

# ***Research in the People's Attitudes Towards Love and Marriage in Chinese Mainland***

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**Abstract:** With the advancement of the economy and social development, these social changes would impact people's attitudes towards love and marriage. This research is intended to investigate the factors that impact people's attitude and their romantic relationship and marriage choice. The analysis uses descriptive statistics and empirical study. Empirical study is conducted by using OLS method. The research find that people would like to get into fewer times of romantic relationships as their age increases. Moreover, the research notice that people with a higher number of years of education would have slightly more positive attitude (expectation) towards marriage. Lastly, working in the public sector, such SMEs, would discourage people's positive attitude (expectation) towards marriage. The study has practical significance for improving social practices, such as enhancing the marriage rate and birth rate. In addition, this research is advantaged by that the data is expand to all the age groups and all regions in Chinese mainland. As for policy suggestion, improving the overall level of education on the whole population and making a stable employment environment will be good ways to encourage people to hold positive attitude.

**Keywords:** Marriage, Love, Social Policy

## **1. Introduction**

According to the data, China's marriage rate rose from 6.7 per thousand in 2000 to 9.9 per thousand in 2013, and then declined year by year, with the marriage rate dropping to 4.8 per thousand in 2022[1]. Marriage is among the important decisions for most people. With the advancement of the economy and social development, these social changes would impact people's attitudes towards love and marriage. In eastern Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korean and large cities in China, increasing attention has been drawn to the peoples' shifting decision with a relationship and marriage. Although relationship and marriage is among the focus of the public, no previous study has specifically examined the factors that would affect people's attitude towards relationship and marriage.

This research is intended to investigate the factors that impact people's attitude and their romantic relationship and marriage choice. The research conducts a survey about people's attitudes towards love and marriage to over one thousand people, aging from 20 to 53 from 27 provinces in Chinese mainland. Leveraging the information collected from the questionnaire, the research uses a fix-effect model to explore the relationship between the demographic and social characteristics and people's attitude towards relations and marriage. The research find that people would like to get into fewer

times of romantic relationships as their age increases. Moreover, the research notice that people with a higher number of years of education would have slightly more positive attitude (expectation) towards marriage. Lastly, working in the public sector, such SMEs, would discourage people's positive attitude (expectation) towards marriage. The study has practical significance for improving social practices, such as enhancing the marriage rate and birth rate.

## 2. Literature Review

Wang Yali [2] conducted a research on the "after 2000" college students' view of marriage and love. Yali conducted specific survey and collect data about that through questionnaires. The data shows that around 60% of the respondents think people should fall in love. 50% participants think should fall in love with the aim of marriage. Personality is the most important factor when choosing a lover. Luo Xi, Chen Haoyuan, Fan Zijing [3] also used questionnaires to make an investigation about the college students' attitude towards love and marriage. More than 60% college students under investigation want to get married before 30 years old. Loving each other and economic foundation are the most significant elements when considering getting married or not. Shen ji, Chen Siying, Shan Keyi [4] used Circumplex Model of Marital and Family System and interviews to investigate the authority oriented family lead to bring positive love and marriage attitude to the children. Zhong Xiaoxiao, Fan Heng, Zhang Yan, He peng [5] also used questionnaires to do the research and focused on the college students. The research used SPSS to process and analyze the data. The result shows that college students in general hold positive attitude to love and marriage. Ma Haoling, Li Dexian [6] conducted an empirical study to research this topic, including descriptive statistics and difference analysis.

Yu Lichao, Wen Jin, Liu Xuemin [7] conducted a survey in college students in Beijing. That research used Logistic regression model and the data were collected by questionnaires. The results found was that college students' attitudes towards love and marriage to a large extent depends on their parents' marriage. And the girls are more likely to pursue their career success rather than devoting themselves to family, which contradicts the traditional situation.

Through these paper found, it is indicated that most research collected data by conducting a questionnaire survey, which is an effective way to study people's attitude. Most paper focus on the love and marriage attitude of the college students, that is, age is limited. In this research, the method will be descriptive statistics and empirical study. The data will be collected also by questionnaires, but it will expand to all the age groups and all regions.

## 3. Research Design

The job involves gathering and analyzing data. Data were obtained by sending questionnaires. The analysis contains two main aspects, descriptive statistics, and empirical study. Descriptive statistics is conducted by observing, analyzing, and interpreting the questionnaire results, such as by discovering the mean, distribution, range, etc. Empirical study is conducted by using OLS method to analyzing the influence factors to the people's attitudes towards love and marriage.

### 3.1. Data Sources

The research involved 1,015 people who filled out questionnaires about their information and preference. Participants are from various places and ages and it is anonymous, which guarantees the objectiveness and effectiveness of the survey.

