

The Impact of Marriage Squeeze on Women's Status: Gender Roles and Social Changes

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Abstract: This paper aims to explore the impact of marriage squeeze on women's status, focusing on the relationship between gender roles and social change. Through the comprehensive analysis of relevant theories and empirical research, this paper reveals how marriage squeeze can shape and change women's status at different levels. The study found that marriage squeeze led to increased competition among women in the marriage market, which in turn affected their education, career development and family roles. At the same time, social change also provides an opportunity for the promotion of women's status. The two interact and jointly promote the evolution of women's status. This study is of great significance for understanding the changes of women's status in contemporary society, and provides a theoretical basis for formulating relevant policies and promoting gender equality.

Keywords: Marriage Squeeze; Female Status; Gender Roles; Social Change

1. Introduction

Marriage is one of the basic systems of human society. It is not only related to personal happiness, but also has an important impact on the stability and development of society. However, in some societies, due to the change of population structure and the imbalance of gender ratio, there is a phenomenon of marriage squeeze, that is, the supply of a certain gender in the marriage market exceeds the demand. This phenomenon has a far-reaching impact on women's status, and has aroused people's attention to gender roles and social changes.

This paper will deeply study the impact of marriage squeeze on women's status, explore how gender roles change in this process, and the role of social change in improving

women's status. Through the analysis of these problems, we can better understand the evolution trend of women's status in contemporary society, and provide a useful reference for promoting gender equality.

2. Literature Review

Ren Qiang and Zheng Weidong (1998) proposed that marriage is not only a gender relationship established by human beings to reproduce, but also a reflection of the specific marriage system formed under the influence of socio-economic conditions. They pointed out that the marital relationship itself has an internal mechanism to regulate the supply and demand of married couples.^[1] Feng Yuping and Xu Gailing (2005) further clarified the concept of marriage squeeze, that is, the number imbalance between men and women of the same age group. When the supply of men exceeds the demand in the marriage market, leading to the surplus of men and the shortage of women, this phenomenon is called the male marriage squeeze; The opposite is called female marriage squeeze. The emergence of marriage squeeze leads to the surplus of a certain group, which leads to marriage difficulties.^[2]

To explore the causes of marriage squeeze in China, Li Handong (2010) believed that the root cause of marriage squeeze was the serious imbalance of the sex ratio at birth. This imbalance is closely related to China's family planning policy. After the implementation of the family planning policy, the population born began to enter the marriage market, while the population born before the implementation of the policy began to leave the marriage market. This change is one of the reasons for the gender imbalance.^[3] The questionnaire survey and report of Liu Chong (2014) revealed that the gender ratio of China's population will remain unbalanced with more men and less women for a long time, and the male population will be less than

the female population for a long time. In this context, the group of highly educated older women, represented by unmarried female masters in Colleges and universities, is facing the situation of marriage squeeze for a long time. ^[4]While generally discussing the male crisis in marriage squeeze, Guo Qing (2016) stressed the existence of the problem of women's marriage squeeze, as well as the differences between it and men's marriage squeeze in form and mode of existence. Unmarried men are mainly concentrated in rural areas and other economically backward areas, while unmarried women are mainly concentrated in cities.^[5]

Xie Huiqi (2017) pointed out that women still face different degrees of unfair treatment, which is particularly obvious in the problem of marriage squeeze. For women, marriage squeeze is mainly reflected in the discipline of different groups of unmarried women, including the loss of women's right to speak in marriage, the social and family pressure faced by unmarried women of school age, the mainstream voice of the media on women's views and guidance, and the pressure between women of the same sex. Compared with men, women suffer from a deeper degree of marital squeeze, involving a wider range. ^[6]Liu Zonghao (2023) believes that marriage squeeze has triggered female marriage migration, which has become one of the important social phenomena of population migration in China. The phenomenon that rural women migrate to cities and towns through marriage is increasing.^[7]

3. The Impact of Marriage Squeeze on Women's Status

3.1 Intensified Competition in Marriage Market

3.1.1 Education

Marriage squeeze, especially in some societies with unbalanced gender ratio, has a profound impact on women's educational choices and career development. This squeeze not only affects women's marriage opportunities, but also urges them to invest more energy and resources in education. In this context, in order to enhance their competitiveness in the marriage market, women tend to choose to pursue higher-level education, such as undergraduate, graduate

and even doctoral degrees. They believe that a higher level of education can not only increase their knowledge reserves and professional skills, but also improve their social status and economic independence. These factors are regarded as important attractions in the marriage market.

