

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Parenting styles and fertility intention: Mediating effects of childbearing beliefs and psychological resilience

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Zhongxuan Huang¹; Liyuan Chen¹; Mengyuan Zhang²; Lixuan Huang³; Xuan Liu⁴; Jinrun Chen⁵; Yi Zheng⁶; Xiaoyi Wu⁷; Huanran Liao⁸; Hailan Wang⁹; Yanhui Gao¹ and Fan Zhang^{1*}

Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, School of Medicine, Jinan University, Guangzhou, China, 510632¹; Department of Orthopedic surgery, Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, Guangdong, 510120, China²; State Key Laboratory of Female Fertility Promotion, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Peking University Third Hospital, Beijing, China³; Shanghai Institute of Hematology, National Research Center for Translational Medicine, State Key Laboratory of Medical Genomics, Ruijin Hospital Affiliated to Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine, Shanghai, China⁴; Guangdong Provincial Key Laboratory of Digestive Cancer Research, The Seventh Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University, Shenzhen, 518107, China⁵; Department of Hand Surgery, Union Hospital, Tongji Medical College, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, China⁶; Guang Dong Clinical Research Center for Metabolic Diseases, Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, Guangdong, 510120, China⁷; Department of Orthopedic Surgery, First Affiliated Hospital of Jinan University, Guangzhou, China, 510632⁸; School of Stomatology, Jinan University, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China, 510632⁹

***For Correspondence:** Email: florencezh@yahoo.com.hk ; 58152287@qq.com ; gao_yanhui@163.com ; Phone : 86-020-85220267, 86-13924118268 , 86- 13922125361

Abstract

China's declining fertility rate is partly due to low fertility intention among childbearing population. To understand family influence on young people's fertility intention and its underlying mechanisms, this study examines how parenting styles (authoritarian vs. permissive) affect Chinese college students' fertility intention, with traditional childbearing beliefs and resilience as mediators. Data were collected from 839 participants (Age: M = 21.1, SD = 1.7 years) using structured questionnaires. Logistic regression found that a positive correlation between permissive parenting style and fertility intention, with authoritarian parenting having no impact. Mediation analysis showed the association between permissive parenting style and fertility intention was fully mediated through resilience ($\beta = 0.0$, 95%CI = [0.0,0.1]) and greater childbearing beliefs ($\beta = 0.0$, 95%CI = [0.0,0.1]). The findings indicate that permissive parenting is related to higher fertility intention in youth via resilience and childbearing beliefs. Promoting positive family environments and permissive parenting may enhance childbearing intention. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2026; 30 [17]:81-91).

Keywords: Parenting styles, Fertility intention, Traditional childbearing beliefs, Resilience, College students

Résumé

La baisse du taux de fécondité en Chine s'explique en partie par une faible intention de procréer au sein de la population en âge d'avoir des enfants. Afin de comprendre l'influence de la famille sur l'intention de procréer des jeunes ainsi que les mécanismes sous-jacents, cette étude examine l'impact des styles parentaux (autoritaire ou permissif) sur cette intention chez des étudiants chinois, en considérant la résilience et les croyances traditionnelles liées à la procréation comme médiateurs. Les données ont été recueillies auprès de 839 participants (âge : M = 21,1 ; ET = 1,7 an) au moyen de questionnaires structurés. Une régression logistique a révélé une corrélation positive entre le style parental permissif et l'intention de procréer, tandis que le style autoritaire n'a eu aucun impact. L'analyse de médiation a montré que l'association entre le style parental permissif et l'intention de procréer était entièrement médiatisée par la résilience ($\beta = 0,0$; IC à 95 % = [0,0 ; 0,1]) et par des croyances plus marquées en faveur de la procréation ($\beta = 0,0$; IC à 95 % = [0,0 ; 0,1]). Ces résultats indiquent qu'un style parental permissif est associé à une intention de procréer plus élevée chez les jeunes, par le biais de la résilience et des croyances liées à la procréation. Ainsi, favoriser des environnements familiaux positifs et un style parental permissif pourrait renforcer l'intention d'avoir des enfants. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2026; 30 [17]: 81-91).

