero social security benefits. This causes the ratio **to soar exponentially** . This huge psychological gap directly translates into the "shame of social fall due to job-seeking failure."

2. $\left(1 + \frac{100}{DEQI_{local}} \right)$ — Environmental factors contributing to a labor market downturn

$DEQI_{local}$: is the local social real **employment quality index** . According to relevant literature, the employment quality index is constructed using four indicators: average monthly wage, underemployment rate, overtime work rate, and contract signing rate , which respectively represent four dimensions: labor wages, full employment, work-life balance, and employment stability. The value is around 0-120 . **(Research Group of the Department of Population and Employment Statistics,2020)**

Mathematical transmission: The fewer $DEQI_{local}$ high-quality jobs there are, the lower this index will be. When approaching 0, $\frac{100}{DEQI_{local}}$ This will approach **infinity** . This means that once a woman loses her job, the difficulty for her to find a decent weekend job in the labor market is [Type here]

catastrophic.

3. $M_{penalty}$ — The Ultimate "Motherhood Punishment and Survival Risk"

classic variable in labor economics . In China's current workplace environment , once a woman chooses to get married and have children, she will face a significant and certain risk of **being marginalized, reassigned, or even effectively laid off** .

Macroeconomic Total Birth Rate Function

a function of the total birth rate (TFR) :

$$TFR = TFR_{base} \times \exp \left(-\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \left[\left(\frac{E_{expect}}{E_{actual,i}} \right)^\alpha \times \left(1 + \frac{100}{DEQI_{local}} \right) \times M_{penalty} \right] \right)$$

Formula explanation:

1. TFR base : The natural fertility rate baseline for this group assuming no employment difficulties and maternal punishment.
2. $\exp(-\text{average risk cost})$: perfectly transforms the micro-level multiplicative risk into the macro-level fertility rate reduction rate.

face extremely low C_{risk} employment rates (E_{actual} and very low indeed), the "risks and shame costs $DEQI_{local}$ " of childbirth are magnified many times over. At this point, if they conform to the traditional family script and marry and have children, mathematically it's equivalent to surrendering to fate and completely severing their hopes of returning to the white-collar workforce. They are using "not having children" to offset "not seeking employment . "

In order to avoid a collapse in their subjective utility, highly educated women have initiated a **defense of their dignity** . By publicly declaring their "no marriage, no children, and dismantling of the family," they psychologically erase E_{actual} the shame brought about by failure. They use their "voluntary strike" against childbirth to cover up their "passive elimination" in the harsh job market.

When millions of women facing employment difficulties, taking full-time civil service exams , or spending their time in offices earning extremely low wages collectively complete this "expected utility calculation" on a micro level, the TFR (birth rate) on a macro level will inevitably experience a precipitous systemic collapse.

The Reaction of the Birth Rate Collapse to the Number of Office Jobs with Weekends Off

Ironically, the rational childbearing decisions made by Chinese female university students based on a sense of dignity and self-preservation have, in turn, impacted the supply of the high-quality, weekend-office jobs they desire. This is because female childbearing itself is a significant engine for creating white-collar jobs (the desire to provide a better life for children has spurred a massive education, culture, and service industry chain). Now, with women refusing to have children and the birth rate declining sharply, the hundreds of billions of dollars worth of weekend-office office jobs generated by the birth rate have lost their economic foundation.

Based on the above theories, this paper proposes a "reverse transmission formula for the number of two-day weekend positions based on women's fertility intentions":

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$$J_{white_collar}(t) = \underbrace{[\Phi_{base} \cdot N_{female}]}_{\text{Job requirement benchmark}} \times \underbrace{[1 - \kappa \cdot (1 - F_i)]}_{\text{Fertility strike penalty}} + \underbrace{[\lambda \cdot (1 - F_i) \cdot N_{female}]}_{\text{Position Alienation}}$$

Formula explanation:

1. F_i The actual fertility intentions/probability of female college students

Source: As we derived earlier $F_i = \Phi[U(Work) + \gamma \cdot U(Family) - C_{risk}]$.

Logic: When C_{risk} When the rates of difficulty finding employment and maternal guilt are extremely high, F_i they approach zero. This means that the vast majority of highly educated women have chosen not to have children.

2. Penalties for maternity strikes: $[1 - \kappa \cdot (1 - F_i)]$

Meaning: Women's refusal to have children has led to a significant reduction in the number of jobs that were originally dependent on the "family-workplace" dual-track system.

