

Marriage Timing and the Effect of Increase in Non-Standard Employment among the Youth in Japan

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The purpose of the paper is to examine the effect of recent change in labor market on the marriage timing in contemporary Japan by utilizing the 11th National Fertility Survey, combined data of Couples and Singles surveyed in 1997.

A sweeping change evident among youth labor market in the late 90's is the rapid increase in non-standard employment and the erosion of the regular employment opportunities. In 1990, only around 5 percent of newly graduated workforce entered labor market as non-standard employees, while the percentage rose to 16 percent of males and 20 percent of females in 2000. More women as compared to men and those with less educational attainment is found in such work status. The wage gap between standard and non-standard employees is very large in Japan in comparison to other countries. If wage gap between gender encourage marriage, women who started one's career in non-standard employment should have higher transition to marriage.

Kaplan-Meier estimate showed that in contrary to such expectation, transition to marriage start to accelerate and quickly boosts for the female regular employees in the age 24 to 26, or 3 to 7 years after school graduation, while no such impetus is found to females in non-standard employment. Japanese employment practice for regular female employment, therefore, seems to have served as one institution for promoting marriage rather than discouraging it. The discrete logit analysis using age, cohort, education years as other explanatory variables also supported the result that the regular employees have higher probability of marriage.

The low payment seemed to discourage social activities and depress attitude towards marriage among non-standard employees. The logit analysis also showed that parental cohabitation, often cited as one factor for the delay in marriage timing, indeed delay marriage timing. The analysis showed recent labor market change serves to delay the timing of marriage.