Mots-clés : Styles parentaux, intention de fécondité, croyances traditionnelles en matière de procréation, résilience, étudiants universitaires

Introduction

Along with rapid aging of the population, China has also been shrinking in size, the major reason being the decline in the fertility rate since 2022. According to the China's National Bureau of Statistics, although China recorded 9.54 million newborns in 2024, with an increase of 520,000 compared with 2023, negative population growth has continued.¹ In addition, the total fertility rate in 2024 was 1.02, which is still far below the global total fertility rate of 2.3.² Low fertility intention among the childbearing population has been found to be a major reason for the drop in China's fertility rate.³ College students, as an important group before reaching childbearing age, their attitude towards fertility and family would play a critical role in future birth outcomes. Previous studies on Chinese college students have revealed that young people reported low fertility intention, with a substantial proportion not wishing to give birth to children or even to start a family.⁴⁻⁶ However, it remains unclear what the predictors and mechanism are at family level. To advance our understanding of how young people's fertility intention develops within the family, the current study investigated the effects of parenting styles and potential mediators. Given that fertility intention is a key predictor for birth rates,⁷ understanding the updated profile of the young generation's fertility intention and its correlates would provide insights for tailoring family services to shape children's adaptive fertility attitudes and prevent further birth rate declines in mainland, China.

Most of the existing literature has focused on individual factors of fertility intention, such as age, marital status, fertility knowledge, gender role attitude, etc.,^{8,9} while little attention has been paid to contextual factors such as parenting styles. Parenting, the process of raising children, may have unique impacts on children's life course. There are four types of parenting styles, namely authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful.¹⁰ Previous evidence suggests that parenting style not only influences children's mental health,¹¹ outlook on life, values, and worldview,¹² but also affects their intimate relationships and attitude toward family and childbearing.¹³ According to the parenting styles theory,¹⁴ authoritarian and permissive parenting

styles may have the opposite impacts on children. Children raised under authoritarian parenting may resist societal marriage and fertility norms due to excessive control, whereas permissive parenting fosters a more organic approach to childbearing by treating children as equal.¹⁵ Investigating the effects of permissive and authoritarian parenting styles can extend the existing literature on the predictors of young people's fertility intention, and contribute to developing guidance for effective parenting strategies.

In addition, parenting styles would influence children's childbearing beliefs, and thereby affecting their fertility intention. For example, previous study found that parenting style is rooted in parent's own personality,¹⁶ and parents' authoritarian parenting style is related to their personality construct of conservative authoritarianism.¹⁷ In other words, individuals who hold traditional views on family values, such as having a high intention to obey social norm in marriage and reproduction, are more likely to have an authoritarian parenting style,^{18, 19} and form continuity in intergenerational transmission of fertility beliefs.^{20, 21} Also, mothers who are more committed to traditional Chinese values tend to be more "authoritarian" towards their children.²² Under the influence of Confucian fertility culture, filial piety is rooted in Chinese people's mindset, particularly among authoritarian parents, who would also expect higher obedience and respect from their children. Therefore, parenting style may influence children's adherence to traditional childbearing beliefs, while these beliefs per se (e.g., family size and daughter-son preference) may change across time. According to the 2017 China Fertility Survey, the reported ideal family size among women aged 15 to 49 was 1.96 on average (compared with 1.72 in 2001), and son preference still serves as a key reason for having more children.²³ A major reason why more people preferred fewer children is because that it was believed that to increase the "quality" of offspring instead of "quantity" is more important. However, it has remained unclear how parenting styles affect young people's traditional childbearing beliefs and fertility intention.

Parenting styles may also affect children's intrapersonal factors such as resilience and further influence fertility intention.¹⁴ Positive parenting, featured by parental emotional warmth, is related

with greater resilience, whereas negative parenting, featured by harsh discipline, over-involvement, rejection, and overprotection, is linked to maladjustment like behavioral issues and mental health disorders.²⁴ Moreover, authoritarian parenting style usually involves punishment that can sometimes develop into physical and mental abuse,²⁵ which jeopardizes children's mental health in the long run. Resilience, defined as a repertoire of mental assets to cope with or bounce back from adversities,²⁶ was found to have a positive effect on fertility intention, even during the difficult period of COVID-19.²⁷ However, existing research on resilience and fertility intention has remained limited, and mostly focused on married or cohabiting individuals. To face the challenge of a declined fertility rate, it is urgent to unravel the factors and process of the development of fertility intention among the young generation.²⁸ The current study extends from individual level to family level factors by investigating how parenting styles affect young people's fertility intention, and proposes a dual mediation model through traditional childbearing beliefs and psychological resilience. To test the mediating pathways, it is hypothesized that: 1) authoritarian style would lead to greater compliance with traditional childbearing beliefs, which further contribute to fertility intention; 2) resilience would also be related to greater fertility intention, while how different parenting styles affect resilience is unclear. The total effects of parenting styles on fertility intention still need to be explored.