κ (Family Support Position Multiplier): This represents how many "weekend office jobs" (such as early childhood education institution operation, child psychologist, maternal and infant brand planning, and even some flexible administrative positions set up to take care of employees' families) can be created for each woman's childbirth.

Logic: At that time, this was close to $F_i 01 - \kappa \dots$. In other words, women not having children directly led to the disappearance of a large number of high-quality office jobs "serving the family" in society.

3. Job-related differences: $\lambda \cdot (1 - F_i) \cdot N_{female}$

Meaning: This is the cruelest backlash. Women not bearing children means they dedicate 100% of their lives and energy to the labor market, leading to an absolute surplus of labor supply.

4. λ (Job Demotion/Involution Coefficient): When a large number of highly educated women flood the market and there is no "exit mechanism" for childbirth, companies have absolute bargaining power.

The logic is this: companies realize that "since you're not having children, there are plenty of people in line," so the original promise of "weekends off, respectable jobs, and no overtime" is broken. These positions still exist, but their nature has been "distorted"—from genuine office jobs with weekends off, they have been downgraded to "single-day-off sweatshop jobs" disguised as white-collar jobs.

Reflections and Suggestions

Establish a brand-new employment quality index for university departments and colleges, and regularly publish it to the public.

Traditional statistics on the employment rate of recent college graduates often only include the signing rate of tripartite agreements and the destinations of those agreements. In recent years, due to employment pressure, some universities have repeatedly been exposed for falsifying tripartite agreement signings or even forcing students to sign them. Ultimately, the tripartite agreement

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signing rate no longer accurately reflects the actual employment situation of college graduates.

Based on the above situation, this paper proposes an index to measure the actual employment situation of college students, named the Departmental Employment Quality Index (DEQI) . The relevant formula is as follows:

all graduating students (total number) N from a certain department of a university during the 36 t months (3 years) following their graduation . Let the employment quality index of this department be $DEQI$, and the formula is as follows:

$$DEQI = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \left[\left(\frac{M_i}{36} \right)^\alpha \cdot \left(\frac{W_i}{\bar{W}_{local}} \right)^\beta \right]$$

Formula explanation:

1. N Total number of graduates

The total number of students graduating from that department that year .

As the denominator, all those who failed the postgraduate entrance examination or the civil service examination and are "floating" at home with zero social security are counted as the denominator base , completely squeezing out the watered-down components of slow employment .

Unless they have already successfully progressed to higher education, they are not included in N .

2. M_i Number of months of individual social security contributions

No. i The cumulative number of months that a graduate has actually paid urban employee basic pension insurance within 36 months of graduation .

Value range: $0 \leq M_i \leq 36$

$\frac{M_i}{36}$ Employment stability factor

If you only work intermittently for six months within three years before leaving, this value will be very low.

3. W_i Individual salary level

No. i The average monthly social security contribution base for each graduate during the period of social security contributions.

This directly reflects their true salary level and the value of their position.

4. $\bar{W}_{local}$ Regional benchmark wage

The average wage of all urban employees in the previous year in the location of the university (or the area where graduates are concentrated).

As the baseline denominator, eliminate the regional wage gap between first- and second-tier cities and third- and fourth-tier cities.

5. $\frac{W_i}{\bar{W}_{local}}$ Employment Quality Factor

If you're working for a low-income job, this ratio will be far less than 1.

If you land a high-paying , high-quality job, this ratio will be greater than 1.

6. α, β Policy adjustment weight parameters

Usually set to $\alpha = 0.4, \beta = 0.6$

Because salary base is a better indicator of the quality of a college graduate's employment than simply the length of employment .

α The relative importance of reflecting employment stability

β The relative importance of reflecting the quality of employment

Considering the current employment situation of universities, it is recommended to set the $DEQI > 0.4$ standard as "qualified" $DEQI > 0.6$ or "excellent." Regular monitoring and public disclosure of the actual situation of relevant university departments are necessary.

Higher Education Shifts from "Large-Scale Expansion" to "Disciplinary Reconstruction"

In reality, the current system of broad-based majors in Chinese universities severely limits the employment potential of graduating students. These graduates, despite having completed a considerable amount of foundational courses, often find their employment opportunities restricted by the name of their major. Therefore, this article argues that Chinese universities might consider a disciplinary restructuring model for employment. Specifically, undergraduates could take common foundational courses in their first and second years. Then, in their third year, based on actual employment trends, they could choose relevant specialized courses, thus reallocating and adjusting their majors. This would give university students multiple opportunities to adjust their employment based on market conditions, allowing them to adapt to the job market more quickly.

