

Understanding the Associations Between Marriage and Fertility Intentions: A Comparative Survey-Experimental Study in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore

Zheng Mu (National University of Singapore)

Lake Lui (National Taiwan University)

Adam Ka-Lok Cheung (Hong Kong Baptist University)

MSF Asian Family Conference 2024

6 & 7 November 2024

Understanding the Associations Between Marriage and Fertility

- A close connection between marriage and fertility with very low prevalence of both
 - marital childlessness
 - fertility out of wedlock
- The associations between fertility intentions and marriage intentions depend on:
 - To what extent the individual endorses the institutions of marriage and fertility as contracts with:
 - The extended families: familism values
 - The state: political values
 - Positionality
 - Gender
 - Gender ideology



Research Questions

- To what extent fertility intentions are associated with marriage intentions in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan?
- How do endorsements of familism and democracy, gender, and gender ideology moderate such associations?
- How do the above patterns differ across the three societies?

Data and Methods

- **Factorial survey design and vignette dimensions**
- Each vignette consists of **7 sets of randomly assigned dimensions of policies and conditions**. Based on each vignette, respondents evaluate their own **tendency of getting married given those scenarios**. To avoid cognitive overload, we allocate each respondent **three vignettes**.
- **Variables:**
 - Dependent variable: **Marriage intention**.
 - Main independent variable: **Fertility intention**.
 - Attitudinal variables: At the respondent level, we asked 3 sets of questions to capture their endorsement of **familism, gender equality, and democracy**

Findings

Table 2. Random-intercept Linear Regression (ML) Models: Fertility Intention and Marriage Intention, full sample

Vignette dimension	Marriage intention (0-10)					
	Full-1	Full-2	Full-3	Full-4	Full-5	Full-6
Intend to have children (ref.=no)	0.095* (0.039)	0.094* (0.038)	0.163** (0.055)	0.619* (0.253)	-0.276* (0.122)	0.219 (0.225)
Attitudinal variables						
Endorsement of familism (1-7)		0.443*** (0.023)	0.443*** (0.023)	0.443*** (0.023)	0.396*** (0.027)	0.443*** (0.023)
Endorsement of gender equality (1-7)		-0.221*** (0.042)	-0.221*** (0.042)	-0.164** (0.050)	-0.221*** (0.042)	-0.221*** (0.042)
Endorsement of democracy (1-7)		-0.079* (0.039)	-0.079* (0.039)	-0.080* (0.039)	-0.080* (0.039)	-0.065 (0.047)
Interactions						
Intend to have children X						
Endorsement of familism (1-7)					0.093** (0.029)	
Women (ref.= men)				-0.136† (0.077)		
Endorsement of gender equality (1-7)				-0.113* (0.054)		
Endorsement of democracy (1-7)						-0.029 (0.052)

Summary

- Intention to have children positively predicts marriage intention.
- The associations between fertility intention and marriage intention are strengthened by endorsement of familism and attenuated among women and by endorsement of gender equality.
 - Diverse meanings attached to fertility?
 - A traditional emphasis on the importance of carrying on family lineage.
 - A potential emphasis on the value of creating a life as a meaningful pathway toward individual actualization may be ignited among women and those holding stronger endorsement of gender equality, which challenge the heteronormative expectations for the relationship between gender roles, marriage, and childbearing.



THANK YOU
socmuz@nus.edu.sg