With the general improvement of women's education level, they also get more opportunities in career development. Higher education not only provides women with more employment options, but also enables them to enter the fields dominated by men in the past, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics. In addition, the improvement of education has also enhanced women's voice in the process of social participation and decision-making. They can more actively participate in social affairs and contribute to gender equality and social progress.^[8]

3.1.2 career development

With the intensification of competition in the marriage market, women have to put more energy into the workplace competition in order to achieve economic independence and improve their social status. They not only invest more in education and skills training, but also show unprecedented enthusiasm in career choice and development, striving to obtain better development opportunities in various fields.

This trend not only promotes the rise of women in the workplace, but also gradually promotes the transformation of the traditional concept of gender roles in society. Men begin to accept and respect women's achievements and status in the professional field. This change reflects the gradual recognition of gender equality in society. It also shows that marriage squeeze promotes the modernization and equality of gender roles to a certain extent.

3.2 The Change of Gender Role Concept

3.2.1 challenges of traditional gender roles

Marriage squeeze is pushing the society to re-examine and change the traditional gender roles. In the context of intensified competition in the marriage market, women are no longer limited to traditional family roles, but begin to actively participate in social and economic activities. This change has had a significant impact on the male dominated social structure.

With the progress of women in education and occupation, their economic independence has increased, which not only changed their way of life, but also had an impact on the development of the whole society. Women's economic independence gives them more autonomy, enabling them to make decisions based on their will and ability in marriage, family and career, and have more control over their lives. In addition, economic independence also promotes women's self realization, enabling them to pursue their dreams and goals, and is no longer limited to the traditional role orientation. At the same time, economic independence also provides a guarantee for women's quality of life, enabling them to bear the living expenses independently and not rely on other people's financial support.

The equal development of gender roles not only improves the status of women in the family, but also lays the foundation for the establishment of a healthier and more balanced interpersonal relationship. With the enhancement of women's economic independence, their decision-making power in the family also increases, which helps to establish a more equal partnership and reduce problems such as domestic violence. In addition, women's economic independence and professional participation also promote the social consciousness of gender equality, which makes the social cognition of the roles of men and women more modern, and no longer adhere to the traditional concept of "men in charge of external affairs and women in charge of internal affairs". This change not only improves the status of women, but also opens up new possibilities for gender equality and social development.

3.2.2 diversification of gender roles

The phenomenon of marriage squeeze promotes the diversified development of gender roles. With the progress of women in education and occupation, they pursue a more independent and independent way of life, breaking the limitations of traditional family roles. This change not only provides women with a broader space for development, but also enriches social resources and wisdom, and promotes the progress of social concepts and the realization of the concept of gender equality. At the same time, men also began to assume more family responsibilities and

participate in family affairs. This role change has promoted gender equality in the family and laid the foundation for establishing a healthier and more balanced interpersonal relationship.

In addition, men's roles and responsibilities in gender equality are receiving more and more attention. They are encouraged to review and reshape their role cognition, receive gender equality education, and promote gender equality in the family and workplace. This diversified and equal development of gender roles has not only improved the status of women, but also promoted the progress of social civilization and contributed to the establishment of a more equal and inclusive social environment.

3.3 Increased Social Participation

3.3.1 political participation

The phenomenon of marriage squeeze promotes women's enthusiasm in political participation to a certain extent. In this increasingly competitive environment, women began to participate more actively in political activities and express their voice in order to strive for their rights and status. This participation not only helps to promote the formulation and implementation of gender equality policies, but also improves the status of women in the political field.