According to existing literatures, Chen Shichuang, Xu Liya [8] conducted a survey in people's attitudes to marriage and childbearing in Zhejiang Province by using 4,907 questionnaires. Questions about basic personal information, attitude to marriage and the childbearing, the aim of childbearing

are included. The questionnaire in this research has 19 questions and it is designed to include two main parts. The first is the questions about the fundamental background of the respondents. There are 8 questions in first part, covering gender, age, education background, marriage and love status, family, region, income, career. The other part is the questions about the attitude towards love and marriage. There are 11 questions in second part, with contents including the number of romantic relationships, the best age for love, marriage and having children, the factors concerned during love, marriage and having children, standards of choosing spouse, ways to meet partner, marriage pressure, attitudes towards love and marriage.

### 3.2. Descriptive Statistics

#### 3.2.1. Number of Romantic Relationships

Among the 1,015 respondents, almost each individual have romantic relationship experience. As for the distribution, it is more likely balanced between the four kinds of frequencies. 295 people have seven to nine times. Therefore, the proportion of seven to nine times may a little bit more than others (see Figure 1).

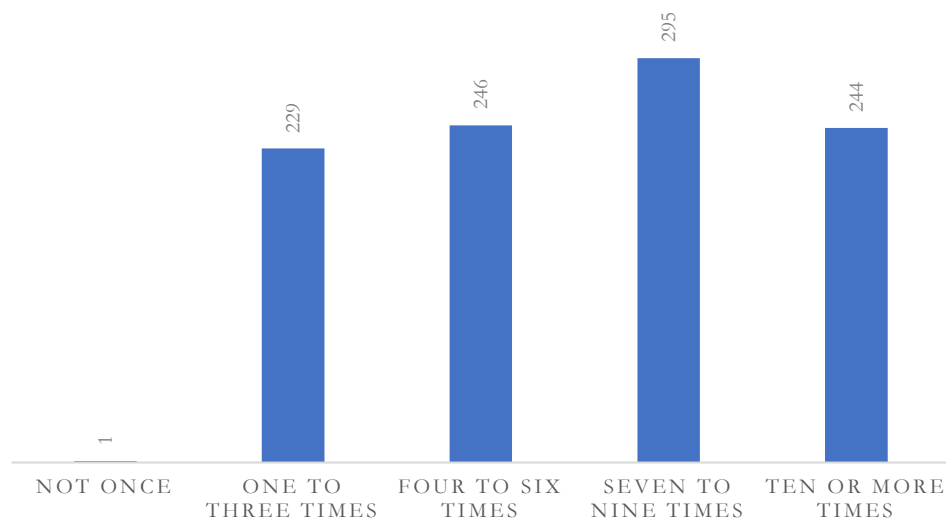


Figure 1: Times of Romantic Relationship  
Photo credit: Original

#### 3.2.2. Best Age to Fall in Love

As for the best age to fall in love, 31 participants think they don't want to fall in love and 151 people think whether fall in love or not does not matter. Most respondents, in the percentage of 55.47%, prefer to choose 18-23 years old as the best age to fall in love, which is more in line with reality (see Figure 2).

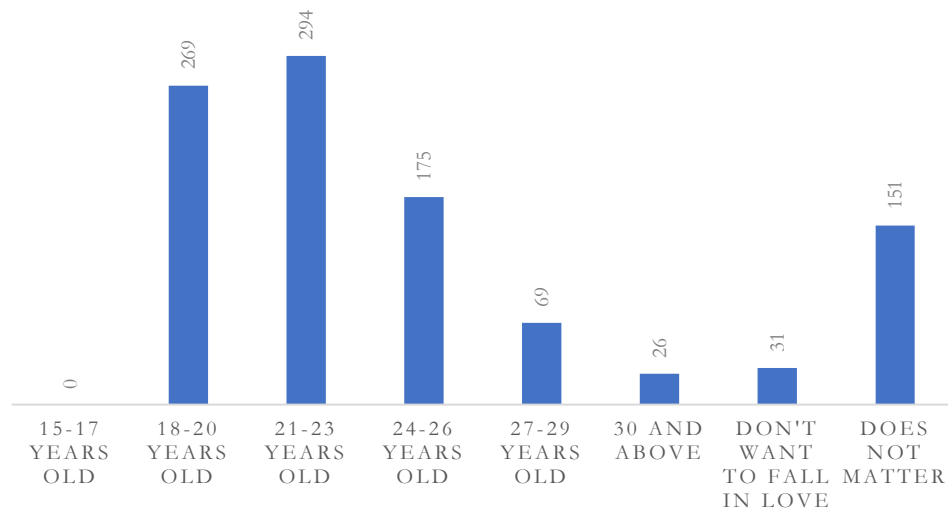


Figure 2: Age for a Romantic Relationship  
Photo credit: Original

### 3.2.3. Best Age to Get Married

In the aspect of the best age to get married, 860 people, in the percentage of 84.73%, are willing to get married. The category of 23-25 years old account for the largest proportion, which is 27.98%. In addition, the data shows that 62.66% respondents want to get married before 30 years old. Besides, 77 people don't want to get married and 78 people think marriage does not matter. The average age is 27.6 years old (see Figure 3).