Methods

Study design and participants

A cross-sectional study using structured questionnaires was conducted on the "Wenjuanxing" platform. The target population was college students from universities in Guangdong Province, China. A two-stage non-probability sampling strategy was employed: initial participants were recruited via convenience sampling through an online platform, followed by a snowball sampling approach where these respondents invited eligible peers to participate. Before taking part in the study, a written consent form was obtained from the participants. To eliminate duplicate filling,

participants can only submit responses once with the same IP address. The response can only be submitted after all the questions were answered to eliminate the possibility of missing values. The inclusion criteria included that: 1) aged over 18; and 2) college students. An a priori power analysis using G*Power 3.1.9.7 was conducted to determine the minimum sample size. The following parameters were assumed: a small to medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.05$), $\alpha = 0.05$, and power of 0.90, which resulted in a minimum sample size of 460. Considering a retention rate of 80%, the minimum sample size should reach 575. A total of 847 participants responded to the online link. After the screening, 8 participants who did not meet the age criteria were excluded, resulting in 839 responses, indicating a valid response rate of 99%, and it provided sufficient statistical power for the dual mediation model.

Measures

Covariates: Demographic information of the participants was gathered, encompassing variables such as age, gender and place of origin, etc. Additionally, familial details were collected, including family structure, annual income, etc.

Parenting style: The Parenting Style Scale of China (PSSC) were adopted and revised to assess authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. The questionnaire was developed by Mu et.al., with a pilot study showing good validity and reliability in a Chinese sample.²⁹ The questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 "totally disagree" to 5 "totally agree"). The total score for each subscale was obtained, with higher scores reflecting a more pronounced presence of the respective parenting style. In our sample, with six items dedicated to assessing the authoritarian parenting style (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.904$) and eight items to the permissive parenting style (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.890$).

Resilience: Resilience was measured using a resilience scale for college students developed by Thomas Mueller.³⁰ The scale was revised into a Chinese version through the back-translation method, following a review by three psychological experts. The 9 items were used with responses ranging from 1 "totally disagree" to 5 "totally agree". Higher score indicates higher level of psychological resilience. Good reliability of a

Cronbach $\alpha = 0.899$ was reported in the current sample.

Traditional childbearing beliefs: Traditional childbearing beliefs was measured using the scale developed by Bailey.³¹ The scale contained 12 items and adopted a 5-point Likert response style (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The final score was generated by averaging all the items, with higher scores indicating more traditional childbearing beliefs. The scale has been validated in the Chinese population with excellent reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.918$).³² In our sample, a Cronbach α of 0.916 that suggests excellent reliability.

Fertility intention: Fertility intention was measured using the question, "Do you have an intention to have child(ren)?" Participants were asked to choose from three response options "Yes"; "No"; and "Uncertain". If participants answered "Yes", they were further asked, "How many children do you wish to have?" to obtain the number of ideal children they desire. The ideal number of children is a complementary indication of fertility intention.

Statistical analysis

A descriptive and correlation analysis were conducted on predictors and outcome variables. With logistic regression, how parenting styles (authoritarian parenting style vs. permissive parenting style) predicts fertility intention was tested. Moreover, mediation models were built to explore the indirect effects of parenting styles on fertility intention via resilience or traditional childbearing beliefs. In sensitivity analysis, resilience and traditional childbearing beliefs were included simultaneously as mediators to construct a parallel mediation model. The significance of mediating effects was evaluated by bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. Mediated analysis was conducted using Lavaan package in R version 4.3.2. A confidence interval that does not contain zero indicates significant mediation effect. The analysis was adjusted for covariates such as age, sex, family structure and place of origin, based on the correlations with the outcome variables. All p-values in the analysis were bilateral, with statistical significance less than 0.05.

