

A Review of Studies on College Students' Views on Marriage and Reproduction in China and Japan (2017-2022)

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Abstract. Through literature review, this paper aims to summarize the current situation, influencing factors, and research on marriage and reproduction education of Chinese and Japanese college students. The results reveal that 297 papers focus on Chinese college students' views on marriage and reproduction mainly by using research methods including questionnaires, interviews, literature review, data analysis, etc. However, there are still deficiencies in defining views on marriage and reproduction and testing the reliability and validity of questionnaires. A majority of Japanese studies are empirical studies, with research on influencing factors oriented toward family, while few studies involve other perspectives and no study is conducted on the education of marriage and child-rearing.

1 Introduction

The change of views on marriage and reproduction mainly explains fewer children in China and Japan. As college students born after 2000 have grown up under the influence of the Internet, their attitudes toward marriage and reproduction have changed. College students, an active young group, are willing to spread modern culture and new lifestyle, and their views on marriage and reproduction have reflected the characteristics of the Times, which plays an exemplary and leading role in society. Therefore, the development of college students' views on marriage offers insight into the study of Chinese young people's marriage concept. A deep understanding of the new characteristics of youth's view of marriage and reproduction helps them to foster views that are more in line with social development, which is of practical significance.

Japan and China are all in the East Asian cultural sphere and have similar social customs and values. Japan has entered society with fewer children earlier than China, and although it has taken many intervention measures, little progress has been made. In this context, comparing the similarities and differences between the marriage and reproduction views of Chinese and Japanese young people and analyzing the reasons and the effectiveness of Japan's relevant policy will help China learn from lessons when it formulates such policies and guides Chinese young people to establish views of marriage and reproduction that conforms more to social development, thereby addressing and alleviating the problem of fewer children in China.

2 Research Methods and Objectives

Traditionally, marriage and reproduction are important to the Chinese people and the views on marriage and reproduction refer to individual opinions on the two aspects. At present, scholars have mainly studied the concept of marriage and reproduction from its connotation and extension. In a narrow sense, the concept of marriage and reproduction refers to people's attitudes towards love, sexual relations, marriage and family, and reproduction in a certain social environment, which are influenced by their outlook on life and values [1]. This paper will also include the study of the youth's willingness to marry and have children and influencing factors.

This paper, through a literature review, aims at the related research on Chinese and Japanese college students' views of marriage and reproduction from 2017 to 2022, expounding on the shortcomings of previous research and the prospects of future research. Therefore, this study intends to summarize the existing conclusions for the subsequent empirical research on marriage and reproduction views of Chinese and Japanese college students and to optimize the research methods and contents based on the research.

3 Research Status of Views on Marriage and Reproduction from 2017 to 2022 in China

The author searched 297 papers published from 2017 to 2022 in July on China National Knowledge Service (CNKI), with such keywords as "college students", "views

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on marriage and reproduction”, “views on love and marriage”, “views on marriage” and “views on reproduction”. Among them, 103 papers mainly involve studies on different groups of college students, 60 papers focus on influencing factors of views on marriage and reproduction and 61 papers are oriented toward education about marriage views. Those studies are mainly conducted from the perspectives of sociology, psychology, pedagogy, Marxist philosophy, behavioral geography, and others.

3.1 Studies Based on Different Subjects

According to different regions and colleges, Chinese scholars distinguish majors and genders to carry out empirical studies on college students’ views on marriage and reproduction, publishing 103 papers on this aspect. Most surveys are not representative as they are limited by schools and regions, with small sample sizes. In recent years, research on common features of groups has increased. Zhu Hongcui and Liu Bing et al. (2020) have investigated the reproduction views of local college students in six regions including East and South China in a new era. The research reveals that most college students have no obvious gender preference. Most college students have no obvious gender preference, and if they have to do so, more of them prefer to have girls; the pressure of work and life has prevented the new generation of college students from having children, while the need for affection has become the greatest motivation for having children [2]. The Population and Development Research Center of the Renmin University of China also conducted a nationally representative survey of Chinese college students’ views on marriage and reproduction in 2021. Based on this survey, Li Ting, Zheng Yexin, and Yan Yuteng (2022) have pointed out that contemporary college students still have expectations for marriage and reproduction, but the value basis of marriage and reproduction has changed as they begin to emphasize the value of love, marriage, and reproduction based on individual meaning. At the same time, college students’ willingness and concept of marriage and reproduction vary with gender. Compared with male college students, female peers are less willing to get married and tend to have fewer children, feeling greater resistance to marriage and reproduction [3].