The marriage rate has been declining since 2013 and it is dropping to 5.4 per thousand in 2021 in China [9]. However, this seems to be a common phenomenon in Asian countries. According to data released by the Korea National Statistical Office, South Korea's marriage rate in 2022 fell from 5.5 per thousand people in 1970 to 3.7 per thousand [10]. The average age at first marriage was 33.7 years old for men and 31.3 years old for women [11], which is older than the result Questionnaire data shows.

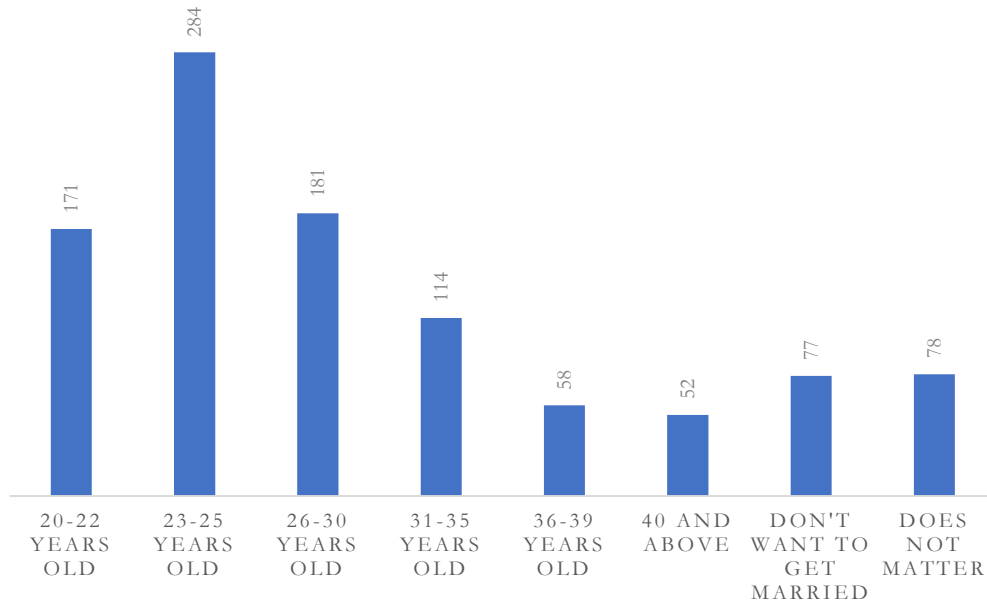


Figure 3: Age for Marriage  
Photo credit: Original

### 3.2.4. Best Age to Have Children

According to the World Population Prospects 2022 released by the United Nations, China's fertility rate in 2022 is only 1.175 percent. In 2022, Korea's fertility rate is 0.78. Stress economic pressure and changing attitudes may be the main reasons [12].

However, in this research, the attitudes of the respondents were optimistic. When come into the question about the best age to have children, 73.99% participants want to have children whereas 93 people don't want to and 171 people take a fairly relaxed attitude. Among the people who want to have a kid, the result shows that 95.87% of them prefer to have children before 35 years old (see Figure 4).

