

Premarital Cohabitation, Marital Dissolution, and Marital Quality in China

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Abstract

Using data from the 2018 China Family Panel Studies, this study examines the associations between premarital cohabitation, marital satisfaction, and the probability of a subsequent divorce, and captures the gradated variations of marital quality by incorporating divorce and self-rated marital satisfaction into a generic measure of marital quality. Findings show positive associations between cohabitation and divorce and negative associations between cohabitation and marital quality. Results further show that the negative association between cohabitation and marital quality is weakened by better education, higher income, and rural origin, and stronger among men. The consistent negative associations between cohabitation and all the marital quality outcomes indicate the persistent strength of the norm of universal marriage, based on which cohabitation is still considered substantively distinct from marriage both in terms of legal status and social recognition. The diverse social gradients of the cohabitation-marital quality links reflect the heterogeneous social meanings of cohabitation in contemporary China.

Keywords: cohabitation, divorce, marital quality, the Second Demographic Transition, trial marriage, economic pressures

Introduction

Premarital cohabitation has been on the rise in Asian countries in recent years. In China, despite the strong influence of Confucian values on the importance of marriage, a third of the 2010-2012 marriage cohort were involved in premarital cohabitation (Jones, 2010; Raymo, Park, Xie, & Yeung, 2015; Xie, 2013; Yu & Xie, 2015). In many Asian countries, cohabitation has been gaining increasing acceptance among young adults on the basis that it provides couples with an opportunity to bond with each other and try out how living with each other would be like a “trial marriage” (Jones, Zhang, & Chia, 2012; Sun et al, 2014; Williams, Kabamalan, & Ogena, 2007). The individualism attached to cohabitation has also made it more acceptable as a reflection of more liberal attitudes toward marital decisions (Jampaklay & Haseen, 2011; Ochiai, 2011; Yang & Yen, 2011).

However, the incidence of cohabitation in Asia is still much lower than that in Western countries. Notably, cohabitation is still largely stigmatized and considered sexually deviant, particularly among Asian women due to societal expectations of maintaining women’s chastity before marriage (Bennett, 2005; Samart, 2007; Yoo, 2015). Cohabiting women are judged to have disgraced the family and community (Kobayashi & Kampen, 2015; Williams, 2010) and the lack of legal protection for cohabiting women and their children in the event of separation deters them from cohabiting as well (Xu & Xia, 2014). Contrastingly, men have been found to show much stronger support for cohabitation compared to women (Jones, Zhang, & Chia, 2012). Yet, in Asian societies which hold Confucian values, cohabiting men may also be stigmatized and stereotyped as irresponsible men who do not want to be accountable for their partners and are avoiding their duty to carry on family lineage through legal childbearing (Yoo, 2015).

Other social gradients have been reflected in the patterns of cohabitation. Despite its higher prevalence among people of higher socioeconomic status, cohabitation has become increasingly popular among the low-income population. The high monetary costs of marriage often deter these individuals from getting married and they enter a cohabiting union instead (DeKeseredy, Schwartz, & Alvi, 2008; Raymo, Iwasawa, & Bumpass, 2009). For example, with divorce being illegal in the Philippines, cohabitation has become an attractive option for individuals who are afraid of future relationship instability but do not have the monetary means to obtain an annulment (Kuang, Perelli-Harris, & Padmadas, 2019). Cohabitation has also increased due to the rising costs of marriage celebrations in the Philippines.

The diverse and changing understanding of cohabitation has led to mixed findings in studies about the relationship between premarital cohabitation and marital stability. Some studies have established a positive relationship between cohabitation and divorce. While some argue that this is due to the weaker commitment between cohabiting couples (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Cohan & Kleinbaum, 2004; DeKeseredy et al., 2008; Hall & Zhao, 1995), some attribute the positive link between cohabitation and divorce to the flexible perceptions of the meanings of cohabitation, which often differ across men and women (Jay, 2012). While men tend to perceive cohabitation as a convenient dating arrangement or an alternative to marriage, women are more likely to consider cohabitation as a precursor to marriage. Even though some couples holding diverging perceptions may still end up getting married, the discordance in their perceived “seriousness” of the relationship may also lead to marital instabilities. Researchers have also posited that the positive link between cohabitation and divorce is due to the selectivity of those choosing to cohabit before marriage (Axinn & Thornton, 1992; Brown, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright, 2006). People who choose to enter cohabiting unions possess characteristics that make

