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Postponement of childbearing and lowest-low fertility, Hong Kong 1976-2001

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Abstract

This study aims to estimate the role of postponement of childbearing in fertility decline of Hong Kong since 1976 and to project whether there may be recuperation of fertility once postponement of childbearing stopped. By analyzing the annual age and parity-specific fertility data of Hong Kong 1976-2001 with the simple and efficient Bonggarts-Feeney method (1998), tempo (timing) free TFR' is obtained. Comparing period observed TFR with tempo free TFR', the author shows that postponement of childbearing played a great role in fertility decline of Hong Kong since 1976, especially in 1980s and the tempo effects decreased over time since 1990s, less than 0.1 in 1998-2000. By decomposing the tempo effect by parity, it is clearly shown that declines of fertility of parity 1 and 2 are largely due to tempo effects, and, however, that of parity 3 is mainly caused by decline of quantum. Decomposing tempo effects into two parts, the author demonstrates that, with further postponement of childbearing, the difference between the decline of fertility rate at younger ages due to delayed childbearing and increase in fertility rate at older ages due to `catching up` effects become greater. So, if postponement of childbearing goes further, lowest low fertility of Hong Kong may decrease further, since `catching up` effects could not compensate the decline in younger ages due to delayed childbearing. If postponement of childbearing stops, the period TFR of Hong Kong may increase moderately due to `catching up` effect of parity 1 and 2.

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