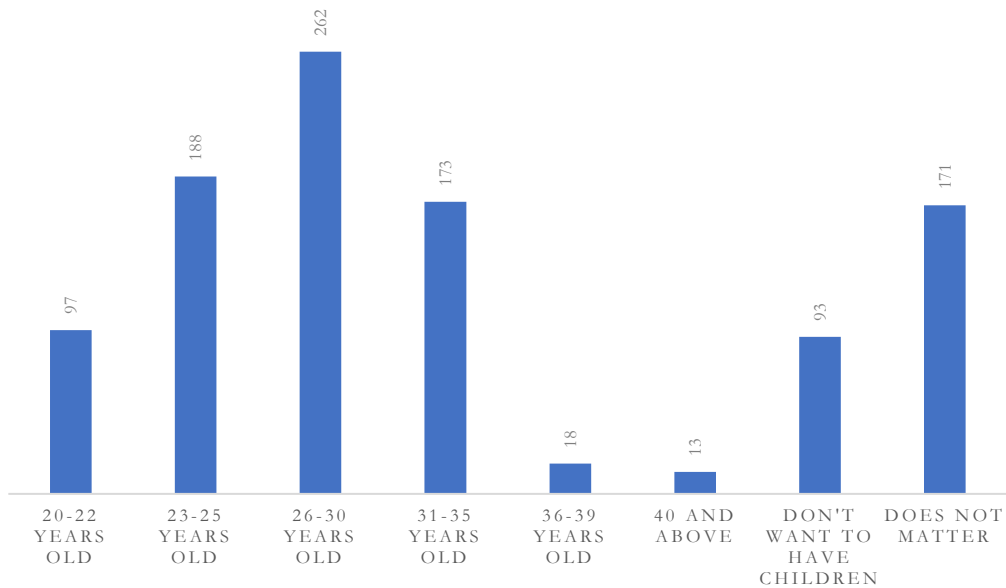


Figure 4: Age for Birth  
Photo credit: Original

### 3.2.5. Factors Concerned During Love and Marriage

The data shows that communication, equality, equality and respect are the most important factors when considering love and marriage, keeping pace with ideological progress. They are factors of values in interaction. Moreover, Emotion, mutual trust are also important factors to consider. Self-growth and fulfillment is the least important factor (see Figure 5).

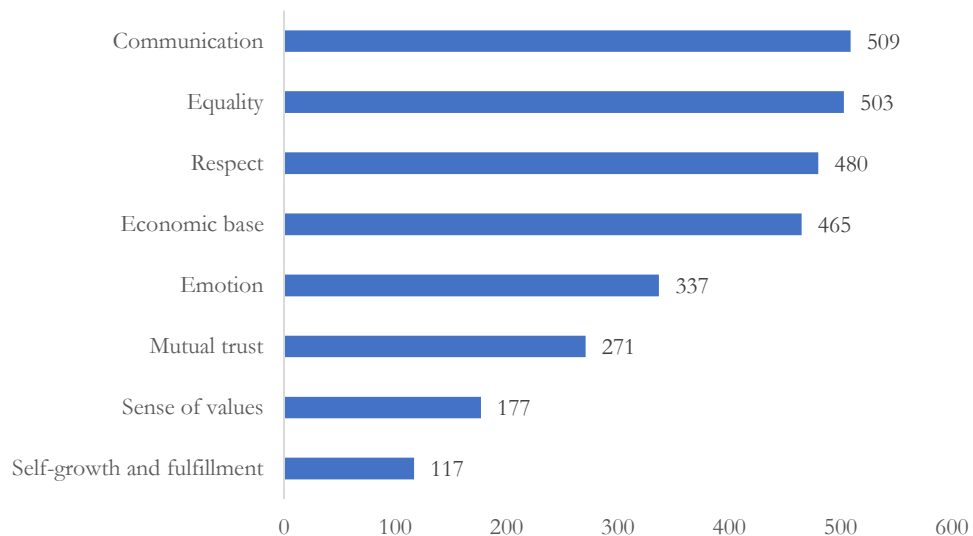


Figure 5: Concerns for the Relationship and Marriage  
Photo credit: Original

### 3.2.6. Standards of Choosing Spouse

The result of standards of choosing spouse indicates that people are more likely to consider career, good shape, income, moral quality, age, ownership of house, good looks, census register, marital history as relatively more important factors. These factors are closely related to one's economic base as well as some external manifestation (see Figure 6).