Specifically, the rise of feminism has profoundly changed the gender concept and women's status, and promoted the in-depth development of women's political participation. Women's participation in politics has a positive impact on the protection of women's rights. It has changed the binary division of men belonging to politics and women belonging to the family, and made women realize that women's experience and women's affairs are also part of politics and should be the object of public attention.

With women's active participation in politics, political issues have expanded to the so-called "private sphere", and the issues concerned by women and related to their vital interests have attracted attention. Gender mainstreaming has also been introduced into policies and legislation, that is, to add a gender perspective in the whole process of the formulation, implementation, detection and evaluation of policies and legislation, evaluate the impact of relevant legislation and policies on the status

and life of men and women in society, and take action to deal with gender inequality, so as to promote gender equality.

3.3.2 economic participation

Marriage squeeze is pushing women's role in economic activities to change significantly. With the development of women's education and career, they not only get more economic opportunities, but also their participation in the economic field is constantly improving. This trend not only helps to improve the economic situation of women, but also makes a positive contribution to the development of society. Specifically, the proportion of women in employment remained at a high level, nearly 70% of women were in employment, and the employment proportion of urban and rural women were 66.3% and 73.2% respectively. In addition, the employment structure of women was further optimized. The proportion of employment in the primary, secondary and tertiary industries was 28.8%, 17.1% and 54.1% respectively, indicating the diversification of women's economic participation. The proportion of rural women in non-agricultural employment has increased significantly, 39.5% of rural women have migrant work experience, and the proportion of returning women engaged in non-agricultural labor is 52.6%.^[9] These data show that women's status and role in economic activities are increasing. Their economic independence and social status have not only changed the economic status of individuals and families, but also provided new impetus for the diversified and balanced development of social economy.

4. The Role of Social Change in Enhancing the Status of Women

4.1 Education Popularization

4.1.1 Increase in educational opportunities for women

With the development of society and the improvement of education popularization, women's opportunities to obtain education are constantly increasing. This trend not only changes women's own knowledge level and comprehensive quality, but also provides a solid foundation for their career development and social participation. Specifically, the popularization of education enables women to have access to a wider range of knowledge

areas and skill training, which not only enhances their personal abilities but also increases their competitiveness in the labor market. The knowledge and skills acquired by women through education enable them to take on more roles and responsibilities in the workplace, thereby playing a more active role in economic and social development.

In addition, the popularization of education has also promoted the diverse participation of women in society. Women are no longer limited to traditional family roles, but are beginning to showcase their talents and abilities in multiple fields such as politics, economy, and culture. This diversified social participation not only brings more development opportunities for women themselves, but also injects new vitality into the progress and development of society. The popularization of education and the transformation of women's roles have jointly promoted the social concept of gender equality, which has elevated the status and influence of women in society.^[10]

4.1.2 The impact of education on the status of women

Education plays a crucial role in enhancing the status of women. It not only endows women with more knowledge and skills, improves their competitiveness and social status, but also changes their attitudes and ways of thinking, promoting the formation of gender equality awareness. Specifically, education provides women with more employment opportunities, breaks down gender barriers, and enhances economic independence.^[11] According to World Bank data, for every additional year of education received, women's wages increase by an average of about 10%. This economic autonomy not only enhances women's self-esteem and confidence, but also gives them a stronger voice in family decision-making, thus achieving a qualitative leap in social status.

The intergenerational impact of education cannot be ignored. The influence of educated women on their children's education is like sowing seeds of hope. They are more inclined to invest in their children's education, improve the quality of family education, and create a positive learning atmosphere. Global research shows that for every year of increase in maternal education, child survival rates

increase by nearly 10%, and the likelihood of their children completing primary education increases by 2.75 times. The improvement of education level has changed the economic situation of families, provided a broader development platform for the next generation, and further narrowed the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty transmission. In addition, education can strengthen or improve gender bias, cultivate women's critical thinking skills through education, break down gender discriminatory stereotypes, and this change also requires men's support.