Furthermore, a "Second Major Empowerment Program" and "Preferential Funding for Women in New Engineering/New Medicine" can be implemented. By establishing special scholarships, interdisciplinary double degrees, and mandatory AI/digital skills embedding mechanisms, a large number of female graduates in the humanities and social sciences can be transformed into "digital composite talents" (such as digital product managers and medical data analysts). This breaks the path dependency that "female liberal arts graduates can only work in front-desk/administration/HR" positions, diverting them to incremental markets with stronger risk resistance. In fact, many traditional foreign language universities in China are currently trying this kind of composite major combination, such as combining a less popular foreign language major (such as Spanish/French/Russian) with a major in engineering management/business administration.

The "De-gendering" of Motherhood Costs and the State's Socialized Bearing of Them.

As long as the costs of childbirth continue to be borne entirely by women and individual companies, women, driven by risk aversion, will never dare to have children. The costs of childbirth must be separated from women and companies. Currently, a prominent flaw in China's birth policy is that the government effectively shifts the burden of these costs onto businesses. A typical example is that the government stipulates very long maternity leave for women, but does not subsidize companies for this, nor does it grant men the same amount of paternity leave. This forces companies to bear this cost themselves. Ultimately, most companies cannot afford this loss and choose to hire fewer women or reduce the implementation of the policy.

Therefore, regarding the burden of motherhood costs, this article suggests that if the government is unable to bear the resources required for women's reproductive policies, it might consider canceling or reducing related preferential treatments for women's childbirth, or equalizing the reproductive treatment for men and women. Simply increasing policy benefits without providing substantial resource subsidies to enterprises will not actually help the policy be effectively

implemented.

In addition, the Chinese government has introduced a subsidy for newborns, currently amounting to 300 RMB per month. However, this amount is far from sufficient and cannot meet the cost of raising children for most families .

The macro market is shifting towards "independent, modern women's self-indulgent consumption infrastructure ".

China's current fiscal model has long revolved around families and children. Local governments are heavily reliant on land revenue. In the past, local governments sold land to developers, who then developed and constructed real estate. These houses were sold to Chinese couples starting families. These couples then had and raised children. This process generated substantial fiscal revenue.

However, with the rapid collapse of marriage and birth rates, more and more men are forced to forgo marriage, naturally eliminating the need to buy houses. Unsold houses make land revenue unsustainable. In 2025, local government revenue from the transfer of state-owned land use rights in China was 4.1518 trillion yuan, a decrease of 14.7% from the previous year. This marks the fourth consecutive year of double-digit declines since 2022. Compared to the historical peak of 8.7 trillion yuan in 2021, local land transfer revenue in 2025 decreased by approximately 4.6 trillion yuan , a drop of 52.3%. In the first quarter of 2026 , China's revenue from the transfer of state-owned land use rights was 517.6 billion yuan, a year-on-year decrease of 24.4%.

Therefore, this article suggests that the market could consider shifting towards self-indulgent consumption infrastructure centered around contemporary independent women. It's possible to delve deeper into the needs of contemporary independent women and, within their purchasing power, develop self-indulgent consumption infrastructure. This could involve in-depth exploration of specialized service industries, modern cultural tourism, and the cultural sector.

Summary of this article

This article discusses the current employment situation of female college students in China and draws the following conclusions:

2025 Graduate Demographics: Approximately 3.55 million female undergraduates (56.5%), 2.58 million associate degree graduates (54.3%), and 585,000 master's graduates (50.0%).

Scarcity of Standardized Jobs: Office positions with weekends off account for only 8-14% of the market, with an annual supply of 1.05 to 2.21 million, indicating severe supply-demand contradictions.

Employment Preferences: Micro-level data from the Anhui Provincial Civil Servant Exam confirms a strong preference for weekend-off jobs, prompting the proposal of an expected utility function for female graduates.

Fertility Inhibition Mechanism: The "Dignity-Defense Fertility Decision Model" (DDFM) reveals that labor market mismatches drive female graduates into a "defensive survival mode," significantly inhibiting fertility.

Several suggestions were put forward, such as reconstructing the evaluation system for the quality of employment in universities and the disciplinary structure, introducing national policies to

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reduce the punishment of motherhood, and promoting the transformation of the macro market towards women's self-indulgent consumption.

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The formula in this article involves first conceiving the approximate parameters, then optimizing them using GEMINI, and finally verifying them manually. Some Chinese content was translated into English using Google Translate.