About 43 papers focus on female college students’ views on marriage and reproduction. In contrast, no research is conducted on male counterparts’ views on this aspect. The authors speculate that this is because researchers pay more attention to women’s attitudes toward marriage and reproduction as they are the ones to give birth and nurture children. Female college students’ views of marriage and reproduction reflect the following characteristics: they are positive, and rational and have multiple criteria when selecting a partner, as they pay more attention to internal quality; they tend to be realistic about marriage and more tolerant of non-traditional marriage behavior, having a weak awareness of marriage and reproduction; they harbor different opinions of reproduction, which is characterized by the thought of having no children. Zhu Xiaofang (2018) has also pointed out that although contemporary female college students

have a strong sense of independence, they lack independent behavior and rational guidance. In the face of the realistic choice of love and marriage, they are apt to rely on a man and his property[4].

Only three papers are concerned with rural college students. Li Wenxiu (2020) has mentioned that compared with urban female college students, rural peers have more conservative views of marriage and love, which means they are influenced by traditional culture and their views have remained unchanged on marriage, family, sex, love, and sexual selection [5]. Cui Biying (2018) has found that rural female college students are more willing to reproduce than their urban female counterparts [6].

Zhu Hongcui and Liu Bing (2020) have also pointed out the difference between the only-child and non-only-child college students, finding that only child among college students in the new era is more inclined to have fewer children, and the only child accounts for more than half of the college students who intend to have no children. Wang Yin hao and Liu Jufen et al. (2018) have studied the fertility intention of only and non-only children in Beijing universities and concluded that: they are different from each other in terms of fertility intention, which is manifested by the “ideal number of children” and “gender preference of one child” [7].

In addition to the above studies, there are also cross-sectional comparative studies between different regions and different countries, including China’s Fujian, Taiwan, between China and Singapore, as well as between China and Algeria. For example, Xie Shuting (2017) has found through analysis and comparison that the Chinese and Singaporean college students’ views on marriage and love reflect mainstream social values. As Singapore is more developed than China, college students have distinctive and mixed views on marriage and love, which mirrors pronounced issues of marriage and reproduction, such as casual sex, and changes in family patterns [8]. The comparison and analysis of the similarities and differences of marriage views in different regions and countries are helpful to better understand their views, so the marriage education of college students in different places can complement each other. In addition, there are longitudinal comparative studies. Yan Xiaomei (2021) has, by comparing college students a decade ago with contemporary ones, found that contemporary college students care more about themselves, are inclined to be more open about sex, and have diversified opinions and marriage; meanwhile, they have more stable standards of finding a partner than their peers ten years ago, which means they put a man’s personality first and emphasize appearance, and they are less likely to be serious about a relationship [9].

3.2 Influencing Factors of Views on Marriage and Reproduction

In the study of the influencing factors of college students’ views on marriage and love from 2017 to 2022, scholars have mainly conducted research from four aspects: society, network media, family, and individual. Growing up on the Internet, “Generation Z” youths (defined as the generation

born between 1995 and 2009) are inevitably influenced by online media in their views on marriage and reproduction, which leads to a growing number of studies.