Ethical considerations

The study protocol was approved by the Research Ethics Committee and the Institutional Review Board of Jinan University (#20240002) on August 2024.

Results

Sample characteristics

A total of 839 participants were enrolled in this study, with an average age of 21.1 years ($SD = 1.7$). The majority of participants were female (53.0%), with a place of origin from urban (64.4%), and 57.0% came from non-only child family. According to Miettinen et al., (2003), the "uncertain" response indicates that the respondent harbors at least a possibility of desiring a child, but is currently hindered by their life circumstances, such as job instability or financial concerns. Consequently, after a combination of "Uncertain" and "Yes",³³ 589 (70.2%) participants reported fertility intention. Compared with female, male showed significantly higher fertility intention ($P < 0.001$). Fertility intention increased with age ($r = 0.1$, $P < 0.05$) and was lower among participants from urban areas compared to those from rural areas ($r = -0.1$, $P < 0.01$). In addition, participants' traditional childbearing beliefs and resilience were both positively related with fertility intention ($P < 0.001$). Among the participants who reported fertility intention, the average ideal number of children was 1.7 ($SD = 0.7$). When looking at the ideal number of children across gender, male participants reported an average ideal number of children of 1.8 ($SD = 0.7$), whereas female participants reported an average of 1.7 ($SD = 0.6$), with no significant difference between them ($P > 0.05$). The descriptive results were presented in Table 1.

The effects of parenting styles on fertility intention

Binary logistic regression analyses were used to explore the relationship between parenting styles (authoritarian vs. permissive) with fertility intention. After controlling for age, gender, family structure

Table 1: Demographic characteristic of all participants and association with fertility intention (N=839).

Variables	Total (N=839)	Have no intention for children (N=250)	Have intention for children (N=589)	P value
Age, Mean (SD)	21.1 (1.7)	20.9 (1.6)	21.2 (1.7)	< 0.05
Gender, n (%)				< 0.001
Female	445 (53.0)	163 (65.2)	307 (52.1)	
Male	394 (47.0)	87 (34.8)	282 (47.9)	
Place of origin, n (%)				< 0.001
Urban	540 (64.4)	184 (73.6)	356 (60.4)	
Rural	299 (35.6)	66 (26.4)	233 (39.6)	
Family structure, n (%)				0.2
Only child family	361 (43.0)	117 (46.8)	244 (41.4)	
Non-only child family	478 (57.0)	133 (53.2)	345 (58.6)	
Parenting style				
Authoritarian parenting, Mean (SD)	1.8 (0.9)	1.9 (0.8)	1.8 (0.9)	0.8
Permissive parenting, Mean (SD)	4.0 (0.6)	3.9 (0.7)	4.0 (0.6)	0.2
Resilience, Mean (SD)	3.9 (0.6)	3.8 (0.6)	3.9 (0.5)	< 0.001
Traditional childbearing beliefs, Mean (SD)	2.4 (0.9)	1.9 (0.8)	2.7 (0.8)	< 0.001

and place of origin, permissive parenting style was associated with increased fertility intention (OR = 1.3, 95%CI = [1.0, 1.7]), whereas no significant association was found between authoritarian parenting style with fertility intention (OR = 0.9, 95%CI = [0.8, 1.1]). Details were presented in Table 2. To further explore the role of parenting styles, a linear regression model was constructed to assess the association with the ideal number of children. No significant effects were observed (authoritarian parenting style: $\beta = -0.1$, 95%CI = [-0.2, 0.0]; permissive parenting style: $\beta = 0.1$, 95%CI = [-0.1, 0.2]).

The variance inflation factors (VIF) for all variables in the regression model were below 10, confirming the absence of multicollinearity.

The mediation roles of childbearing beliefs and resilience

To further explore the potential mechanism mediation models were conducted with resilience or traditional childbearing beliefs as mediators. Since only permissive parenting style showed a significant effect on fertility intention, the mediation analysis only focused on its indirect effect.

