

The Pressures on Leftover Women and Men under the Chinese Patriarchal System

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Abstract—Researchers have studied leftover women to understand the struggle of women to balance marriage planning and career advancement. The aim of this study is to assess social perspectives associated with the pressures leftover men and women face. China is still dominated by the patriarchal thinking that men are breadwinners and women are homemakers, no matter how widespread the notion of gender equality is. In recent decades, the concept of leftover men and women has become a cliché. Women left over are especially affected by many sources of pressure, such as family, media, and policy, but their welfare has been overlooked. Although leftover men are in a better position than leftover women, they still have strong pressure from their families on their careers. Passive leftovers continue to go unnoticed. Based on a 4-month online content analysis, 15 in-depth online interviews, and five semi-structured face-to-face interviews, I have found different perceptions of leftover men and women from their parties and the outside. Moreover, under personal and social attribution, family reputation has been considered as a main point for leftover women to marry early rather than for leftover men.

Keywords—Gender roles, leftover women, leftover men, patriarchy.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Chinese patriarchal system is characterized by two characteristics-self-reproducing and intergenerational transmission [1]. Under such a convention, reproduction has played a significant role in pushing marriage and understanding this patriarchal system. In modern society, leftover women and men have become typical and contradictory representatives of Chinese patriarchy. As a general rule, both are defined according to their ages. When they are older than 27 and not married, they will be considered leftover women and men. However, the definition of a leftover man can be postponed to 30 since society has a more tolerant view of male ages. As a result, it has become an obvious and acceptable social phenomenon today. According to Yu's [2] research on linguistic metaphors for leftover women, metaphorically representing leftover women (men) reflects and shapes Chinese womanhood (manhood) within the Chinese sociocultural context through the contested ideologies of traditional patriarchy and modern egalitarianism. Under such an ideology, there are many literatures that have talked about leftover women or leftover men separately [3]–[6]. Sociological research have similarly paid more attention to Chinese leftover women, who are more common and comprise a more visible proportion in urban

China. For example, leftover women accounted for 3.28 million women in 2000 and rose to 15.16 million in 2010. Urban areas had a significant number of women classified as "leftover women." At the same time, Huachun *et al.* [7] have predicted that there are likely to be around 33 million leftover women in 2020. Compared to leftover women, leftover men have received less coverage. However, as the percentage of single men had gradually increased, there has been greater attention on leftover men.

Currently, gender equality has been developing a lot in the public sector, but in the private sector, women and men still adhere to traditional views regarding marriage and gender status. In general, every section of the public and private spheres is still dominated by traditional gender roles for women and men alike. In this study, four variables (education, income, parental pressure, and dual standards for age) are used to examine the attitudes and measurements of leftover women and men. For the purposes of expanding the scope of the research, I also utilized online social platforms to understand how men and women view leftovers.

An in-depth interview as well as an online context analysis are used to compare the differences between leftover women and men. By examining the left-behind men and women perspective of the rooted patriarchal system, this paper reveals how the system affects both gender and modern society on a paradoxical level. In particular, it seeks to understand if leftover women and men are experiencing different levels of pressure and expectation. It will compare the different attitudes from different ages and social platforms (online and offline). It offers two important insights. First, it identifies the reasons and social attitudes toward both leftover women and men. Moreover, it contributes to existing works that have focused primarily on leftover women, or on either leftover women or leftover men.

Over the years, gender inequalities have persisted in the distribution of power [8]. Throughout China's history, traditional women have been treated as subordinates to their fathers, male elders, husbands, and sons and had no rights of their own. Under such previous systems women were regarded as property, particularly in poorer families [9]. The idea of women as property extends to their early marriage, starting at ages 15 [10]. The establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, emphasized the view that "Women hold up half of sky," and was characterized by a series of laws designed to protect and enhance women's rights. Chinese women now possess more social rights and can enter into various fields previously available only to men. However, the current marriage structure is still inclined towards

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traditional notions of marriages that view men as breadwinners and women as homemakers. Men still marry younger women, but it is less common for women to marry younger men. Men and women have different reasons for marriage. Men seek marriage as a way to reproduce, while marriage for women is often designed to improve their future living conditions [11].