3.2.1 Social Factors.

Economy, ideology, and culture all shape people's views on marriage and reproduction. Economic status is an important factor affecting college students' willingness to marry and have children, as it determines the superstructure. Li Ting, Zheng Yexin, and Yan Yuteng (2022) have pointed out that the cost of marriage and reproduction and the pressure from workplace competition is the main factor preventing college students from getting married and reproducing [3]. In the process of modernization and individualization, the marriage system imposes less restraint; marriage tends to be more unstable; the traditional concepts of "three obedience and four virtues" (a set of moral principles and social code of behavior for maiden and married women), "many children bringing many blessings" and others are gradually abandoned, and the traditional family model gets relaxed. Meanwhile, modern and social individualization, postmodernism, feminism, and other social trends are also reshaping college students' values of marriage and reproduction. Zhu Hongcui and Liu Bing (2020) have pointed out that one of the reasons why a small number of college students do not want to have children is the misleading trend of postmodernism. College students in the new era favor modernity and postmodernism that puts themselves first and advocates individuality, which conforms to their spiritual pursuit of living for themselves and not wanting to be restrained by the outside world. This has further misled their views on reproduction [2]. In addition, Zhang Zhe (2020) pointed out that social emergencies, such as the COVID-19 epidemic, on the one hand, have affected the way college students communicate with the opposite sex — they rely more on the network platform; on the other hand, this also prompts college students to reflect on material life and interpersonal relations, which further influence college students' views on the value and meaning of marriage and reproduction [10].

3.2.2 Media Factors including TV and the Internet.

The Internet and other media outlets play an important role in shaping college students' views on marriage and reproduction. Social networking, online novels, TV dating shows, reality TV show for stars and their children, and the female narratives in Korean TV series have a negative or positive influence on college students' views on marriage and reproduction. On the one hand, they have easy access to knowledge of marriage and reproduction thanks to the Internet; on the other hand, fragmented information on the Internet and multiple views fail to provide them with comprehensive and systematic guidance. Guo Jin (2017), based on the cultivation theory, has concluded: that college students who like Korean dramas will subtly show the similar values carried by the TV series, which means they believe in the equality

between men and women while expecting more romantic and material love [11]. Li Ting, Zheng Yexin, and Yan Yuteng (2022) have pointed out that college students' engagement on the Internet is associated with their views on marriage and reproduction. With more time spent on the Internet, college students are less willing to get married and tend to have fewer children. In addition, college students who participate in different subcultures also exhibit differences in their views on marriage and reproduction. Fans of animation, online literature, and stars may show a lower willingness to marry and have children, while fitness, and e-sports enthusiasts may show a higher willingness [3].

3.2.3 Family Factors

Native family shapes college students' view of love and marriage from their structure, atmosphere, parenting style, interaction mode, and parental marriage quality, so different family environment has exerted various effects on college students' view of love and marriage. According to Gao Hanlu (2019), college students who have grown up in a family with healthy parents, a good family atmosphere, an appropriate parenting style, and care and love for their children can develop a sound outlook view of marriage and love [12]. Shen Ji, Chen Siying, and Shan Keyi (2022) have distinguished four types of family interaction modes from two dimensions, i.e., "communication" and "decision-making". Through the research method of interview, they have found that the authoritative family interaction mode with good communication and decision-making can better shape children's positive views on marriage and love, while authoritarian, egalitarian, and disorganized types cause children to have fuzzy and negative views on marriage [13].

3.2.4 Personal Factors

Zhu Hongcui and Liu Bing (2020) have used SPSS21.0 to analyze the data from 1008 questionnaires (275 males and 733 females) received by local colleges and universities in six regions, and found that gender and family ranking have a significant impact on the number of children students will have in a new era ($P < 0.05$). The proportion of girls who want to have no children is about twice that of boys; the proportion of boys who want to have one or two children is roughly the same as that of girls, while the proportion of boys who want to have three children is about 8 times that of girls [2]. Sun Wei and Wu Xiaoyong (2020), by investigating the association between personality characteristics and fertility intention of 1052 college students (378 males and 674 females) in Guizhou Province, have found that openness has a generally negative impact on the fertility intention of college students. Moreover, the influence of personality characteristics on fertility intention shows gender difference — extroversion is likely to improve male students' fertility intention but it exerts no pronounced effect on female college students' fertility intention. Agreeableness and neuroticism tend to improve female college students' fertility intention [14]. Zhang Haixia and

Guo Cheng (2017) have investigated the relationship between a sense of life meaning and a sense of love among 422 college students (including 161 males and 261 females) in a university in Shaanxi Province by using the Chinese version of the Meaning in Life Questionnaire compiled by Wang Mengcheng and Dai Xiaoyang and the College Students' View on Marriage and Love Questionnaire compiled by Cai Min. The study reveals that college students with a high sense of life meaning have clearer goals, higher self-affirmation, and self-esteem in seeking marriage, love, and relationships [15]. It is worth mentioning that in the survey conducted by Li Ting (2022), nearly 60% of female college students listed the pain and risk of childbirth as important factors affecting fertility [3].

