

Anticipating Trade-offs: Individual Expectations on Career Development versus Family Formation*

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Abstract

This study explores the perceived trade-offs between career development and family formation among university students in Japan, focusing on the impact of human capital investment on future earnings, marriage, spousal earnings, and fertility. We collected data from around 600 students from leading Japanese universities, scrutinizing expected life scenarios at the ages of 30 and 45. The results highlight a widespread belief that higher education is associated with elevated earnings and reduced fertility. Additionally, the research explores the potential effects of early marriage on long-term outcomes. The conclusions drawn from this study can assist in shaping policies and strategies for educational institutions and policymakers, taking into account individual aspirations and constraints.

Keywords: Career Choice, Higher Education, Marriage Rate, Survey