When resilience was entered as the mediator, the total effect of permissive parenting style on fertility intention was significant ($\beta = 0.1$, 95%CI = [0.0, 0.1]). The indirect effect via resilience

was also significant ($\beta = 0.0$, 95%CI = [0.0, 0.1]). In other words, permissive parenting style was positively associated with resilience ($\beta = 0.4$, 95%CI = [0.3, 0.5]), and resilience was associated with higher fertility intention ($\beta = 0.1$, 95%CI = [0.0, 0.2]). However, after including resilience, the direct effect of the permissive parenting style on fertility intention was not found ($\beta = 0.0$, 95%CI = [-0.0, 0.1]). These results indicate that resilience fully mediated the effect of permissive parenting style on fertility intention. Details were presented in Table 3.

A similar mediation model was conducted with traditional childbearing beliefs as the mediator. The total effect of the model was significant ($\beta = 0.1$, 95%CI = [0.0, 0.1]), and the indirect effect via traditional childbearing beliefs was also significant ($\beta = 0.0$, 95%CI = [0.0, 0.1]). However, after including the mediator, the direct effect of the permissive parenting style on fertility intention was not found ($\beta = 0.0$, 95%CI = [-0.0, 0.1]). These results also indicate that traditional childbearing beliefs fully mediated the effect of permissive parenting style on fertility intention. Details were presented in Table 4.

Sensitivity analysis

In the sensitivity analysis, both resilience and traditional childbearing beliefs were included as parallel mediators. The total effect of permissive

Table 2: Multivariate logistic regression predicting fertility intention (N=839)

Variables	Model 1				Model 2			
	β	P	OR	95%CI	β	P	OR	95%CI
Age	0.1	0.1	1.1	[1.0, 1.2]	0.1	0.1	1.1	[1.0, 1.2]
Gender	-0.7	< 0.001	0.5	[0.4, 0.7]	-0.7	< 0.001	0.5	[0.4, 0.7]
Place of origin	-0.6	< 0.01	0.6	[0.4, 0.8]	-0.6	< 0.01	0.6	[0.4, 0.8]
Family structure	0.2	0.2	1.2	[0.9, 1.7]	0.2	0.2	1.2	[0.9, 1.7]
Authoritarian parenting	-0.1	0.3	0.9	[0.8, 1.1]				
Permissive parenting					0.3	< 0.05	1.3	[1.0, 1.7]

Model 1: Incorporating authoritarian parenting style and demographic variables to predict fertility intention.

Model 2: Incorporating permissive parenting style and demographic variables to predict fertility intention.

Table 3: Simple mediation model predicting fertility intention when resilience as mediator (N=839)

Variables	Model [†]		
	β	P	95%CI
REGRESSION			
Permissive parenting - Fertility intention (c')	0.0	0.6	[-0.0, 0.1]
Permissive parenting – Resilience (a1)	0.4	< 0.001	[0.3, 0.5]
Resilience - Fertility intention (b1)	0.1	< 0.01	[0.0, 0.2]
Indirect effects			
Resilience as mediator	0.0	< 0.05	[0.0, 0.1]
Total effect	0.1	< 0.05	[0.0, 0.1]

[†]Model adjusted for age, gender, family structure, place of origin

Table 4: Simple mediation model predicting fertility intention when resilience as mediator (N=839)

Variables	Model [†]		
	β	P	95%CI
REGRESSION			
Permissive parenting - Fertility intention (c')	0.0	0.2	[-0.0, 0.1]
Permissive parenting - Traditional childbearing beliefs (a1)	0.1	< 0.05	[0.0, 0.2]
Traditional childbearing beliefs - Fertility intention (b1)	0.2	< 0.001	[0.2, 0.2]
Indirect effects			
Traditional childbearing beliefs as mediator	0.0	< 0.05	[0.0, 0.1]
Total effect	0.1	< 0.05	[0.0, 0.1]

[†]Model adjusted for age, gender, family structure, place of origin

parenting style on fertility intention was found ($\beta = 0.1$, 95%CI = [0.0, 0.1]), with significant indirect effects via resilience ($\beta = 0.0$, 95%CI = [0.0, 0.1]) and traditional childbearing beliefs ($\beta = 0.02$, 95%CI = [0.0, 0.1]). Meanwhile, the direct effect between permissive parenting style and fertility intention was

not significant ($\beta = 0.00$, 95%CI = [-0.1, 0.1]). These results are consistent with those of the simple mediation models, further indicating that resilience and traditional childbearing beliefs fully mediated the effect of permissive parenting style on fertility intention. Details were presented in Figure. 1