them prone to divorce more so than non-cohabitators. For example, those who have conservative attitudes to marriage and those who are religious are less likely to cohabit and to divorce (Brown et. al., 2006; Woods & Emery, 2002). In addition, one's personal history such as past experiences of severe delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse, and legal run-ins were also predictive of subsequent divorce (Woods & Emery, 2002). Perelli-Harris and colleagues (2017) introduce a novel perspective to the positive relationship between cohabitation and divorce by suggesting that the increase in cohabitation rates in recent years is a response to the prevalence of divorce. That is, as the increase in divorce indicates a shift in social norms towards the deinstitutionalization of marriage where marriage is seen as a temporary arrangement rather than a permanent one, people feel increasingly reluctant to get married and choose to cohabit instead (Perelli-Harris, Berrington, Gassen, Galezewska, & Holland, 2017).

Meanwhile, as cohabitation becomes more common, it is more likely that the positive relationship between cohabitation and divorce transforms into a negative one (Reinhold, 2010; Teachman, 2004; Perelli-Harris et. al., 2017). In the past, cohabitation was usually practiced by people who broke social norms and were less committed to marriage, making them more prone to subsequent divorce (Teachman, 2004). As cohabitation becomes more common, cohabiting unions are no longer confined to individuals who possess these qualities of instability (Teachman, 2004). The declining benefit of marriage in comparison to cohabitation leads to both an increase in premarital cohabitation and a rise in relationship quality (Reinhold, 2010), which, in turn, leads to lower divorce rates upon married. Moreover, along with rising acceptance of cohabitation, young people increasingly find cohabitation as a helpful "trial marriage" (Kulu & Boyle, 2010; Svarer, 2004). Having lived together, cohabitators who transition to marriage tend to have more solid relationships and thus are less likely to divorce.

In addition to the above studies discussing the positive or negative relationship between cohabitation and divorce, the diffusion perspective aims to establish a coherent framework to understand the heterogeneities in the relationship (Liefbroer & Dourleijn, 2006; Zhang, 2017). That is, rather than a binary categorization, the direction of the relationship between cohabitation and divorce hinges on specific social contexts, where the meaning and prevalence vary. For example, the study by Zhang (2017) found the positive relationship between cohabitation and divorce significant only for those who got married in early-reform China when cohabitation was rare whereas this positive relationship was not found among those who got married in the late-reform period when cohabitation had become much more common.

Moreover, previous studies on the implications of cohabitation on marital stability have focused on divorce as the outcome. Given the rising diversity in the nature of cohabitation and the empirical ambivalence of the link between cohabitation and divorce, it is crucial to examine how premarital cohabitation has influenced marital quality for those cohabitators who stay married (Zimmermann & Easterlin, 2006). Rather than a binary distinction, levels of marital quality lie on a spectrum of gradated variations, which can only be captured by simultaneously looking at the degree of marital satisfaction among those who are still married and those who are already divorced.

In this study, using data from the nationally representative 2018 China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), I examine the relationship between premarital cohabitation and three marital stability outcomes, namely, divorce, self-rated marital satisfaction, and a generic measure of marital satisfaction which incorporates the former two measures to capture the full range of variations of marital quality. I will further investigate how the relationships are moderated by gender, rural origin, education, and income.

Conceptualizations of Cohabitation

The nature and origin of cohabitation are diverse and complex. Drawing on the framework of the Second Demographic Transition, cohabitation is an important form of articulation of individual autonomy and expressive needs (Lesthaeghe, 2020). Yet, it is also driven by practical and economic reasons with those less financially established using cohabitation as a trial marriage and a buffer zone for preparing for marriage. Thus, cohabitation is also perceived as “the poor man’s marriage” (Lesthaeghe, 2020). The heterogeneous nature and understanding of cohabitation has led to different conceptualizations of it, particularly in terms of its relationship with the status of being single and married (Thornton, Axinn, & Xie, 2008).

To fully understand the social meanings of cohabitation, Thornton and colleagues (2008) have proposed a categorization system to depict the relationships between cohabitation, being single, and marriage, based on which there are five types of relationships:

First, for some people, cohabitation is considered to be equivalent to being single. Based on this definition, the status of cohabiting couples is considered as single and very similar to those still dating and going steady. This definition emphasizes the social and legal distinctions between being married and being single, with the latter being less socially stable and without a need for legal recognition.

