

Third-Child Fertility Intention and Influencing Factors among Women of Childbearing Age: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis

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Zhou, XN; Ye, XH; Liang, JL; Fang, SH; Si, JC; Lv, XY; Lin, B; Zhou, JG.

Corresponding author:

Xiaonan Zhou

xiaonanzhou20@163.com

Author Affiliation:

Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**Support** - None.**Review Stage at time of this submission** - Preliminary searches.**Conflicts of interest** - None declared.**INPLASY registration number:** INPLASY202630104**Amendments** - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 28 March 2026 and was last updated on 28 March 2026.**INTRODUCTION**

Review question / Objective The purpose of this study is to investigate the pooled prevalence of fertility intention toward a third child among Chinese women of childbearing age following the implementation of the three-child policy, along with its associated influencing factors. Within the PICOS framework, the study population (P) is Chinese women of childbearing age; the intervention/exposure (I) and comparison (C) refer to associated influencing factors; the outcome (O) is fertility intention for a third child; and the study design (S) is limited to cross-sectional studies.

Rationale To provide an academic basis for the formulation of fertility policies.

Condition being studied The research team is stable and has a solid research foundation. All team members are experts and students in the field of public health.

METHODS

Search strategy Literature retrieval was performed using a combination of subject headings and free-text terms. The main Chinese search terms are: 生育, 意愿, 愿望. The main English search terms included: fertility, desire, intention, China, and Chinese.

Participant or population The study population consisted of Chinese women of childbearing age.

Intervention Factors influencing fertility intention for a third child.

Comparator Factors influencing fertility intention for a third child.

Study designs to be included cross-sectional study.

Eligibility criteria Inclusion Criteria The study population consisted of Chinese women of childbearing age.

Studies investigated fertility intention and its influencing factors.

The outcome indicator was the rate of fertility intention.

The study design was cross-sectional study.

Literature published in Chinese or English.

Survey conducted after May 31, 2021.

Studies provided sufficient data for calculating pooled effect size.

Medium- and high-quality literature.

Exclusion Criteria

Duplicate publications.

Literature including reviews, case reports, conference papers, etc.

Literature not in Chinese or English.

Studies for which full text or valid data were unavailable.

Studies that did not provide sufficient data to calculate effect size or lacked other key information.

Studies with data derived from the same research project.

Low-quality literature.

Information sources We will conduct searches in the following databases: PubMed, Embase, Cochrane Library, Web of Science, CNKI, Wanfang, VIP, and CBM.

Main outcome(s) Primary outcomes: The pooled rate of fertility intention for a third child, and the pooled rate of intention to have a third child.

Secondary outcomes: Factors influencing fertility intention for a third child.

Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis

Methodological quality was assessed using the standardized critical appraisal tool from the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI): the Statistical Meta-Analysis Assessment and Review Instrument. In this review, two reviewers independently evaluated the risk of bias in accordance with the PRISMA guidelines. Any disagreements between the two reviewers were resolved by taking the average score of the two reviewers.

Strategy of data synthesis Data analysis was performed using Stata software. Heterogeneity among the included studies was evaluated using both the Q-test and I^2 statistic. A fixed-effect model was employed for meta-analysis when $P \geq 0.05$ and $I^2 < 50\%$, whereas a random-effect model was adopted when $P < 0.05$ indicated low publication bias.

Subgroup analysis Subgroup analyses will be performed according to region, population, and other factors.

Sensitivity analysis Sensitivity analysis will be performed using Stata software. The sensitivity of each study will be reflected by examining changes in the pooled effect size after omitting one study at a time.

Language restriction Chinese and English.

Country(ies) involved China.

Keywords Intention to have a third child, meta-analysis, China's three-child policy.

Contributions of each author

Author 1 - Xiaonan Zhou.

Email: xiaonanzhou20@163.com

Author 2 - xiaohan ye.

Author 3 - Liang jianliang.

Author 4 - Fang shihui.

Author 5 - Si Jianchao.

Author 6 - Lin Bin.

Author 7 - Lv Xiayu.

Author 8 - Zhou jianguo.