

Feelings about Parental and Friends' Marital Relationships and Exposure to Marriage and Childrearing: Analyses of Perception of Marriage and Desire to Marry

Saori KAMANO

Using the data of never-married persons from the 13th National Fertility Survey conducted in 2005 by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, I examined two areas relevant to perception of marriage, namely, (1) one's feelings about the married lives of people around [(a) whether one envies parents' marital relationships; and (b) whether one finds friends who are married happy], and (2) the extent to which one has exposure to marriage and childrearing in daily life [(c) whether one has many friends and siblings who are raising children, and (d) whether one often hears from the mass media and people around that marriage, childbirth and raising children are difficult work].

I first examined the relationships between these four variables and socio-economic factors, such as age, level of education, employment status, as well as other factors, such as heterosexual partnership status, whether one's parents live together and attitudes toward marriage and family, through cross-tabulation analyses and ordered logit analyses. Major findings include first, whether one has graduated from university contributes to a positive evaluation of parents' marital relationships and lowers the tendency of being surrounded by friends and siblings who are raising children; second, having more liberal attitudes toward marriage and family lowers one's evaluation of other people's marital relationships and lowers the tendency of being surrounded by friends and siblings who are raising children.

Next, I undertook an ordered logit analysis to examine the effects of the four variables [(a) to (d) above] on one's willingness to marry, which is measured by a 6-point scale of the attitudinal closeness to marriage, ranging from having no intention to marry to wanting to get married within a year. The statistically significant effects indicate that perceiving friends who are married as being happy and having had many friends and siblings who are raising children increase one's desire to marry, even after controlling for various factors, including age, level of education, employment status, heterosexual partnership status, whether one's parents live together, the attitudes toward marriage and family, the number of children desired, and whether one is cohabiting. The findings confirmed the importance in the research examining desire to marry and the perception of marriage in general of looking at the subjective feelings toward marriage as well as personal contact with people experiencing marriage and exposure to information about marriage and childrearing. It was suggested that in future research, it is necessary to develop better indicators that can capture complex and multi-dimensional feelings about marital relationships of parents and friends and personal exposure to marital experiences. In addition, it is necessary to analyze a model that takes into an account reciprocal relationships between desire to marry on the one hand, and the feelings about parental and friends' marital relationships and the amount of exposure to marriage and childrearing on the other.