Yet, for some people, cohabitation is much more similar to marriage than to being single. Thus, based on the second definition, cohabitation and marriage are considered as equivalent contrasts to being single. This definition emphasizes the importance of intimate relations and common residence as crucial distinctions in determining relationship status, for which cohabitation and marriage have a major overlap with cohabitation perceived as a paperless or de facto marriage.

Third, while the above two conceptualizations focus on the binary distinction between the status of being married and being single, some people perceive cohabitation as an independent and the third option of relationship status besides marriage and being single. Based on this definition, cohabitation is different from both marriage and being single, and marriage and cohabitation are two comparable but different alternatives to the single state.

Fourth, while the above three definitions focus on the conceptual differences and interconnections between cohabitation, marriage, and being single, the fourth and fifth definitions aim to capture the sequential patterns of relationship development. Specifically, some people may consider marriage and cohabitation as two different yet independent options conditional on the decision to exit singlehood and to form a union. This definition conceptualizes the process of exiting singlehood as a two-step process, namely, first, having a desire to transition to a coresidential union, and second, to end singlehood by choosing to get married or to cohabit. Based on this definition, marriage and cohabitation are direct alternatives to each other for couples who decide to live together.

On the other hand, the fifth definition, while recognizing the processual nature of exiting singlehood, perceives cohabitation as part of the marriage process, rather than a competing option. Thus, for people who hold this conceptualization, cohabitation is not an alternative to either marriage or being single, but a part of the relationship transition process that leads from being single to getting married. Cohabitation, as part of the courtship process, functions as a trial marriage.

In reality, people's conceptualization and understanding of cohabitation may not be exclusive to one type out of the above five definitions and are subjected to contextual influences

and changes. In the next section, drawing on various social backgrounds, I discuss the prevalence of and trends in cohabitation and various understandings of it in contemporary China.

Modernization and Cohabitation in China

Since 1978, post-reform China has witnessed dramatic economic development and social modernization, characterized by more liberal and individualistic attitudes and ideals toward life choices including marital decisions (Raymo et al. 2015; Xie, 2013; Yu & Xie, 2015). Among the influences of modernization on the private lives of individuals, China has experienced rising cohabitation and divorce rates (Xu & Xia, 2014; Yeung & Hu, 2016). Yet, the experiences of the same process of modernization have been different for Chinese of varying educational backgrounds. As a result of modern education, which has been a powerful enactment of modern culture and ideals (Meyer, 2006), Chinese with higher education tend to be more receptive to Western culture which promotes individual autonomy in marital choices. Therefore, contrary to studies in other industrialized societies, the years spent on schooling by Chinese men and women have significant positive effects on the likelihood of premarital cohabitation, as cohabitation is seen as an innovative and modern behavior in China, and hence cohabitation predominates among the highly educated (Song & Lai, 2020; Yu & Xie, 2015).

Yet, the influence of educational attainment on cohabitation is not clear-cut. While higher educational attainment is associated with having liberal values and therefore an increased propensity to cohabit, having higher educational attainment also accrues an individual with more financial power to get ready for the economic requirements of marriage and to obtain a divorce in the future when needed, making cohabitation a less necessary option for this group of individuals (Mu & Yeung, 2020; Williams et al., 2007).

Cohabitation is also more prevalent and widely accepted in urban areas compared to rural areas (Boyle & Kulu, 2006; Cuevas, 2017; Hong, Stanton, Li, Yang, Lin, Fang, Wang, & Mao, 2006; Bennett, 2005). Often, individuals in urban areas are more likely to be associated with unconventional norms and ideals than those living in rural areas (Jampaklay & Haseen, 2011). In urban areas where housing costs are high, unmarried couples often turn to cohabitation for more convenient and economical accommodation (Bennett, 2005; Nguyen, 2007). In countries like China where rapid economic changes have taken place, urban areas experience rapid urbanization and greater exposure to western values (Kobayashi & Kampen, 2015; Yang, 2011). Especially in the case of China, it is likely that market forces have eroded the Chinese traditional family system and allowed women to gain economic independence; therefore, also introduces a preference for relationships bounded by romance (Yang, 2011). Cohabitation may be a particularly appealing option for urban women who are no longer eager to marry just for financial security. In contrast, rural residents often see premarital cohabitation as “irresponsible” and “selfish” and associate the practice with being morally reprehensible and in defiance of social norms (Williams, 2010). In instances where cohabitation occurs in rural areas, it is often an arrangement borne out of structural necessity where residents have difficulty accessing formal marriage registration facilities (Kobayashi & Kampen, 2015). Cohabitation in rural areas can also be appealing for couples who do not feel that they are financially stable enough to get married (Reynolds & Walther, 2020).