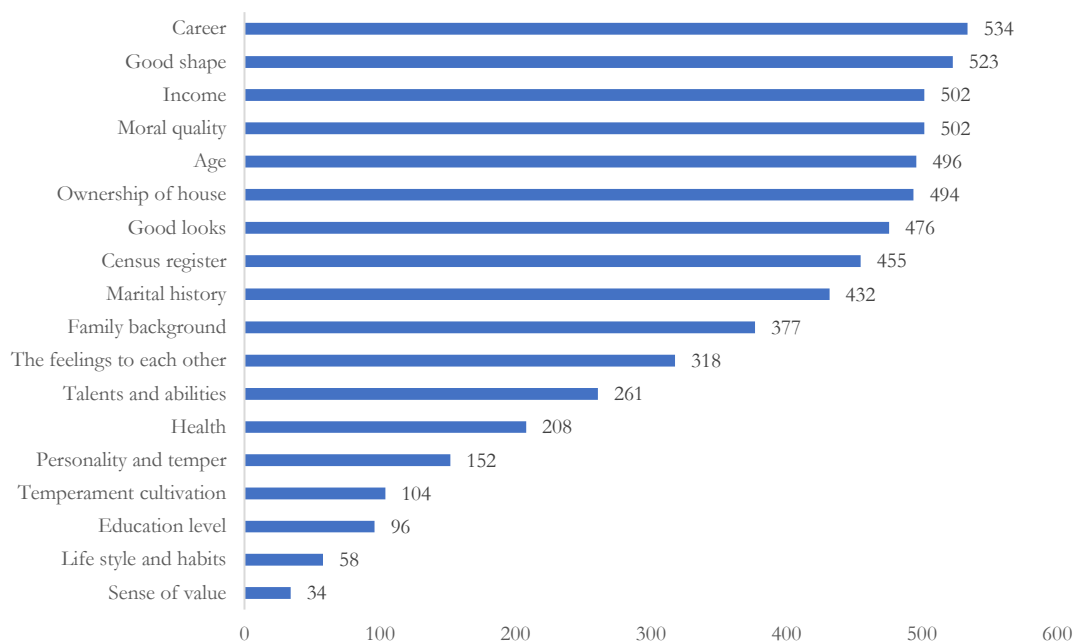


Figure 6: Standards for Choosing Spouse  
Photo credit: Original

### 3.2.7. Ways to Meet Partner

People today tend to meet a partner through free love or introduction by a mutual friend or by formal blind date. They are less likely to meet their love through internet. It indicates that face-to-face interaction occupy an important position (see Figure 7).

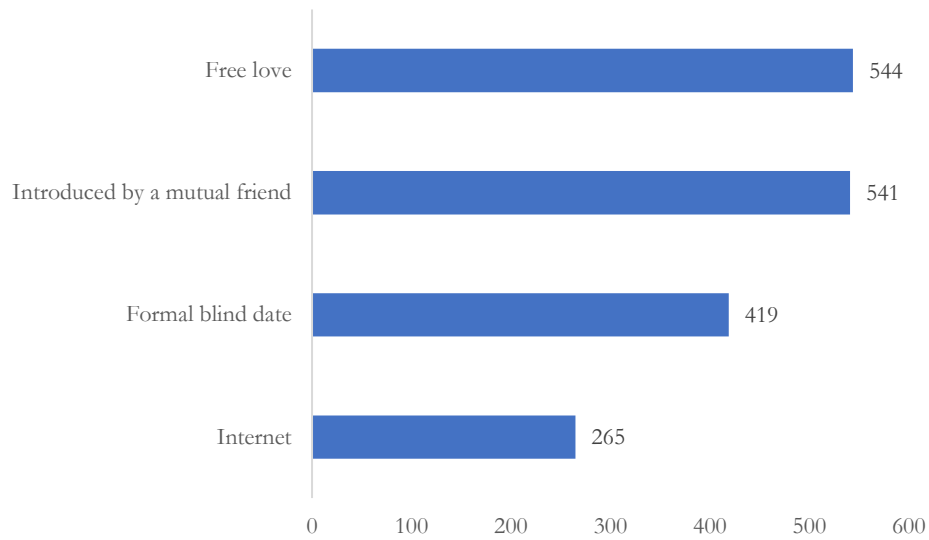


Figure 7: Ways to meet Partner  
Photo credit: Original

### 3.2.8. Marriage Pressure

Marriage pressure focus on several factors, such as pressure from peers, relatives, parents, and oneself. All these factors are mainly the idea of people. In addition, the pressure of from the whole society and someone's income, properties and census register also be of much concern (see Figure 8).

