

# Stereotype Chinese have on IVF Babies and Parents

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## Abstract

**This essay examines the the stereotype Chinese have on IVF babies and the reason behind it. Four hundred and twenty-nine IVF and non IVF parents participate in the research. They complete questionnaires of related questions and four of the IVF parents participate in one to one interviews. The research result was counted and made into graphs to demonstrate the results. In conclusion, discrimination of IVF babies still exist in Chinese society, mainly regarding their health and intelligence problems. Some people are unclear about the medical theories behind this process. Women may feel pressure when having IVF babies.**

## Keywords

**Stereotype; IVF baies; parents; discrimination.**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 1978, the first in-vitro fertilization baby in the world, Louise Brown, was born. Along with the development of modern-day society, in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer has become more and more common. However, according to research, "Patterns of emotional responses to pregnancy ,experience of pregnancy and attitudes to parenthood among IVF couples: a longitudinal study" published in the Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics & Gynecology, "[a] majority of both the IVF women (75%) and the IVF men (66%) stated that they experienced the pregnancy differently compared to other couples without previous infertility problems. The experience of having difficulty in having fertile offspring has brought them with uneasy feelings. The experiment revealed that IVF parents face plenty of worries including the fear of losing the pregnancy, having to get through caesarean birth. Experiment revealed that IVF mothers and fathers worried more about whether the baby would be injured at birth more than natural birth babies' parents. They may also have some unrealistic expectations of themselves as parents.

The frequent recalling of the experience as an infertile woman can be stressful for these women. Currently, society puts so much pressure on this issue. Infertility not only affects women, it can also cause distress to men as well. The gossip and comments from the public on these individuals can lead to emotional distress.

It was also widely reported that infertile women experience additional pressure from family and friends to bear a child (William, 1988). Moreover, it has been suggested in China that people have certain discriminations towards women with an IVF baby. Although IVF mothers are going through the exact same process of being pregnant and giving birth, people don't regard them as normal babies. There is a great portion of IVF parents that didn't consider themselves having any difference with other parents. Nevertheless, through observing the current society, researchers have reached a conclusion that it is possible for people to have different attitudes towards IVF babies compared to their attitudes towards non IVF babies.

The experiments are intended to find out people's opinions about IVF babies versus natural birth babies. The most important thing is to better understand the origin of the problem which may be the stereotypes that the public has about IVF babies and ultimately to find a way to eliminate these stereotypes. Today, many parents are sometimes even hiding the fact that their child is an IVF baby because they consider it shameful.

Even IVF mothers and fathers can have different stereotypes about having IVF babies. For example, according to one IVF mother, she reported "I think I am more nervous and worried, I wonder if the risk of injury to the baby is higher because of the IVF treatment although I have heard that this is not the cause but I wonder how big these studies have been and if it really is so" (A. Hjelmstedt, A-M. Widström, H. Wramsby & A. Collins, 2009)

The common and understandable lack of knowledge and understanding of this technology are causing certain psychological problems to the parents of the IVF baby when the mother is pregnant.

According to research, IVF can be a good thing for people to do. Through getting successful IVF, the couple, especially men feel more engaged in the process of pregnancy and they value the chance of having the baby more than others do. The research therefore may change people's biases towards this technology and be more open to the idea of having a child via IVF .

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1. Participants

Four hundred and twenty-nine participants joined this study by answering the questionnaire was sent out. Among these people. 25.17% (n=108) are parents of IVF babies and 74.83%(n=321) are not IVF parents. The IVF parents include 95.37% (n=193) female and 4.63% (n=5) male. 80.56% (n=87) participants graduates from a 4-year university. The median range for their age is from 36-45 years old. Among the group that didn't include IVF parents, the median age range was 36-45 years old. 89.72%(n=288) of this subgroup of participants were university graduates.

### 2.2. Measures

Each participants were asked to complete the questionnaire with two separate forms for IVF parents and non-IVF parents. The questionnaires included several questions that measured their attitudes towards having an IVF baby. Among the IVF parents, participations were asked to rate their families' support toward them having an IVF baby. The options were from 1-10, representing from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." They were also asked to answer the following question: "How long did it take for you to decide to have an IVF baby?" The participants were given the following options: a) suddenly decided, b) about one week, c) about a month, d) about a year, and e) more than one year. The responses indicated that more than half of the participants use about one year or more than one year to decide to have an IVF baby. 26.47% (n=26) of the participants were reported to have tried adopting a child and 75.93% (n=82) reported they did not have try any other way. Also, the majority of them identified their reason for having an IVF baby as wanting to have a child with their own genetics. Finally, 8.33%(n=3) of the participants reported that they worried their IVF kids may face some trouble in their future.

