

Reproductive Intentions and Fertility Control Behavior  
of Japanese Married Couples  
— Analysis of the Pregnancy History —

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1. Purpose

This study aims to develop a dynamic and sequential model for the process of fertility control of married couples and to assess the relationships among their fertility attitudes, behavior and outcomes in present-day Japan with below-replacement level of fertility. In this study we focus on the concept of reproductive intentions (plans preceding a pregnancy) which are supposed to intervene between attitudes and behavior. In our survey reproductive intentions were directly questioned by use of the pregnancy history table for each pregnancy case with 4 categories: want a child soon, want later, want no more, and have no particular idea.

2. Data and methods

Data set is derived from the Eleventh Japanese National Fertility Survey, which is a nationally representative sample survey conducted by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research in 1997. The analysis uses 9,817 pregnancy cases from the pregnancy history tables for 7,354 couples consisting of a first-married husband and a first-married wife. The table includes all pregnancies from a couple since marriage maximum up to their 5th pregnancy.

The analytical models consist of variables of exclusively demographic characteristics within the closed system in which reproductive intentions, behavior, and outcomes occur in succession. By use of 7 sets of logistic regression models, we estimate effects of the demographic variables on (1)reproductive intentions (3 patterns), (2)contraceptive practice and its success or failure, and (3)pregnancy outcomes (induced abortion and spontaneous abortion).

3. Results and discussion

(1)The progress of parity and the reduction of the difference between the ideal/expected and the realized number of children at the time of pregnancy have positive effects on fertility regulation intentions particularly on birth stopping intention. The desired number of children and the degree of its accomplishment are

important determinants of reproductive intentions. Both not having a male child and not having a female child have negative effects on birth stopping intention.

(2) Birth spacing and stopping intentions have positive effects on contraceptive practice. Particularly the effect of birth spacing intention on contraceptive practice is noticeable at the first and second pregnancy. Birth spacing intention also has positive effects on the probability of success of contraception for spacing purposes.

(3) The desire to have the next birth soon and birth spacing intention have negative effects on induced abortion, while birth stopping intention and higher parity have positive effects. It means that reproductive intentions are important determinants for the decision of induced abortion and that the accomplishment of the desired number of children independently influences it. On the other hand the same type of analysis for spontaneous abortion shows less significant relations.

The effects of other independent variables used in these logistic regression models such as wife's age at pregnancy, experience of spontaneous or induced abortion before the pregnancy, and wife's birth cohort are found in some models but the tendencies are much less clear. We cannot conclude that the role of wife's age is small because this analysis does not cover the cases of successfully avoiding pregnancy by wives at higher ages who are considered to practice contraception more effectively.

#### 4. Conclusion

These findings demonstrate the usefulness of our dynamic and sequential model composed of demographic variables by use of the pregnancy history tables from the fertility survey and reveal the key role of reproductive intentions through the reproductive process of Japanese married couples. Above all we analyzed in this study the distinct determinants and influences of two types of reproductive intentions: birth spacing intention and birth stopping intention.