II. LEFTOVER MEN AND WOMEN: A BRIEF HISTORY

Arrangement marriage has long been practiced in China and has greatly shaped society's understanding of women's and men's roles. The conventional arrangement is usually characterized by woman marrying up through marriage to men from a higher socioeconomic class [12]. Despite changes in society with economic development and globalization, the existing marriage model endures, and remains a main criterion for people to choose a spouse.

Increasingly, the visibility of left-over men and women, individuals who are still unmarried, have attracted attention. There are different concepts to define leftover women and leftover men. The label of "leftover women" is often used to refer to educated and unmarried women, ages 27 and above [4], [12], [13]. Leftover men are those who are over 30 years of age and are still single [14]. One important difference between leftover women and men is that there is no education variable used to define leftover men compared to women. Moreover, a leftover man's range of acceptable choices is greater than that of a leftover woman. In addition, leftover women as a group are considered individuals who are eligible to enter the marriage market but choose not to marry in order to pursue up higher goals whereas leftover men are seen as individuals who had been squeezed out of the marriage market [1], [15].

There are also different reasons for the presence of leftover women compared to leftover men. According to the Chinese Statistic Yearbook [16], in terms of age distribution, as of 2019, the ages with the most imbalanced sex ratios in China were 10-14 years old and 15-19 years old. The sex ratio in these two age groups is between 119.10 and 118.39 with almost 1 girl corresponding to 1.12 boys. In addition, female infanticide [17] is also a factor that explains the current gender gap. As a result, there are roughly 104.5 males for every 100 females in China. There are two types of leftover men: one who actively chooses to be single, is highly educated and has a steady income, and has more choice as they age; the other is considered passive, lacking a stable income and security. The most significant difference between these two groups of leftover men is the geographical distribution whereby active ones often live in large cities while passive ones reside in rural areas. A narrower definition would state that the "real" leftover men are those who belong to the passive group. In contrast, leftover women are defined by their age and education levels. A woman who has a higher level of education and is older is more likely to be a leftover woman. These leftover women, like active leftover men, also live in city centres. Leftover women and leftover men have differing subtexts. For example, marrying is a priority option for leftover women, and it is objectively better for their future lives since commonly marriage and children are necessities for women. As a result of the long delay, age advantages will disappear, thus leading to more disadvantages for them in the marriage market. By comparison, men's marriage

opportunities are not as affected by age, so if the conditions are right, they can marry wives much later in life. The differences between them have led to different social attitudes towards leftover women and men.

Due to the advancement of technology, social media has played an important role in shaping attitudes towards leftover women and men, especially for women. Continuing exposure and pressure with social media has presented leftover women with a negative image in the public sphere [12], [18]. Recently, there have been increased online dating shows to catch public attention and anxiety. Under this condition, with the function of orientating public opinions and attention, social media can also serve as a vehicle for government policies, such as marriage policy [3], [12]. In studying leftover men and women, this paper highlights the development of these two groups over the past ten years and captures the attitudes towards these two groups from various social perspectives. Importantly, I centre the role of social media and social platforms to illustrate how the virtual realm is key to the social distribution of ideas and assumptions about these two groups of people.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theoretic Supports

Under the patriarchal system, gender is usually defined as the different gender division of labour and the social subordination of women by men [19]. Traditionally, holding a job and earning a salary has been considered to men's family obligation, at the same time, women has been connected to care housework and children even though they also work with paid jobs [20]. Additionally, in the contemporary society, the reasons for such gender division of labour are combined traditional family rules and volunteer maintenance, for example, even if the marriage partner is willing to participate in the traditional roles of the opposite sex, they are not willing to give up their traditional gender roles [21]. In traditional sociological theories, there is not much research to solve the contradiction between gender and the division of labour. For example, in addition to the primary status of women at work, women also have the dual identity to deal with housework and taking care of children in their personal lives, especially after marriage. They are called unpaid work and women are main undertaker. In [22] discussion, it is mentioned that the influence of the wife's contribution to labour mainly depends on the husband's expectations and requirements. In this way, it has also indicated that men's privileges in marital role negotiation are still strong and in the authority [21]. In the process of connecting traditional values and democratic impulses, women seem to strike a balance between effective workers and traditional gender role based on previous principles [23].