Among non-IVF parents, they were asked to say whether they ever thought of having an IVF baby, and if so why did they decide to no longer pursue IVF. 56.07% (n=180) reported that they haven't thought about it while others reported that they had gave up because of different reasons. 10.59%(n=34) participants thought that IVF babies may have some health problem; 9.03%(n=29) participants thought that being the product of high technology is a cool thing;

and 80.37% (n=258) participant thought that they didn't have any difference with natural birth children.

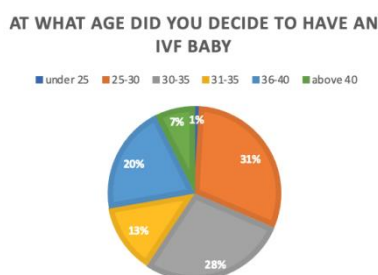
### 2.3. Procedure

Data collection was completed through WeChat's mini program. The research study and its' intended purpose was explained to participants. In an effort to maintain anonymity, they did not include their names on the questionnaire, and the interviewee only told me their family names. Lastly, the result were collected through the mini program and my interview record. I randomly selected four participants to talk with them. Then, I picked the data and analyzed the graph illustrated through software and analyze the result. I also viewed and analyzed the open-ended questions.

### 2.4. Results

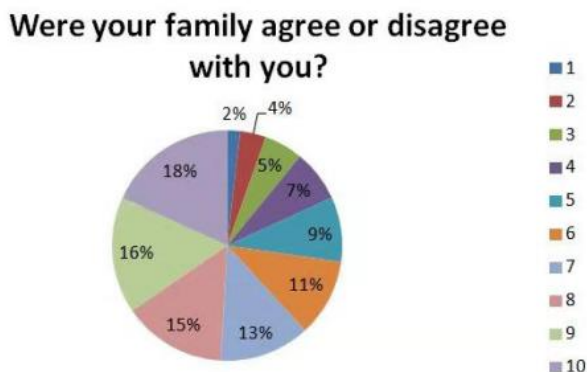
First, I analyzed the results of my interviews. Three interviewees generally reported that they are very open about the fact that their kids are IVF babies and they feel "OK" about telling their children that they are IVF babies. However, one interviewee told us that she wouldn't tell anyone except her close friends and relatives that the child is an IVF baby because she is worried that this may attract too much attention to the kid. The situation reflected that being an innovative technology in China, IVF baby is a controversial topic and that many people still doubt that a IVF baby will be healthy or the same as a natural baby. Moreover, another interviewee, Ms. Zhu, told me that when she first told her families about IVF baby, they felt concerned about the health problem of the future baby. Nevertheless, when she explained to them the scientific principles behind this process, they all understood and accepted the fact. In my opinion, the problem that China is facing today, is mainly that people do not understand the real principle of the IVF process and instead, they believe in rumors so easily that they have formed some false impressions about IVF babies.

From Fig.1, we can easily notice that most people's family agreed and support them when they decided to have an IVF baby, which suggested that the discrimination is not that serious in China.



**Fig 1.** At what age did the participants to have an IVF baby?

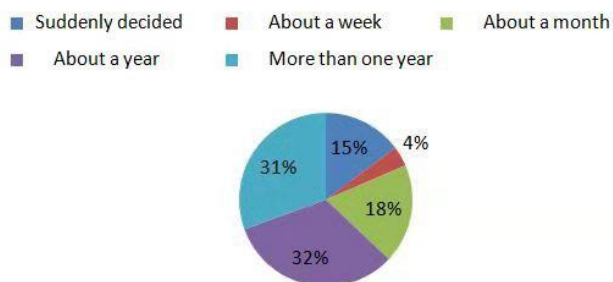
From Fig.2, we can see that people older than 30 years old comprise a large proportion of the IVF parent's age when they decide to use this procedure. The data reflected that currently in China, having an IVF baby is still the last option for many people. They think of IVF babies as not a normal way, but as a method that they were forced to take to get their own baby.



**Fig 2.** Were the participants’ family agree or disagree with them?

Through Fig.3, we can see that people spending one year or more to decide that they are going to have an IVF baby consist 62.97% (n=68) participants. The data mirrors the fact that having an IVF baby is not a common thing for people and require serious consideration for the potential results, both positive and negative.

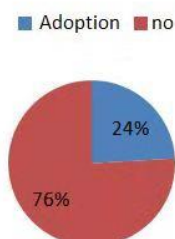
**How long did it take for you to decide to have an IVF baby?**



**Fig 3.** How long did it take for participants to decide to have an IVF baby?

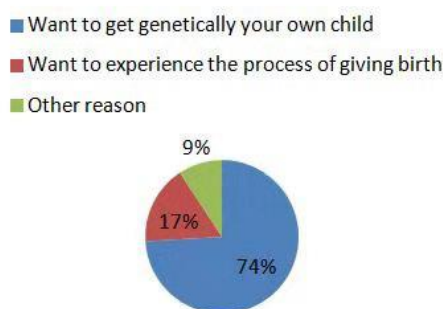
Combining Fig.4 and Fig. 5 together, people general don’t try any other ways of getting pregnant. Many people choose IVF baby because they would like to conceive a child with their own genetics. One of the advantages of having an IVF baby is that this is not sperm-sells, and people can get the child via natural conception.