4.2 Economic Development

4.2.1 Increased employment opportunities for women

Economic development has provided more employment opportunities for women, which is reflected on multiple levels. With the acceleration of industrialization and urbanization, some traditionally male dominated industries have begun to open up to women, and the range of employment choices for women continues to expand. For example, the development of the service industry has become the dominant force in China's economic structural adjustment and upgrading, providing vast opportunities for women's employment. The rise of the digital economy has also created unprecedented employment opportunities and challenges for women. The application of new technologies such as artificial intelligence,, cloud computing, and big data has brought new possibilities for women's employment. In the fields of digital trade, e-commerce, live streaming, etc., the participation rate, activity rate, and contribution rate of women have been increasing year by year. Digital platforms have broken the limitations of time and space on women's employment and provided rich employment opportunities for women.

4.2.2 The impact of economic independence on women's status

Economic independence is an important symbol of the advancement of women's status. It not only means that women can independently control their economic resources, but also means that they can achieve success in the economic field and provide security for themselves and their families.^[12]

Through employment and entrepreneurship, women can obtain economic income and achieve economic independence, which not only enhances their confidence but also improves their status in the family and society. Economic independence enables women to make various choices independently, no longer subject to others, and make decisions based on their own wishes and abilities in marriage, family, and career, thus having more control over their lives.

Economically independent women demonstrate greater influence in society, as they can choose their favorite jobs, pursue a sense of belonging and self actualization in their hearts, and no longer be bound by traditional roles and societal expectations. In addition, economic independence also grants women a more equal status in interpersonal relationships, no longer subject to economic dependence, and helps to establish healthier and more balanced interpersonal relationships. Meanwhile, economically independent women are able to independently bear living expenses without relying on others for financial support. This independence not only brings dignity to individuals, but also ensures quality of life and stability.

5. The Mechanism of the Interaction Between Marital Pressure and Social Change

5.1 The Impact of Marital Pressure on Social Change

5.1.1 Promote the popularization of education

The phenomenon of marriage squeeze has prompted women to pursue higher levels of education in order to enhance their competitiveness in the marriage market, which not only changes their position in the marriage market, but also promotes the society's attention and popularization of education. With the improvement of women's education level, their participation in economic and social development has increased, the employment ratio has increased, and the occupational structure has been improved. Especially in traditional male dominated industries, the increase in women's participation has injected new vitality into economic development. The popularization and improvement of education have brought more employment opportunities for women,

promoted their status in society, and achieved gender equality. The economic independence and career development of women not only improve the economic situation of individuals and families, but also provide new impetus for the diversified and balanced development of the social economy, thus forming a more equal and inclusive environment in society.

5.1.2 Promote economic development

The phenomenon of marriage squeeze has prompted women to participate more actively in economic activities, increased labor supply and consumption demand, and promoted economic innovation and development. The education and career advancement of women inject new vitality into economic growth, and their performance in multiple industries plays a key role in economic development, especially in fields such as finance, education, and health, where women's contributions are increasingly prominent.

The economic participation of women not only improves the economic situation of families, but also injects vitality into the progress of the social economy. The increase in women's labor force participation rate has promoted economic development and growth, while their activity and influence in entrepreneurship and global economic activities continue to increase, promoting gender equality and social progress.

5.2 The Impact of Social Changes on Marriage Pressure

5.2.1 Impact on population structure

The popularization of education, economic development, and the improvement of legal systems are the three major factors driving social change, which have had a profound impact on changes in population structure and thus have an effect on the phenomenon of marriage squeeze. The popularization of education has reduced the birth rate, thereby alleviating population pressure. With the improvement of education level, people's concept of childbirth has changed, and more families tend to have fewer and better children, which helps to adjust the population structure and reduce the problem of gender imbalance caused by gender preferences at birth. At the same time, economic development has improved people's living standards and further changed their views on childbirth. Many families have begun to place more emphasis

on quality of life rather than the number of children. In addition, the improvement of the legal system, especially the protection of women's rights, has promoted gender equality, which also helps to reduce the gender imbalance caused by gender discrimination in the population.