Despite social pressure to change traditional gender roles, the evolution of culture may still make us to keep the traditional gender roles, which is matching masculinity for men and femininity for women [24]. When it comes to Chinese culture, masculinity and femininity are also oriented to *yang* and *yin*. Although it emphasizes the balance between *yang* and *yin*, it also mentions that the way of achieving balance through *yang* controls *yin* [25], [26]. Besides, in different cultures, money is an important symbol of economic success and masculinity [27]. So, this also creates a close

connection between masculinity and power [28] Occupation and gender are also closely connected with each other with time changes [19].

B. Leftover Women

Leftover women now have become a widespread topic in China. As China opens up to the world and transitions towards a market economy, patriarchal Confucian norms have begun to re-develop [29], [30] In the struggle between tradition and modernity, the family remains an important site of contestation [31]. The emergence of leftover women has also become the main object of attention between tradition and modernity. Although women have made significant progress in the public sphere and secured economic independence and social statuses, in the family sphere, they are still confined to the traditional family framework that espouse male authority and female passivity [32]. Leftover women usually have successful businesses, but they also have a strong family concept.

Normally, people usually consider career or education as obstacles for women to get married early. Ji and Yeung [33] have pointed out the close relationship for the marriage time with education, degree of urbanization and economic development. Besides, the closer social interaction, the higher possibilities to be leftover status [15].

C. Leftover Men

Income and work status are not important for leftover women to find partners; however, these two variables are the main points for leftover men [15]. In this way, they also fit for traditional expectation for gender [12]. However, higher education achievement is a common feature for active leftover men and all leftover women [34] In fact, both men at the bottom of society and women at the top of the society get out of the marriage market [35]. For both leftover men and women, they more consider economic pressure than romantic relationship. In the process of the development of gender consciousness, through the development of Chinese feminist consciousness, men still mainly retain traditional gender consciousness in terms of gender. Therefore, in terms of spouse selection and ideology, men also prefer the traditional "male as breadwinner and female as housekeeper." [5].

IV. METHODS

To analyse different social perspectives and attitudes in researching gender and marriage. First, my approach is a combination of different groups, which I believe will yield more diverse perspectives. Second, the object of my analysis is marriage planning and career development. At the same time, instead of looking at a single group, I was able to compare the attitudes of leftover women and leftover men. Most women tend to view marriage as their ultimate goal, and it can significantly interfere with their career development. Men, however, are not affected by this phenomenon. Thirdly, I expand on sexism, gender roles, and stereotypes in this paper by pointing out the differences between the internal and external perspectives of the two gender groups regarding the same issue.

Due to social media's significant influence on gender stereotypes [36], I have opted for the online qualitative approach for this study. Zhihu is the online forum that I used for my study. Zhihu is known as a "nan hu" (male's forum) in

response to feminists. Different from other forums, it may offer a different point of view. I usually used hashtags such as leftover women (#shengnv), leftover men (#shengnan), and single person (#danshen) on Zhihu to select discussion rooms to participate in. To gain a deeper understanding of the messages for a topic such as this in China, I conducted an online context analysis for four months in Zhihu between January 10 and April 3, 2021, for 20 participants. During this process, I conducted 15 online interviews with 9 women and 6 men after receiving confirmation in Zhihu. In order to get a more representative sample, I conducted five semi-structured interviews in person with an older audience using recommendations from friends.

The interview process was divided into two steps. To establish validity and determine time limits, I conducted an existing test for 30 minutes before scheduling any formal interviews. Additionally, the main topics covered in the online interview include attitudes toward leftover women and men, their current marriage plans, and the factors that influence their choice of partner. In the case of the in-depth interview, it includes contexts similar to those in the pre-existing test. At the same time, the entire transcript is written in both Chinese and English and saved as Microsoft Word documents. For further data, I used newspaper reports, social media reports, and a TV series called Find Yourself in 2020, which depicts a typical leftover woman struggling to maintain friendships, friendships, and family after she was crushed by a man who was younger than her. Through these paths, it will reflect the experiences and thoughts of leftover women and men. Furthermore, it will be helpful to investigate whether leftover women and men face different pressures in a broader context.

