Pros and Cons of “The China One Child Policy”

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In the late 1970s, when food supply was dwindling and space is congested, the Chinese government took a strong stance on having more than one child in the family. They gave away free contraceptives, encouraged abortions, and tried their best to educate people on safe sex. Unfortunately, all their efforts failed. So, in 1980, when population growth is showing no signs of slowing down, the government implemented the One Child Policy, a mandatory policy where couples are only allowed to have one child.

The rule is still alive and well in China today. There are posters plastered all over the country that reads, “Less Children, Better Life”, promoting the mandatory policy. But more and more people are now against it, calling the policy oppressive. Some, however, strongly defends it.

The Pros of One Child Policy

**1. Population control.**
This is probably the number one reason that couples are mandated to give birth and raise only one child. After all, the country’s growing population was what spurred the policy in the first place. If population growth was not mitigated during the 70s, the ratio between people and land area would be high today. Food would be scarcer than ever, and poverty would be at its highest.

As of today, China makes up almost 20% of the world’s entire population. This is taking a toll in education and housing needs, and land and government resources.

**2. Poverty eradication.**
In China, where culture and economic activities are still rooted in the old ways, too many births add to the serious problem of poverty. As a means to improve the way of life and develop these poor areas, the government has introduced family planning. Keeping population growth under control is seen as an effective way to eradicate poverty in the country. In other parts of China, the One Child Policy is also necessary to ensure a comfortable and healthy life with jobs, food and other resources kept in sufficient supply. In fact, the gradual decline in poverty rate is considered a direct result of the One Child Policy.

**3. Exceptions in place.**
While it is a mandatory policy, there are certain circumstances where couples are exempted from the One Child Policy. Very wealthy people are given rights to have multiple children, provided that they pay a hefty fine. Couples who have a severely handicapped child can also have another baby. The exceptions, however, have no clear-cut rules, and only government officials can make a decision for each individual case. Ethnic minorities throughout china are also exempt from the policy.

**4. Compliance results in benefits.**
As a way to motivate couples to comply, certain incentives are given. Complying couples will be given a certificate that will buy them good benefits, such as loans that are completely interest-free, subsidies for housing and education, and longer periods of maternity leave.

**5. Widely accepted policy.**
A large percentage of Chinese people believe that the One Child Policy has many beneficial effects. More people are in favor of the mandate now than when it was implemented years ago. Although culture is still rooted in tradition to have large families, more people are showing support for the One Child Policy.

The Cons of One Child Policy

**1. Increase in abortion and infanticide cases.**
Because of the mandatory policy, the number of children being killed or abandoned is increasing at an alarming rate. Worse, most of the victims are girls, because majority of the couples would want to have a boy as an only child. This is because boys have money making potentials, will carry the namesake for the family, and will provide labor.

Also, when the gender of the baby is revealed, and turns out to be female, later-term abortions will be performed. Accidental pregnancy of couples who already have a child would also result in abortion, increasing the number of cases.

**2. Imbalanced sex ratio.**
With more preference to a boy when having a single child, the male population is higher than that of females. The impact of gender imbalance may not be felt now, but it will cause problems in the near future. It would be harder for men to find a wife who will bear him children.

**3. Negative effects on the child.**
Being an only child, with all the attention and resources focused on them, they would develop the Little Emperor syndrome, where they are spoiled and lazy. Because their needs are catered to and even over indulged, a child can become overweight and very lazy. This is why obesity in children is now a major problem in China.

High suicide rates in China are also due to the stress of being an only child. Many responsibilities and pressures related to education, career and other parents’ expectations fall upon the only child, leading to stress that many of them can’t handle

The One Child Policy also created the 4-2-1 problem. When the child grows, the responsibility to take care of aging parents and grandparents will fall on their shoulders. This means four grandparents and two parents to be taken care of by only one child. As a result, the child can no longer take care of themselves.

**4. Negative effects on the country.**
Majority of China’s population today consists of elderlies that can no longer sustain the massive labor needs of the country. This results in a dwindling workforce. The One Child Policy is also violating a family’s moral and ethical values. Moreover, it seeks to control at what age people should get married and when they should have children.

**5. Birth tourism.**
Because giving birth to another child is not acceptable in China, parents would resort to give birth overseas. One of the most preferred destinations is Hong Kong, because it is exempted from the mandate. There are also several advantages to having a Hong Kong passport. While parents escape the strict rules of China, their actions could have an impact on Hong Kong and its people.

**Are you for or against the One Child Policy?**

**Given the opportunity, would you abolish or keep the mandate in place?**