

Regional variation of marriage behavior: An analysis of delayed marriages and increased unmarried population

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In this paper, we examine the regional variations of marriage patterns in Japan by analyzing delayed marriages and an increased proportion of single persons among younger generations. According to the reference survey on this research topic, we could not clearly identify the scientific factors or hypothesis associated with the regional variation in the marriage behavior patterns, particularly in a society declining to low fertility.

From an analytical viewpoint of the social anthropological study of regional characteristics on family norms and familial behavior, we examined regional variations of marriage patterns using the sex ratio of the unmarried population as provided by the national census.

Results of this study show that the proportion of the male unmarried population was relatively high among eastern prefectures in Japan. In contrast, the proportion of females was clearly high among western prefectures. For a more detailed analysis, we examined the population sex ratio as per the municipal data within Iwate and Nagasaki, the prefectures that have the traditional regional characteristics of family norms and familial behavior.

By comparing data for the two prefectures, we found a relationship between the unmarried ratio and the sex ratio. Regional migrations from rural prefectures to urban areas have an important effect on the unbalanced sex ratio among the younger generations. In Iwate prefecture, among the younger generations, men tend to stay back because of the relative importance of a detaining effect in their region. Furthermore, in Nagasaki prefecture, females among the younger generations are more likely to continue living in their parents' residential area as a detaining effect.