V. THE DOUBLE STANDARDS OF MARRIAGE AND CAREER FOR LEFTOVER WOMEN AND MEN

There are variations among men and women in terms of how they see themselves within the left-over category. Women ages 27 and above consider themselves to be leftover women, while most men do not consider themselves leftover. Leftover women usually treat age as a main source of being leftover. However, they tend to take the term positively rather than as a negative label, like Hu, who is a master student:

"You know? In my hometown, most of girls would marry after graduated from university, like 23 or 24. But I don't want to be that kind of person, I don't know what I can do once I get married, I don't want to be a housewife."

Hu equates the term leftover women with working women. Leftover women are characterized by the fact that they devote more energy and attention to their work. They are more inclined to choose work than they are to choose marriage and family. Compared to previous female lifestyle, it talks about social norms on women that only expect certain roles from them and cannot comprehend the idea of women as workers. That said, most of the women I interviewed said that they did not intend to stay single forever; they hope to be wives and mothers in their final journey. As Liu explains: *"I think I would marry one day, definitely. I want to marry someone when I go to 30, and I want to have my offspring. If I cannot marry before 30, it would be difficult and risky to have a kid."* Liu always wants to be a mother in her statement, her anxiety

of age and marriage reflects on production. Women have earlier optimal childbearing ages, so Liu expresses these concerns. The average age at which a woman can have children seems to be 28 to 30 years old now [37]. The more modern woman seeks economic independence and greater success than the woman in the previous era. In spite of this, they still regard marriage and children as necessities in their whole life. Hence, it is understood that women have advanced views and independent thought. In the same vein, women still consider marriage and procreation to be their responsibilities. Traditional ideologies on gender roles from Families and publics continually have strong impacts on defining women's family and reproductive responsibilities. The belief that "marriage is a must for women" in China is still existed [38], [39].

A. Parental Pressure

Parents' pressure has been reported by most of the 15 online interviewees. Women and men, however, tend to interpret parental pressure differently. The women in this study associate marriage with family reputation and respectability. Women's parents often place emphasis on the need for future generations and the optimal pregnancy ages for women. These are important factors that lead them to encourage early marriage for their daughters. Additionally, the circumstance of the female marriage is affected by the environment as well, including the family, colleagues, or friends of the female. When surroundings are still following the traditional gender norms and marriage ages, women will bear greater responsibilities for their families. Liu comes from a small village in Gansu and now works in Beijing. Despite caring for her parents tremendously, she has a different perspective regarding her current lifestyle and future life direction. The differences between her parents' expectations and her own desires have caused anxiety for her and places pressure on her to find "Mr. Right":

I know I am a leftover woman now, and I will definitely get married one day. But I need to find one who I really like. My mother is very angry, and she asks me to back to Gansu and get married as soon as possible because many of my previous friends get married and have babies now. My mother just thinks that one of the reasons why I do not get married is that I live in Beijing and there are many temptations.

Liu's situation is common among the female interviewees. After graduation, college students prefer to stay in developed cities, such as Beijing or Shanghai, to seek good job opportunities. But a large number understand that they will not stay in these places forever, especially women whose parents prefer that they have a good marriage rather than a good job. Parents recognize the difficulties and pressures in developed cities, such as higher rent, regional differences or other economic factors. Yet they still consider marriage an important aspect of women's lives, viewing the "golden age" for women in terms of family formation. If women are over 27 years old and unmarried, or 30 years old and still single, when they return to their hometown, it will not only be more difficult for them to get married, but they will also experience some psychological pressure. When they have lived with their parents, they are more likely to compromise with their

parents' suggestions, especially in matters related to marriage and life choices.

Chen has moved back to live with her parents for three months now and admits that she has been unemployed during Covid-19. After resigning from her job and unsuccessfully securing jobs, she decided to go back to her hometown and accepted her parents' advice.