These social change factors collectively affect the population structure and have an impact on marriage pressure. The popularization of education and economic development have improved the education level and economic status of women, enhanced their bargaining power in the marriage market, and thus alleviated the phenomenon of marriage squeeze to a certain extent. The improvement of the legal system safeguards the legitimate rights and interests of women, promotes gender equality, and helps reduce the gender imbalance caused by gender discrimination, thereby alleviating the pressure of marriage pressure. Overall, these factors have had a positive mitigating effect on the phenomenon of marriage pressure by influencing population structure and changing people's reproductive behavior.

5.2.2 Change the concept of gender roles

Social change has prompted people to re-examine traditional gender role concepts and promote the diversification and equalization of gender roles. This shift in mindset is first manifested in the formation of gender equality awareness. Modern society emphasizes individual differences and diversity, and gender is considered a socially constructed concept that can be reconstructed in individual development. This change not only affects people's traditional views on gender roles, but also promotes the advancement of women's status in society, economy, and family. With the improvement of women's education level and the increase of career development opportunities, their behavior and choices in the marriage market have changed, more pursuing personal development and career achievements, rather than just traditional family roles. In addition, the shift in gender roles has also influenced the behavioral patterns in the marriage market. With the increasing economic independence and social status of women, they pay more attention to the emotional and value compatibility of both parties when choosing a partner, as well as the equality of marriage

and the common growth of partners. This change has made the choices in the marriage market more diversified, and women are no longer limited to traditional marriage models, but can make choices according to their own wishes and needs. At the same time, this also has an impact on men's expectations and behaviors when choosing partners, prompting them to reconsider and adjust their roles and behaviors to adapt to the social trend of gender role diversity and equality.

5.2.3 Promote social participation

The improvement of women's status and open mindedness brought about by social changes have made women more actively participate in social activities and expand their social circles. This change directly affects behavior and choices in the marriage market, as women begin to pursue independence, freedom, and a high-quality life, holding a more open attitude towards marriage. Modern women pay attention to the quality of marital life, pursuing common interests, mutual help, and admiration with their partners, no longer the traditional sense of "respecting each other like guests". They also approach marriage crises more rationally, no longer constrained by social discourse or children's factors, and choose to peacefully end loveless marriages.

In addition, the economic independence and social status of women have enhanced their bargaining power in the marriage market, and their expectations for marriage have become more diversified. Women no longer see marriage as the only reliance, but begin to demonstrate their social value and pursue the realization of their personal value. This shift in mindset has made marriage concepts more open and diverse, thereby alleviating the pressure of marriage compression to a certain extent. Women's choices about marriage are no longer limited to traditional frameworks, but are made based on personal wishes and needs. This autonomy greatly enhances women's position in the marriage market and promotes the overall progress of society's concept of marriage.

6. Conclusion

The squeeze of marriage has had a profound impact on the status of women, intensifying competition in the marriage market, promoting a shift in gender role concepts, and increasing social participation. At the same

time, social changes have provided opportunities for the advancement of women's status, with factors such as education popularization, economic development, and the improvement of legal systems working together to promote the advancement of women's status.

However, we should also recognize that the impact of marriage pressure and social change on women's status is complex, and they interact with each other to jointly promote the evolution of women's status. In future research, we need to further explore the impact mechanisms of marriage pressure and social change on women's status, in order to provide a more scientific basis for formulating relevant policies and promoting gender equality. At the same time, we also need to pay attention to the impact of marriage pressure and social changes on men and other groups, and promote the harmonious development of society.

In short, marriage pressure and social change are phenomena that cannot be ignored in contemporary society, and their impact on women's status has important theoretical and practical significance. We should respond to these changes with a positive attitude, promote the realization of gender equality, and strive to build a more fair and harmonious society.

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