

Predictive Validity and Structure of the Intended Number of Children in Japan

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The purpose of this study is to examine the stability of the average ideal and intended number of children for married women and the usefulness of the average intended number of children in predicting completed fertility. Moreover, after this analysis, this paper explores the structure of the intended number of children. Data analyzed here come from the Japanese National Fertility Survey, 1977(7th), 1982(8th), 1987(9th), 1992(10th), 1997(11th), 2002(12th).

In an analysis on stability and validity, the averages for the ideal/intended number of children were observed by hypothetical cohort. The results indicated an upward tendency of the ideal number of children as the age of the respondent rises. But, among women who married when in their twenties, the average intended number of children early in marriage remained almost constant with their older counterparts. Among women who married in their thirties, the average intended number of children had a downward tendency with their older counterparts.

Given that the average intended number of children observed here can be used as a predictor, the following results on the completed fertility of married couples were obtained: wives born in 1963-67 and married between the ages of 20-24 will have an average of 2.33 children, married between the ages of 25-29 will have 2.15, married between the ages of 30-34 will have 1.89 and downward. Wives born in 1968-72 and married 20-24 will have 2.24, married between the ages of 25-29 will have 2.14, married between the ages of 30-34 will have 1.89 and downward. Wives born in 1973-77 and married between the ages of 20-24 will have 2.27, married between the ages of 25-29 will have 2.09. Wives born in 1978-82 and married between the ages of 20-24 will have 2.22.

Next, the structure of the intended number of children was analyzed. First of all, on reasons why the intended number of children falls short of the ideal number of children, differences were observed among married couples classified by intended number of children. The results indicated that the principal reasons were sterility or unhealthiness among couples that intended to remain childless or intended to have 1 child, while their ideal number of children was 1 or more. There were very few couples whose ideal and intended numbers of children were 0 or 1. Heavy educational and rearing costs of children were the largest reasons among couples that intended to have 2 or more children.

Then, I consider the relationships between the intended number of children and the wife's views on marriage/family, and the socio-economic characters of the wife. In an analysis of views on marriage/family, it was found from the results that there was a tendency for those with more conservative views on marriage/family to have a higher intended number of children. In an analysis of the wife's socio-economic characters, education, DID and working status, there was an indistinct relationship between the wife's socio-economic character and the intended number of children.