After working for some years, on the one hand, I feel tired and then I was dismissed [from my job] during covid-19. On the other hand, my parents always talk to me to go back to [my] hometown as a girl. They do not care about how much I can earn or how higher working status I can get, they just think it is time for me to get married. Honestly, I have dated with some unfamiliar persons till now.

Chen once talked about her parents' expectations of her, they just want Chen to be by their side so that they can protect her. Chen explained that women are more likely to be in danger than men. For instance, Chen has a male cousin who is 2 years older than her and works in the field. The attitude towards her male cousin is that men need to go outside, a contrast to how women are viewed.

Although parents have different attitudes regarding men and women's work and visibility in certain places, most parents prefer their sons to pursue a career. But this does not mean that men do not feel pressured by their parents. Like women, parental pressure is also an important factor for leftover men. Compared to leftover women, however, men are more vocal about how they feel about potential parental pressure and do not readily to their parents. Dong, for example, is an only child and shared that his family has always had higher expectations of his personal social achievements. The parental pressure him experiences are often related to social status and class rather than marriage:

My parents have not talked about marriage with me, and I have a girlfriend right now. I think it is a reason why my parents do not push me ? But I can feel that stress, as an only child in my family, I have to marry someone in next few years, not now. Right now, I need to improve myself, which is more important to get married.

According to the rest male statements, they have also mentioned about this point about "career is more important than marriage for men." By comparing two different cases, parents put more pressure on women in the area of marriage or family, and pressure on men is more in the field of work. Parents believe that women need to enter a stable environment at an earlier age, such as getting married and having children earlier. In the traditional Chinese concept, regardless of men and women, once they get married, they enter another field, which needs stability rather than struggle.

Age is the main dividing line for the leftover women and men. At the same time, it also causes different views and attitudes on leftover women and men. The overall view for leftover women is that their value decreases with aging, along with their sexual desire, even they do not have any value. However, leftover men generally have become more valuable to society, and they are not experiencing as much decline in sexual desire as leftover women.

At the same time, when choosing partners, in analysing Zhihu's contexts, there is a comment that "a woman usually

chooses a man who are one or two years older than themselves. However, men always want to choose wives around 20 years old" to explain the double standards of ages for both women and men.

Besides, healthy is a critical criterion that informs the double standards of ages for women compared to men. Most of my online interviewees stated that they want to have children in next few years. They all express the importance of optimal childbearing ages. Gu has pointed out that this standard will change with different regions.

I will marry someone when I am 30. I know it is fine to get married after 30 for men if I were in Shanghai or Beijing, however, in my hometown, my friends now have babies and some of them have the second child in this year. I have resigned from my previous company, and I want to create my own business this year.

When asked what kind of wife he wants to marry, Gu responded:

I am 29 now, and 29 is fine for me but not for a woman, especially for bearing a baby. I think I will marry someone who is 24 or 25. In this way, we can have two more years for us to enjoy romantic life. And then, we can have extra time to have a baby or the second child.

Gu cares about his wife's age more than him, with his perspective, in his current age, he would not like to marry someone who are the same age with him. Rather than talking about the standard age in this case, "women's bodies" usually is more accurate description to analyse female values. If they are older and not seen to be of childbearing age, their bodies will be devalued. On the other hand, 27 or 30 is not a strict standard for men to get marry, they are not hurry in the age problem. As a result, when it comes to optimal childbearing age in this case, Gu mainly has talked about the importance of optimal childbearing age of women, rather than men.

B. Contradiction between Modernisation and Tradition

As mentioned above, the contradictions between modernisation and tradition are important features of the topic of leftover women and men. With the development of technology and globalisation, social media imports different cultures and values into China that can influence individuals. At the same time, social media platforms also allow for the promotion of traditional ideas. With the implementation of the *Second Child Policy* in recent years, there are increasing reality shows online that advertise traditional values about marriage and the family. Except for these social advertisement, educational attainment has also shaped the contradiction between modern and tradition. The more people to learn knowledge, the more chances for them to accept the ideology of gender equality and advanced gender norms.