3.3 Research on Marriage and Child Education.

It is worth noting that college students only represent a part of young people who are still in a changing stage and have not set foot in society, so their views on marriage and reproduction will change with the course of life[3]. How to guide college students to shape positive views on marriage and reproduction is a problem worth discussing. In recent years, scholars have enriched the content and practical approaches of marriage education from different theoretical perspectives.

Yan Ke and Liu Xingeng (2018) have studied college students' marriage and love education based on the humanistic conception. From the perspective of human nature and social attributes, the marriage and love mode for college students should be changed from "being regulated" to "guiding the students"; the practice of marriage and love education must be shifted from "differentiation" to "collaboration", while the concept should be changed from "being successful" to "be an adult" [16].

Kong Desheng and Zang Kai (2021) have proposed to integrate the theory of love psychology into marriage and love education in colleges and universities and such education should be carried out in college under the guidance of the theory — educators should give college students guidance based on respecting and understanding their love behavior; colleges and universities should pay attention to sexuality and mental health education, intimate relationship ability education, love and marriage responsibility education, love and marriage gender education, love, and marriage personality education; love and marriage education in colleges and universities should include love type education, and family relationship education [17].

Based on the dilemma of college students' marriage and love in the era of the network, Kong Desheng and Zang Kai (2021) have proposed practical approaches for their marriage and love education: it is necessary to strengthen the supervision of network platforms and create a sound cyber environment; formal love and marriage education platform should be built to create a self-learning space for college students; college students' network literacy and cultivate their discrimination ability; a mechanism of education integrating home, school and

Internet can be established to cultivate college students' comprehensive views on love and marriage[18].

Zang Kai and Yang Wei (2021) have combined ideological and political education with mental health education, emphasizing that a new knowledge system must be built to integrate basic knowledge of marriage and love, the psychological structure of marriage and love, the morality of marriage, and legal knowledge. They have also expounded on different education methods including family, school, network, and self-education [19].

4 Research Status of Views on Marriage and Reproduction in Japan

The author has used CiNii, a Japanese Bibliographic database, and Google Scholar website to retrieve papers with Japanese keywords including “大学生の結婚観 (college students' views on marriage)”, “大学生の子育て観 (college students' views on reproduction)”, “大学生の結婚願望 (college students' willingness to marry)”, “大学生の出産願望 (college students' willingness to reproduce)”, and 23 related papers published between 2017 and 2022 have been retrieved, of which 5 could not be viewed.

4.1 Research on Japanese College Students' Views on Marriage and Reproduction

From 2017 to 2022, Japanese scholars have conducted empirical studies on college students' views on marriage and reproduction from the perspectives of willingness to marry and reproduce and gender division of labor and horizontally compared their views on marriage and reproduction with those of other countries (Keiko Hiraoka (平岡敬子) 2019, 张景泰(Zhang Jingtai) 2017, etc.).

Yumiko Imei (井梅由美子) (2019) has surveyed 380 private college students in Tokyo (68 males and 294 females) pointing out that college students both expect and feel burdened to get married. Among them, female students have more expectations than the burden, while their male counterparts have more burdens than the expectation. As women are the ones to give birth and nurture children, they have both expectations and unease about child-rearing. More and more female college students choose to return to work after giving birth or to juggle work and child-rearing in the future, while male college students also expect their future partners to return to work to reduce the financial burden on their families to a certain extent. The idea of “women take care of the family while men make money” is losing its appeal, but the concepts of “child-rearing are the most important stage in a woman's life” and “men are the breadwinner of the family” are still deeply entrenched [20].

Qixi Kanishi (中西啓喜) (2022) has surveyed 165 students from Kanto A University and used KH Coder to process the survey data, finding that most college students still have a plan to get married and are more eager to fall into love and get married. “Blind date” is only considered as a means, and female college students have more negative views of it than their male counterparts; they

believed that marriage and children are still associated [21].