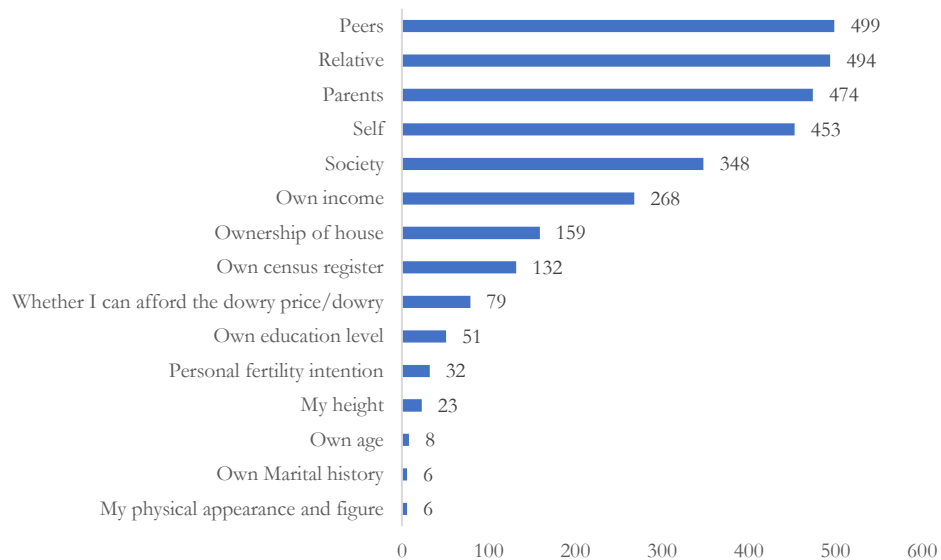


Figure 8: Worry about Marriage  
Photo credit: Original



### 3.2.9. Factors Need to Consider to Have a Child

According to the data, three factors are more important, including adequate mental preparation, stable marriage, adequate economic foundation. When considering to have a child, people need more previous preparation. It is shown that parents' opinion seems much less important (see Figure 9).

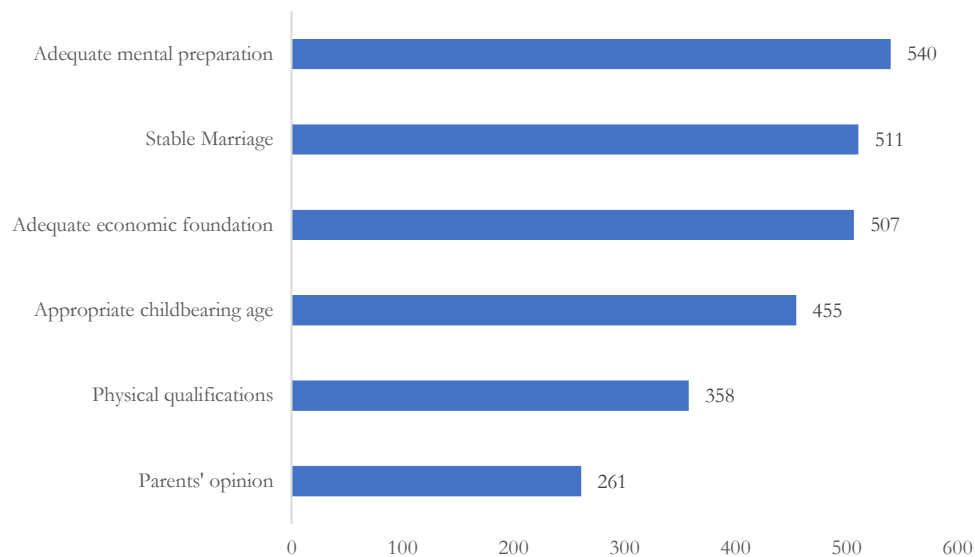


Figure 9: Determining Factors for Having a Child

Photo credit: Original

### 3.2.10. Love Attitude

The result shows that 45.41% of respondents have not thought clearly. 357 people want to fall in love, weighing 35.17% of the total. 197 participants don't fall in love, and they prefer to stay single. In this question, there is a marked difference of opinion (see Figure 10).

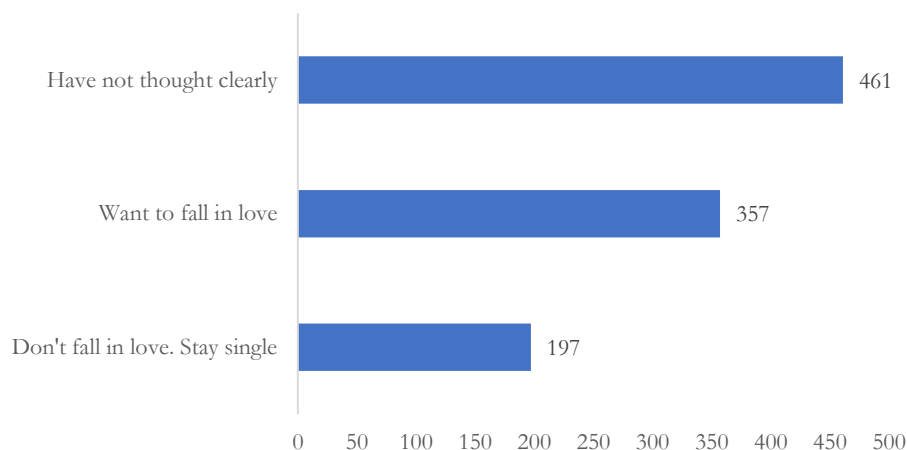


Figure 10: Attitude towards Relationship

Photo credit: Original

### 3.2.11. Marriage Attitude

There are 16 statements of love attitudes. As for descriptive analysis, they are divided to two categories, one is positive attitude, the other is negative or neutral. The positive attitudes are showed in red in the chart while the others stay blue (see Figure 11). It is clearly that people are apt to be positive about marriage, thinking that marriage is one of life pursuits, people in stable relationships are more likely to succeed, marriage is sacred and noble, and the marital is irreplaceable by other human relationships, etc.