The improvement of educational attainment is a critical step related to the existence of leftover women. Education has become a key point for men to find soulmates since they would like to find a partner who have shared interests with them. Educational attainment is an important topic for offline participants when it comes to the discussion of finding good partners. For example, Su clearly stated that her partner's education must be the same as hers, or at least higher. Wu similarly points out the importance of education for him to find a good wife. But unlike Su, Wu cannot endure his wife

having a higher education than him.

...I mean education now is common, at least for undergraduate level. When most of us graduated from bachelor's degree, we are getting 23, and then we start to work or go to higher educational level – master's degree. Ok, it will last for 2 or 3 years. Such as, I am a master now and I do not want to go for PhD since it will last for another 4 or 5 years. Indeed, it will postpone marriage age, especially for women. At the same time, I do not want to my wife to be a PhD. In my view, it is enough to have an undergraduate education, I do not want her degree is higher than mine. It feels that she is powerful than me.

Nowadays, education is not only necessary for people to find a better job and higher income, it also has a role in determining the power dynamic between men and women. As it has been talked in past few years about three genders in China "men, women and female PhDs," which defines female PhDs as another category that differs from women. As a third gender in China, female PhDs have two obvious characterizes with high educational attainment and more difficult to get married than other women. Although men would like to find their partners who have higher education, their partner's education cannot be higher than theirs. In contrast, women prefer that the academic qualifications are equal for couples.

Goffman's gender role display theory posits that men and women often display existing gender roles in their social life, with men performing masculinity in line with power, strength, and domination, Women, by comparison perform femininity, by behaving meek, gentle, and obedient. According to recent data, however, younger women like to challenge these images of femininity while younger men prefer to keep these traditional characteristics of masculinity. Hu, for example, is a PhD in what speciality?? in Beijing, and states that she does not want to be a traditional woman. She expresses a desire to achieve gender equality in her future family structure.

You must hear a saying that there are three kinds of person in China – men, women and female PhD. And I am the third one, and I am proud of it. Honestly, I prefer to use a positive view to treat my identity now as a leftover woman. ... as a modern woman, leftover women should not be a traditional one with obedience. I have seen how my mother works for unpaid work and I do not want to be that one anymore. I must be a one with higher social status and independent economy.

Like Hu, Lili regards leftover women as modern women in order to differentiate herself from notions of traditional women. In her view, modern women have higher social status, and are independent economic actors. Compared to traditional women, modern women prefer to express their values in public spheres, like she says: *I don't think women's future is in the kitchen. As a modern woman, I will learn more knowledge and raise my positions in the workplace, I am also learning international relations, and I want to go for a master's degree with this major and work in political area to express my skills.*

For Han, an older interviewee, traditional gender roles are important, regardless of gender.

Old is good. Characteristics, behaviours or marriages should follow traditional rules. I understand that women should have their own business, but I also think women

should have women's images. ... of course, women should marry. There are very few women who choose not to marry. But once you marry and have a child, your life is successful.

Han further mentioned that she observes the traditional gender and marriage concept because it has many years of history. In her view, women can only guarantee their opportunities in life after giving birth. She believes that women are still in the weaker position in the family and in society.

C. Income

Income is a main criterion in terms of mate selection for leftover women. In my research, most women who are in the age range for leftover women care about their own income. Leftover men also pursue higher social status and incomes, however, with the exception of one respondent, most male interviewees do not regard their partners' income as important. Qian now is 32, and he comes from a lower income family. To possessing a quality life, he expresses that he wants his wife can work as well as him after getting married. *"I know most men prefer to leave their wives in the homes, if I have money, I also do not want my wife to work since men should be main supporter in the families. But now, I have to admit that I don't have enough ability to bear whole family expenditure."* Although income is an indispensable part of the criteria for mate selection, as more women enter the workplace, the concept of the male breadwinner and female caretaker has started to wane. Yet the dominant understanding in Chinese society still views the male income as the main source of provision for the family.

Xi currently lives abroad and says that she has been a leftover woman for few years now. After hesitating about whether to get married or start her academic life, she chose to go abroad to improve her education. She feels positive about her leftover woman status since she has had enough time and money to pursue her dreams. Xi mentioned the importance of gender equality and economic independence many times during our conversation.