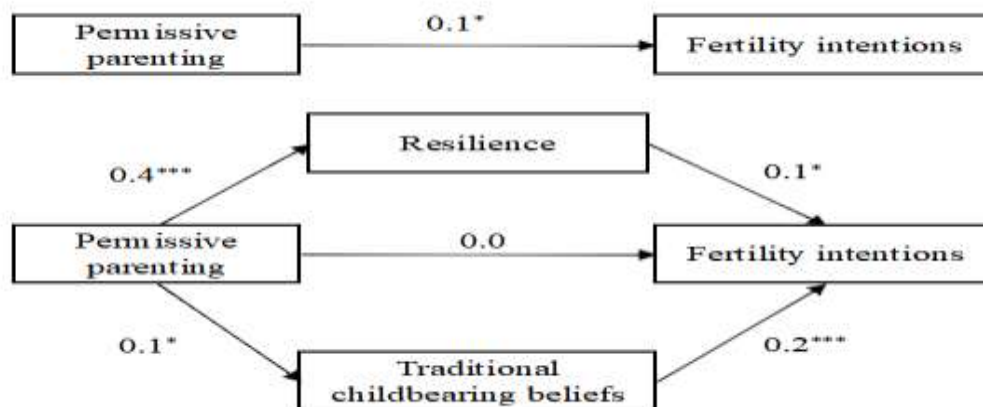


Figure 1: The multiple parallel mediation model of permissive parenting style predicting fertility intention (adjusted for age, sex, family structure and place of origin); * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$

Discussion

The declining birth rate has become a major challenge for population and economic development in China. Although family factors are known to influence children's social behaviors,³⁴ limited research has been conducted on how parenting style affects fertility intention. The current study has investigated the effect of parenting styles on college students' fertility intention and the mediating mechanism underlying this relationship. Our main findings are threefold: (1) permissive parenting style, rather than authoritarian style, was significantly associated with increased fertility intention; (2) traditional childbearing beliefs and resilience fully mediated the association between permissive parenting style and fertility intention, in which permissive parenting style was associated with increased resilience and greater adherence to traditional childbearing beliefs, which in turn contributed to higher fertility intention.

Declines in fertility intention among young people has gained emerging research attention in the past decades. In the current study, only 33.7% of participants explicitly expressed a positive answer to whether they would like to have children, which was in concordance with previously research conducted in 2022.³⁵ On the one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic may have a prolonged impact on people's lifestyle and social decisions, including reproductive choices and fertility intention.³⁶ Chen et al. has found that the disruptions in daily life and declined economic

growth during the pandemic may have a negative impact on people's fertility intention. Another study of the research team also found that the social isolation during the pandemic has led to increased uncertainty and limited future time perspective among college students, which both affect their social relationships and mating preference.³⁷ On the other hand, it is also possible that the participants were relatively young in the current study, and they may not give thorough consideration to the decision of marriage and childbearing. Nevertheless, these findings highlight the urgent need for appropriate guidance and education for the young generation, who hold the greatest potential for future population growth.

The association between parenting style and fertility intention found in this study suggests that when developing services to promote fertility intention, family atmosphere and parenting styles should not be neglected. It was found that permissive parenting style was positively associated with fertility intention. This is consistent with previous research.³⁸⁻⁴⁰ Largely explained by the framework of family-life experience (i.e., relationship with parents, childhood happiness), positive perceptions of family were related to stronger fertility preference in adulthood, whereas negative perceptions were associated with lower ideal number of children.³⁸ It is widely acknowledged that permissive parenting is associated with higher cohesion and lower overall conflict between parents and adolescents. For instance, a survey of Chinese adolescents found that

offspring of permissive parents exhibited lower levels of parent-adolescent conflict compared to those of authoritarian parents.³⁹ A favorable parent-child relationship may contribute to greater fertility intention.⁴⁰ Interestingly, no significant association between authoritarian parenting style and fertility intention was found. One possible explanation is that the level of authoritarian parenting reported by our participants was relatively low, which may have restricted the variance from detecting a significant association.