Nakamura (中村悠里慧) (2018) has discussed the influence of college students' views on their intention to marry and the possibility of marriage, finding that college students who believe that "marriage can lead to happiness, causing less trouble than being in love" are more likely to get married [22].

Some scholars have conducted a transverse study. Keiko Hiraoka (平岡敬子) has cross-sectionally compared the views on reproduction among female college students in Japan, the United States, and Indonesia. She has concluded that while Japanese female college students agree that children should be educated regardless of gender, compared to 99% in the other two countries who believe that children should receive the highest possible quality education, they hold conservative and traditional views of child-rearing, with 33.9% not believing that children should be given a high-quality education as possible. Zhang Jingtai (2017) has compared the views on marriage among female college students in Japan and South Korea, pointing out that female college students in both countries tend to marry later and show interest in an international marriage. In addition, both countries should create a workplace that is conducive to women balancing work and childbirth [24].

4.2 Research on the Influencing Factors of Japanese College Students' Views on Marriage and Reproduction

From 2017 to 2022, seven papers have been published involving the influencing factors of Japanese college students' views on marriage and reproduction from the perspective of family.

Gaefa Youxiang (改发有香) (2019) conducted a questionnaire survey in 2 private universities, with 289 valid questionnaires (178 males and 111 females) collected. According to the survey, college students who have grown up in a complete family have more expectations about marriage [25].

Yumiko Imei (井梅由美子) (2019) has analyzed that students' views on marriage and reproduction are influenced by their relationship with their parents in childhood, their trust in their mothers, and their relationship with others. In particular, she has pointed out that a mother's avoidance attitude and poor relationship with the mother in childhood would increase female college students' willingness to marry and have children, while those who can't trust others are less willing to have children [20].

Maharu Imakawa (今川真治) (2017) has investigated the relationship between the marriage views of freshmen and seniors at Hiroshima University and the topic of love with their parents through a questionnaire. It is found that male college students have more traditional marriage views than their female counterparts, and the more frequently they talk about marriage and love with their fathers, the more traditional their marriage views tend to be and the stronger their consciousness of gender division of labor is. For female college students, the more fathers

can provide emotional value to their mothers, the more attractive they feel their fathers are, and thus, the more willing they are to marry. The willingness of female college students to marry and have children is not only affected by the frequency of communication with their mothers but also affected by the relationship between their mothers and fathers [26].

5 Conclusion

From 2017 to 2022, scholars have conducted abundant research on Chinese college students' views on marriage and reproduction, studying the issue from the perspectives of college students' marriage and reproduction status, influencing factors of marriage and reproduction views, and marriage and reproduction education. Their research methods are diverse, including questionnaire surveys, interviews, data analysis, literature review, and so on. However, some shortcomings remain pronounced. For example, the view on marriage has not been clearly defined; most researchers classify the definition, structure, and research scope of the view on marriage based on their research, which is far from authoritative. In the future, the definition and structure of the view on marriage need to be further clarified. As most of the empirical studies on marriage and reproduction views are conducted through self-designed questionnaires and those with reliability and validity have seldom been employed, researchers are suggested to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaires after making their questionnaire tools to improve the reliability of the survey. More studies are oriented toward college students' love and marriage education, but less attention is paid to the guidance on fertility education. Nowadays, as China's aging population is increasingly serious, and the Internet is abuzz with the idea of low fertility, how to guide college students to have positive views on fertility should be stressed. The issue of marriage and reproduction is closely related, but most researchers either study college students' views on marriage and love or views on reproduction, which means future research should be more systematic, focusing on the relationship between them.

In comparison with China, less research on literature is carried out in Japan, with more empirical studies conducted. The research methods are generally questionnaires and interviews, and professional software is used to process the survey data. The research perspective is lacking, and, in particular, the research on influencing factors focuses on family, so such research can be enriched from the perspective of network media. In addition, as research on marriage and reproduction education in Japan is insufficient, more research can be carried out from this perspective to enrich the content.

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