Such dichotomous views between rural and urban residents make it unsurprising that rural-to-urban migrants often feel that their receiving communities are much more accepting of cohabitation (Mu & Yeung, 2020). Thus, rural-to-urban migrants are more likely than rural residents to engage in premarital cohabitation (Yu & Xie, 2015). Notably, rural-to-urban

migrants often feel that urban residents are more open-minded (Hong et. al., 2006), and moving to the city away from their families provide migrants with the freedom and independence to engage in premarital sex and cohabitation without being bothered by moral judgments (Ngyuyen, 2007; Samart, 2007). Rural-to-urban migrants may also prefer cohabitation in a bid to gain companionship and help one another get used to the faster pace of life and competitive new environment (Ngyuyen, 2007). Migrants are also likely to cohabit with their partners to cement their relationship while saving up to get married (Samart, 2007; Mu & Yeung, 2020). Back home in their villages, expensive wedding banquets and formal ceremonies are an indispensable part of being recognized as a married couple (Mu & Yeung, 2018; Gaetano, 2008). Cohabiting in cities delays these marriage costs.

Returning to the five-category understanding of the conceptualization of cohabitation, while some social changes may lead to increasing cohabitation, others may lead to a decrease. Specifically, for the first type, namely, being single and cohabiting as equivalent contrasts to marriage, while more Chinese youth may take up the arrangement of cohabitation in their premarital years as a modern behavior, a salient social gradient may still exist. Cohabitation may remain more acceptable among people who are more exposed to “modern” ideas, such as urbanites and those with higher education. Also, more people may take up cohabitation as a trial marriage and as a buffer zone to get financially prepared, as described by the fifth type of conceptualization, especially given the normative importance of marriage ceremony and housing upon marriage, along with the skyrocketing costs of living and housing in contemporary China. However, given the persistent norm of universal marriage, the remaining three types of conceptualizations, which place cohabitation as a social equivalent to marriage, may not represent the development of cohabitation in China. In 2010, 4.99% of men, and 1.21% of

women in China were never married by age 30 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010); in 2018, 3.6% of men, and 0.76% of women were never married by age 30 (author's calculation using the CFPS data). That is, in China, while cohabitation may be more acceptable to those who hold more liberal attitudes toward premarital sex and those who need the time to get financially prepared, it is still considered substantively distinct from marriage. Therefore, the experience of cohabitation may still hurt post-marital relationships, and the impact may be moderated by factors such as gender, education, rural/urban divide, and income.

Cohabitation and Marital Quality

Previous studies on the implications of cohabitation on marital stability have focused on divorce as the outcome. However, especially given the rising diversity in the nature of cohabitation and the empirical ambivalence of the link between cohabitation and divorce, it is crucial to examine how premarital cohabitation has influenced marital quality for those cohabitators who stay married (Zimmermann & Easterlin, 2006). The variations of marital quality are gradated. While divorce may indicate an extreme case of marital instability, it cannot capture the nuanced variations of the levels of marital quality.

In this study, besides examining the influence of cohabitation on marital quality by separately focusing on divorce and self-rated marital satisfaction, I also incorporate the two measures into one indicator of marital quality, assuming those who got divorced hold the lowest level of marital quality. By doing this, this study aims to capture the full range and the gradated changes in the levels of marital quality.

Data and Methods

Data and Methods

I utilize data from the nationally representative 2018 wave of the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS). It includes a detailed history of intimate relationships and marital satisfaction, as well as respondents' demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and residential registration (*hukou*) status at younger ages. The richness of the data enables us to measure marital quality, detail the marital and life trajectories, and rigorously estimate the relationships between cohabitation, marital quality, and marital stability.

I select data from respondents aged 20-50, whose intimate relationships were more likely to have happened after and under the influence of the full development of China's economic reforms. I further narrowed it down to those who were either married or currently single after getting divorced and those with full information on all included variables, which leaves us with 4602 women and 4298 men.

I use regular logistic models to estimate the propensity of getting divorced versus staying married, OLS models to estimate self-rated marital satisfaction, and both OLS and ordinal logistic models to predict general marital satisfaction, which is a generic measure incorporating divorce and self-rated marital satisfaction.

