

## The Separation of Marriage and Childbearing in the Philippines

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### Extended Abstract

Late age at marriage has been an important policy tool in the Philippines to abate the continuous growth of the population. This assumes that with later age at marriage, the onset of childbearing will also be delayed and the total number of children will be fewer. However, fertility level in the country has remained high and contraceptive use has remained relatively low. Age at marriage however, continues to rise. Additionally, Filipinos continue to form unions but they do not necessarily "marry." A growing number of Filipinos are now cohabiting, or start their unions by living together before formally marrying. Childbearing however, is not delayed and the proportion of births born to unmarried mothers is also increasing.

Studies found that there is growing tolerance for nonmarital childbearing (Pagnini and Rindfuss 1993) and there is evidence that fertility has increased among cohabiting women in the U.S. (Raley 2001). In Britain, marriage following a birth has decreased among women (Steel et al. 2006) and in many European countries where cohabitation has become an acceptable alternative to marriage policies were put in place in recognition of such unions (Kiernan 2000).

In the Philippines, childbearing outside of marriage is still largely frowned upon and both mothers and children are stigmatized. However, there are indications that this is loosening up with attitudes slowly becoming more accepting of this behavior. Data from the Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study (YAFS) conducted in 1994 and 2002 provide evidence to this. Approval of women having sex before marriage increased from 44 percent in 1994 to 54 percent in 2002 among female youth. A hypothetical question on what to do if an unmarried pregnancy happens to these youth, "keeping the baby" remains the most popular choice and it increased from 69 to 73 percent during the period while "marrying" as a resolution decreased from 27 to 24 percent. In all, Williams, Kabamalan and Ogena (2007), analyzing the same YAFS data found that young Filipinos develop a tolerance toward cohabitation.

There is also evidence that cohabitation is a path toward marriage in the Philippines (Kabamalan 2004) and cohabiting couples also involve having children. Based on the 2003 National Demographic and Health Survey, 83 percent of cohabiting women have been pregnant. In addition, qualitative data suggest that cohabiting couples plan to marry formally someday (Kabamalan 2006).

The effect of modernizing forces (educational attainment, female literacy, and urbanization) on delaying marriage in the Philippines has been validated and revalidated with different data sets [Domingo, 1992 #530: 88]. More recently however, Ogena, Kabamalan and Sasota 2008 found that economic status is

negatively correlated with timing of marriage among females. Because the measure used for timing of marriage in the analysis is the singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) which includes cohabiting persons as married, this negative relationship might be due to the increase of cohabitation. Based on qualitative data, Kabamalan (2006) found that the increase of cohabitation is also attributed in part to lower economic status.

Using the 1994 and 2002 YAFS data, this paper examines the separation of childbearing from marriage using multivariate and decomposition techniques to separate effects of changing socioeconomic composition of the population from propensities. The model includes such factors as education, employment status, wealth status, religiosity, age, and gender. It is expected that females, high education, being employed, being wealthy, the very religious and the older population all affect behavior not favoring the separation of childbearing from marriage.