We are modern women; I do not want my partner to afford whole economic or others once we have built up a family together. I have ability to earn more money, and in my ideal marriage, we should economy independently, and relationship dependently. I do not want to rely on someone, even though he is the closest one in my life.

For parents, however, the income is what determines who can take initiative in the family. For the five interviewees who are in the older age bracket, they believe that the man should be the head of the family as men's position as head of the family and society as long been practiced. Compared with the economic status that determines their rights, the secular concept of hierarchy is more decisive, and this kind of hereditary rights has not been broken in modern society. On the one hand, some women believe they should have their own economic sources. On the other hand, however, others think it is more important to take charge of their partners' incomes and assets. Fen never worked after she married at the age of 23. From then, she has mostly performed unpaid work, such as housework and childcaring. Different from current leftover women' views, she takes charge of her husband's income and other assets. She does not think work is important for women despite that fact that she is the one in control her husband's salary.

It is a woman's nature to be a good wife if she can take charge of her husband's income. I have a daughter and she has already got married when she was 25, which is a perfect age to get married after she graduated from university. And now she is doing some idle work in here. Why should women care about money? It is a man's job.

Fen stands as a symbol of the traditional women who stay at home and care for the children. The continued state of traditional gender role is still dividing women and men into certain areas. In this way, it separately adds more pressures for each group.

VI. CONCLUSION

With the rapid development of society and economy introducing new ideas about marriage, family, gender equality and career, women in China have responded to these new modes of being a woman in society. What followed was the emergence of leftover women and leftover men. I have explained the different reasons for the emergence of leftover women and leftover men, even though they have similar parts for the emergence of both groups. Both are the result of the traditional and modern struggle. They are also the result of the tension between individuals and their families, especially for women. Women's consciousness about their options has indeed risen in China, and the source of this stems from education and work. Economic income has become the most important feature that distinguishes modern women from traditional women. Both the leftover women and the leftover men emphasize the importance of income, but the leftover men will pay more attention to income and social status, because they will use these as capital to find a partner. Despite the fact that the leftover women are constantly pursuing better economic income and job status, the dominant understanding in society still upholds the idea of the male breadwinner and female caretaker. Therefore, the standards of the two groups in choosing a mate are still reliant on traditional expectations for men and women.

The existence of leftover women and leftover men is also the cause of parental pressure. Since the emergence of the topic of "leftover women" in 2006, anxiety has not only spread among the leftover women and the leftover men themselves but has also caused more anxiety for parents. Due to the difference between traditional marriage relationships and the spread of social media, the phenomenon of leftover women and leftover men has become a concern of society. The interviewees all mentioned parental expectations on them to marry and have children. But parents' expectations of their sons differ from their expectations of their daughters. Parents want their daughters to marry and have children earlier in life, and hope that they can engage in stable and easy jobs. By comparison parental pressure on their sons rests on income and greater responsibility for the future and society. In this way, parental pressure reflects existing gender stereotypes for women and men that are still being passed on. It is not only an obstacle for women to pursue higher social positions but also cause bigger pressure on men.

From this study, we can see that the so-called leftover women and leftover men do not pay much attention to this title. Rather, their attitude towards this title is either positive or accepting. Yet, this does not mean that they are not under pressure. The current society's evaluation of leftover women and leftover men is still negative. At the same time, due to

China's current two-child and three-child policy, social media also pays more attention to leftover women and leftover men. The pressure placed on leftover women and men has become a key topic on social media platforms and in public for a long time. Despite the public's interest in leftover women and men, there is little consideration for their welfare. In particular, there are more negative attitudes towards leftover women than leftover men. This is also due to the dominance of existing gender logic that roots women's worth in the family, and there will be a greater degree of tolerance for men's choices of marriage and love.

Under the "three children" policy background, this paper re-reflects the social phenomenon of leftover women and men, at the same time, it pays more attention to pressures for both groups. Understanding each pressure, hopefully, will cause more thoughts on gender roles. By combining both groups together, on the one hand, it is clear to understand existing gender roles causing stress for both genders. On the other hand, it expresses that marriage and reproduction are the core ideology in the patriarchal system to constrain people's gender role diversity.

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