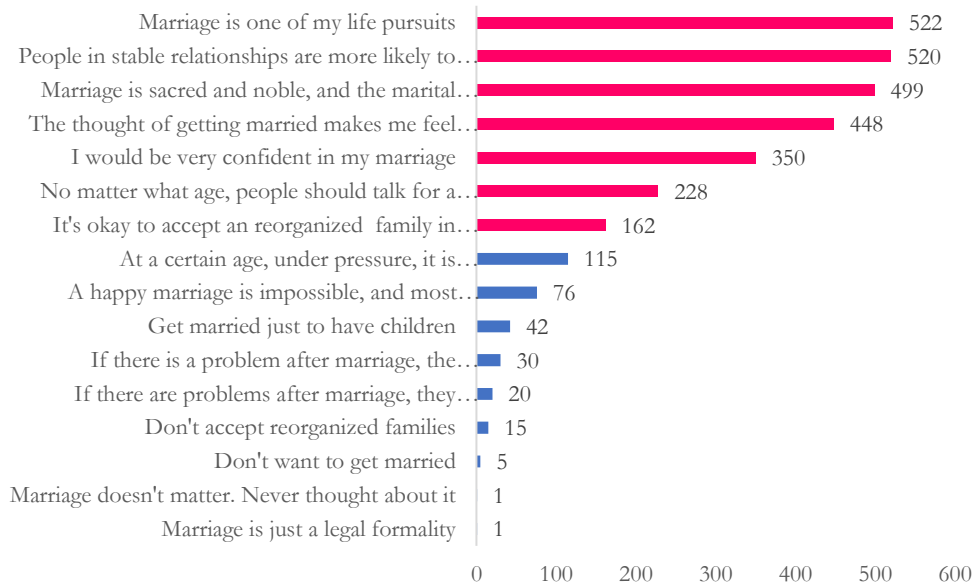


Figure 11: Attitude towards Marriage  
Photo credit: Original

## 3.3. Empirical Study

### 3.3.1. Model

To investigate the factors that would affect people's attitude towards romantic relationships and marriage, the research used a cross sectional model with fixed effects. First, the research used the expected number of times of being in a relationship as the dependent variable to study how the respondent's attitude toward relationship would differ. Second, the research examined how the respondent's preferred marriage status. Lastly, the research focus on how people's positive expectations about marriage would be impacted by their backgrounds. The regression function is as follows:

$$Y = \gamma + \beta X + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

where  $Y$  is the vector of variables for the respondent's attitude toward relationship, respondent's preferred marriage status, and the respondent's positive expectations about marriage.  $X$  is the vector of demographic and social characteristics of this respondent. The research include age, number of years in school (including higher education), current marriage (relationship) statues, annual income, and type of employers.  $\beta$  is the vector of coefficients of interests.  $\varepsilon$  is the residual. The research includes the province fixed effects.

### 3.3.2. Empirical Results

Yu Lichao, Wen Jin, Liu Xuemin [6] used Logistic regression model to study the influencing factors about the attitudes to love. The results found that these factors are significant: gender, parents' relationship, parents' marriage situation, major, census register. In addition, the love situation had significant influence on the college students' marital autonomy. This research conducted regressions about the factors on times of being in a relationship, attitude towards a relationship and positive attitude towards marriage. The factors are age, education, marriage situation, income, position, more comprehensively than Yu Lichao, Wen Jin, Liu Xuemin's research.

The results are present in three tables. Table 1 shows the results of the expected number of times of being in a relationship. The research includes different sets of control variables in three columns. The R-squared is about 3 percent across the three models. Although the research doesn't find any significant coefficients for the variables of interests, the results do suggest that people would like to get into fewer times of romantic relationships as their age increases.

Table 1: Regression Results for the Times of Being in A Relationship

VARIABLES	(1) OLS Time	(2) OLS Time	(3) OLS Time
Age	-0.0000 (0.0040)	-0.0001 (0.0041)	-0.0014 (0.0042)
Education by year	-0.0015 (0.0083)	-0.0012 (0.0083)	-0.0010 (0.0084)
Married		0.0731 (0.1100)	0.0771 (0.1109)
Single, no experience		-0.0310 (0.1683)	-0.0182 (0.1671)
Single but have experience		0.0156 (0.1088)	0.0199 (0.1099)
In a relationship		0.0490 (0.1085)	0.0566 (0.1098)
Income			-0.0009 (0.0024)
Public sector			0.0708 (0.0922)
Private sector			-0.1228 (0.1282)
Self-employed			0.0886 (0.1197)
Constant	3.7085*** (0.3131)	3.6787*** (0.3318)	3.7137*** (0.3678)
Observations	1,015	1,015	1,015
R-squared	0.0290	0.0298	0.0346
Province FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 2 shows the results for respondent's preferred marriage status. Coefficients for Age are statistically significant for all three models. The negative coefficients indicate that people with higher ages are more likely to be determined to keep single. However, as the number of years education increases, the respondent is more likely to look forward to being in a romantic relationship. The R-squared is about six percent across the three models.