In addition, the effect of permissive parenting style on fertility intention was fully mediated by traditional childbearing beliefs and resilience. First, permissive parenting style was positively associated with resilience, which in turn predicted higher fertility intention. This is consistent with a previous study on Chinese adolescents, which identified a significant positive correlation between permissive parenting style and resilience⁴¹ as well as better mental health.⁴² It is probably because a warm and supportive parent-child relationship would cultivate children's intrapersonal and social resources, and thus fostering resilience.⁴³ When individuals possess greater resilience, they are more likely to have adaptive personality traits,⁴⁴ and overcome the disruptions and adversities in daily life. Resilient individuals often view difficulties as temporary and believe things will "work out" even in the worst scenario. Gatta et al. (2022) reported that greater resilience in facing employment uncertainty was associated with higher fertility intention.²⁷ Second, permissive parenting style was also associated with greater adherence to traditional childbearing beliefs, which in turn increased fertility intention. A Previous study found that permissive parenting style, characterized by parental emotional warmth, also fosters family cohesion and individual's compliance with social norms, including traditional childbearing beliefs.⁴⁵ In Chinese culture of collectivism, family's wellbeing is a priority, and continuation of the family line is considered a vital duty. Children raised in warm family environments are more likely to perceive their parents' behaviors as acts of kindness and internalize the values of concern for others' wellbeing. This may help understand why individuals with permissive parenting style tend to have greater traditional childbearing beliefs. Furthermore,

individuals who align with traditional fertility views are more likely to desire more offspring and are less daunted by the expenses associated with childrearing.⁴⁶ Thus, this study shifts attention from individual to family predictors of fertility intention, identifies two mediating pathways, and highlights permissive parenting as a key driver. Practically, fostering warm parent-child relationships and family atmosphere about childbearing may help sustain fertility intention in young adults.

Strengths and limitations

This study has several strengths. First, with a sample of 839 college students, the study endeavored to unravel the family-level predictors (i.e., parenting styles) on young people's fertility intention. Second, by adopting a dual mediation model to uncover underlying mechanisms, the mediating effect of resilience and childbearing beliefs were addressed. Based on the findings, implication for policy and practice could be provided.

Nevertheless, several limitations of the current study that should be acknowledged. First, given the nature of a cross-sectional study, the analyses are not sufficient to address the causal relationships between the variables. Longitudinal data should be collected to better understand the casual mechanism on fertility intention. Second, the sample consisted solely of college students from Guangdong Province, which may limit the generalizability to other populations or regions. Third, fertility intention was measured by a single item, which may not fully capture the complexity of reproductive decision-making. Future research should employ multi-item scales and consider behavioral outcomes such as actual childbearing. Fourth, we did not examine potential moderators, such as socioeconomic status or cultural context, which might interact with parenting styles to influence fertility intention.

Despite these limitations, our findings offer valuable insights for practice. The findings that permissive parenting style enhances fertility intention through resilience and traditional childbearing beliefs underscores the importance of family environment. For policymakers and family service providers aiming to address declining birth rates, interventions should move beyond individual-level economic

incentives. Promoting warm and supportive parenting styles and fostering open parent-child communication about family values may be effective strategies to sustain fertility intention among young adults

Conclusion

The current study advanced the understanding about the development of individual's fertility intention. It was found that permissive parenting style was associated with increased resilience and more adherence to traditional childbearing beliefs, which both contribute to higher fertility intention. The findings suggested that when developing family program and community services to increase fertility intention among the young generation, parent's influences and contextual factors should be considered. Permissive parenting style may represent a promising target for public health efforts, as fostering this style may help expand individuals' psychological resources and promote their long-term social adaptation.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Author contributions

Zhongxuan Huang and Liyuan Chen made equal contribution. Zhongxuan Huang: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing. Liyuan Chen: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing. Mengyuan Zhang: Data collection. Lixuan Huang: Data collection. Xuan Liu: Data collection. Jinrun Chen: Data collection. Yi Zheng: Data collection.

Xiaoyi Wu: Data collection. Huanran Liao: Data collection. Yanhui Gao: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Writing - Review & Editing, Supervision, Funding acquisition. Hailan Wang: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Writing - Review & Editing, Supervision, Funding acquisition. Fan Zhang: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Writing - Review & Editing, Supervision, Funding acquisition.

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Informed consent statement

Written informed consent was obtained from each participant before taking part in the study.

Data availability statement

The dataset generated in this study can be obtained by contacting the corresponding authors.

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