

Parents' education expense burden consciousness and decrease in the birthrate

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In order that this paper may grasp in detail the real picture of the education expense burden, which is one of the background factors for the decrease in the birthrate, we analyzed how the attitudes of married women toward the education expense burden have changed in recent years, specifically as regards values relating to their socioeconomic position and educational investment, expectations for their children to progress onto higher education, and school education perceptions. Comparisons were made based on the wives' birth year and relations with many variables clarified through analysis of the micro data.

Among the younger generation of women born in the 1970s and later, a high proportion recognizes the burden of education expenses, and even among those in this age group planning for no children or only one child, the awareness has become high in recent years.

Regarding changes in the proportion of wives with burden consciousness according to socioeconomic attribute and geographic area, changes were seen to vary according to factors like the wife's working status, the educational history of the couple, and household income.

Regarding expectations for progress onto higher education, 70 ~ 80 percent of all wives surveyed desired progress of their children to such a level, and there was strong awareness of the need for parents to pay the greater part of the economic expense. Moreover, in connection with the number of desired children, for women with at least one child currently or two children planned, expectations for progress to higher education tend to decline, suggesting that a trade-off exists between the desired number of children and higher education expectations. Logistic regression analysis indicated the following variables to be statistically significant in raising the chances that wives consider education expenses a burden:

born in 1965 or later, household income at least 4 million and less than 7 million, wife does a part-time job or consignment-based dispatch work, many children currently and at least two children planned, high expectations for progress to higher education, and recognition of the benefit of education.

Going forward, the burden of education expense in child-rearing will likely attract attention as a factor making it increasingly hard to have children.

It will therefore likely become an issue of the utmost importance what steps overall society can take to support child-rearing, in the quest to build a society where every child goes to university.