Table 2: Regression Results for the Attitude towards a Relationship

VARIABLES	(1) OLS Preference	(2) OLS Preference	(3) OLS Preference
Age	-0.0102*** (0.0026)	-0.0098*** (0.0027)	-0.0095*** (0.0028)
Education by year	0.0038 (0.0060)	0.0034 (0.0059)	0.0031 (0.0061)
Married		0.0155 (0.0736)	0.0085 (0.0741)
Single, no experience		0.0242 (0.1141)	0.0226 (0.1148)
Single but have experience		-0.0784 (0.0718)	-0.0811 (0.0718)
In a relationship		-0.0018 (0.0730)	-0.0069 (0.0733)
Income			-0.0010 (0.0016)
Public sector			-0.0580 (0.0591)
Private sector			-0.0315 (0.0809)
Self-employed			0.0324 (0.0759)
Constant	0.5620** (0.2359)	0.5666** (0.2462)	0.6547** (0.2551)
Observations	1,015	1,015	1,015
R-squared	0.0553	0.0579	0.0610
Province FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 3 presents the respondent's positive expectations about marriage. The research noticed that people with a higher number of years of education would have slightly more positive attitude (expectation) towards marriage. This is consistent with the results in table 2. In the third column, the research finds that working in the public sector, such SMEs, would discourage people's positive attitude (expectation) towards marriage. The author believe this might be due to increasing level of workload in these companies. The R-squared is about thirteen percent for the three models. This supports the idea that the model is relatively effective in explaining people's attitude towards marriage. Hong Lu [13] found that in less developed areas such as Yunnan province, female university students are holding positive and more modern ideas about marriage but at the same time

they maybe to some extent are still bound by more traditional ideas, which also consistent with the result that education really plays an important role. However, data shows that in Korea, the higher the education, the lower the marriage rate [14].

Table 3: Regression Results for the Positive Attitude Towards Marriage

VARIABLES	(1) OLS Positive	(2) OLS Positive	(3) OLS Positive
Age	0.0003 (0.0003)	0.0003 (0.0003)	0.0002 (0.0003)
Education by year	0.0010 (0.0007)	0.0010 (0.0007)	0.0010* (0.0006)
Married		-0.0113* (0.0062)	-0.0119* (0.0063)
Single, no experience		-0.0127 (0.0161)	-0.0124 (0.0162)
Single but have experience		-0.0111 (0.0074)	-0.0105 (0.0075)
In a relationship		-0.0033 (0.0036)	-0.0034 (0.0037)
Income			-0.0001 (0.0002)
Public sector			-0.0127** (0.0057)
Private sector			-0.0155 (0.0120)
Self-employed			-0.0073 (0.0061)
Constant	0.9790*** (0.0144)	0.9854*** (0.0136)	0.9997*** (0.0139)
Observations	1,015	1,015	1,015
R-squared	0.1286	0.1311	0.1357
Province FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

#### 4. Conclusion

By using the survey for over 1,000 respondents from 27 province in China, the research investigates the factors that impact people's attitude and their romantic relationship and marriage choice. The research find that people would like to get into fewer times of romantic relationships as their age increases and people with higher ages are more likely to be determined to stay single rather than thinking about being in a relationship. The research also finds that people with a higher number of years of education would have slightly more positive attitude (expectation) towards marriage. Surprisingly, the type of employer plays a role in determining the respondent's attitude toward marriage. The respondent who works in the public sector, such SMEs, are less likely to have a positive attitude (expectation) towards marriage.

It is well known that healthy and stable marriage can promote social progress. It is important for people to have a positive attitude towards marriage. As for policy suggestion, improve the overall level of education on the whole population will bring positive impact. Universities and the society should shoulder this responsibility. The research also indicates that a stable and decent position is closely related to positive attitudes marriage. Making a stable employment environment and reducing unemployment will also be a good way. In a word, with the rapid economic development, a stable environment can give people the foundation for marriage and love.

Although some limitations still exist with this study, such as the number of questionnaires is not enough and maybe some other influential factors are not be included. Besides, it covers too many age groups and regions so it is difficult to analyze the performance of specific group. This study has some practical implications for improving the policy and enhancing the marriage rate and birth rate.

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