**Did you try any other way except having an IVF baby or via natural birth?**



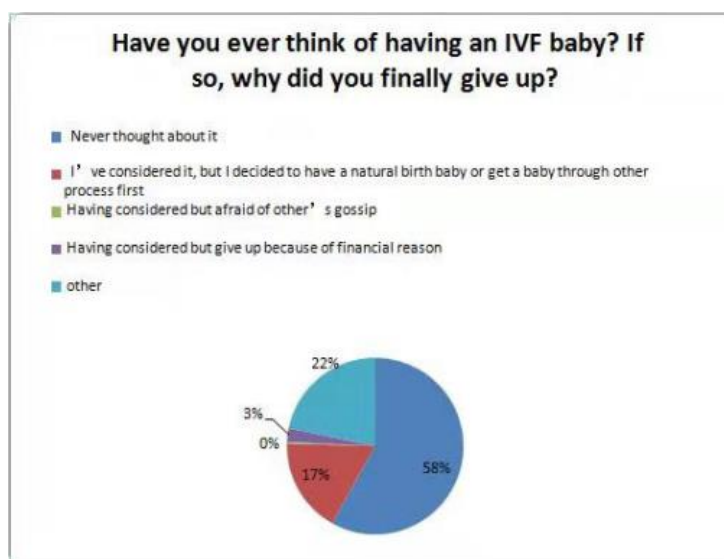
**Fig 4.** Did the participants try any other way except having Ann IVF baby or via natural birth?

### Why did you decide not to have a child using other methods?



**Fig 5.** Why did the participants decide not to have a child using other methods?

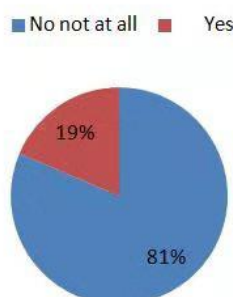
According to Fig. 6, more than half (n=187) of the participants that are without an IVF baby haven't ever considered having an IVF baby, while 17% (n=56) of them reported that they gave up because they conceived a child naturally or became pregnant before they began the IVF baby. We can also see that financial reasons serve as a relatively important factor when considering having an IVF baby, and there are also people that are afraid of other people gossiping about their IVF baby. From those facts, we can interpret that discrimination still exists, but not that severely.



**Fig 6.** Have the participants think of having an IVF baby? If so, why did they finally give up?

As Fig. 7 shows, the majority of people (n=262) believe that IVF babies won't face any trouble in the future for their special identity, while the rest 19% (n=60) of the participants reported that they mainly worried that those kids may face health problems or psychological problems. One participant explained that her elder relatives told her to ask whether her future boyfriend whether he is an IVF baby or not. IVF baby may felt the discrimination though they behaved well.

### Do you think an IVF baby will face any trouble in the future?



**Fig 7.** Do the participants think an IVF baby will face any trouble in the future or not?

Through this last question, we can reach the conclusion that currently, most people have no discrimination regarding IVF baby. The fact is that discrimination still exists, but mainly because people believe they may have some health problems. They are also attracting attention to other. What we can do is to propagate the basic information about IVF in an effort to better inform people about the benefits of having and IVF, as well as the risks.

### 3. DISCUSSION

This experiment is aimed to study whether people have stereotype on both the IVF babies and IVF parents in China. The result shows that people nowadays understand that we need to treat IVF babies as the same and not to look down upon these IVF parents. However, for people who doesn't understand the medical theories behind it or still doubting the theories, they are still concerned about the health problems of those babies. Among those worrying people, most of them felt unease about the intelligence and fertility of those babies. Women might feel some pressure from the family for having IVF babies, but most of their families are quite supportive. Telling people the scientific knowledge behind IVF can be an effective way to stop the remaining misrepresentation, stereotypes and discrimination on it.

Certain drawbacks exist in the research. The participants may not be honest in answering the questionnaire I sent out since they know what is the expected right answer for those questions. Also, the interviewees may be shy to answer the questions a stranger asked. Moreover, the method of solving this problems must be designed and tested to be the appropriate solution of this problem. The sample size of 400 people in a certain hospital may not be broad enough for the research to be generalized to the current situation in China, but the results can still provide some insight on the current circumstance.

### REFERENCES

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