Measures

Dependent Variables

The main dependent variable in this paper is the probability of getting divorced versus staying married, self-rated marital satisfaction, and a constructed measure of general marital satisfaction that captures the full range of variations of marital quality including for both divorced and

currently married individuals. Divorce is measured as a binary variable indicating whether the respondent is currently single after getting divorced with 0 being currently married and 1 being divorced. I use regular binary logistic models for this outcome. Marital satisfaction is a composite measure as the sum of three ratings on marital quality—respondent’s self-perceived satisfaction with the marriage in general, self-perceived satisfaction with the housework division, and self-perceived satisfaction with the financial conditions of the marital household. All three ratings range from 1 to 5 with higher ratings indicating higher levels of satisfaction with the marriage. I use regular OLS models for this outcome. General marital satisfaction accounting for divorce draws on the above measure of marital satisfaction while coding divorce as 0 for each rating to indicate divorce as the lowest level of marital satisfaction. I use both OLS and ordinal logistic models for this outcome.

Main Independent Variable

The main independent variable is the experience of premarital cohabitation. This is measured as a binary variable indicating whether the respondent has ever cohabited with a spouse before the current marriage, with 0 being no and 1 being yes.

Other Independent Variables

Gender is a binary variable with women coded as 0 and men coded as 1. Education is a continuous variable indicating the respondent’s years of schooling. *Hukou* origin is a binary variable aiming to capture the respondent’s social origin. Specifically, it relies on the respondent’s *hukou* status at age 12, for which an urban origin is coded as 0, and a rural origin is coded as 1. Age is a continuous variable indicating the respondent’s age in years. Logged annual

family income is the logarithm of the respondent's annual income. The number of children is a continuous variable indicating the number of children the respondent has.

Results

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of variables used in the analysis. As shown, divorce is still uncommon among respondents in the sample. Specifically, in the sample, 2.75% of the respondents have been divorced. Note that this is an overestimate of divorce rates in China with the denominator including only those who have been divorced and remain single at the time of the survey and those who are currently married, while those who are widowed and currently in cohabitation are excluded. For marital satisfaction, out of the composite rating ranging from 0 to 15, the average rating is 12.89. For general marital satisfaction, I consider those who are divorced as holding a rating of zero for marital satisfaction, and the average level of marital satisfaction based on this measure is lower than that based on the original ratings, decreasing to 12.53. For premarital cohabitation, 19.71% of the respondents had cohabited with each other before their current marriage. For the respondent's social origin, the majority of the sample, namely, 89.21%, held a rural *hukou* at age 12. The average age is 40.54 years old. Their personal annual income on average is 22625.67 yuan per year. The average number of children is around 0.91 children. The average years of schooling is around 8.36 years, which is around graduation from junior middle school.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Table 2 shows regression results estimating the relationship between premarital cohabitation, divorce, and marital satisfaction. As shown, based on all the outcomes and models,

cohabitation is correlated with lower marital quality and higher marital instabilities. Specifically, cohabitation is associated with a higher probability of divorce and lower levels of marital satisfaction. For other covariates, men tend to have a higher probability of divorce and, upon remaining married, higher levels of marital satisfaction than women. In comparison with those of an urban origin, those who held a rural *hukou* at age 12 are less likely to divorce, possibly due to the more conservative family attitudes in rural areas. Age is related to lower probabilities of divorce and better marital quality. Those with more years of education have a lower probability of divorce. Higher income is correlated with a higher likelihood of divorce and lower levels of marital satisfaction. Those with more children are less likely to get divorced and report better marital quality.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

In the following analyses, I further examine how the negative influence of cohabitation on marital quality differs across gender, *hukou* origin, education, and income. In Table 3, the negative influence of cohabitation on both marital satisfaction outcomes remains. Marital quality is estimated to be more severely affected by premarital cohabitation for men than for women. This is possible because men who have cohabited before, in comparison to women, may be less committed in their romantic and marital relationships and are more likely to perceive cohabitation as similar in status to singlehood than a step toward marriage.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

In Table 4, findings show that the negative link between cohabitation and marital quality gets weaker for those with a rural origin. This is possibly due to the stricter conventions of marital ceremonies, betrothal gifts, and marital housing in rural areas. That is, it is more common for those with rural origins to cohabit in advance of marriage when the young couple gets

financially prepared for official marital registration. This indicates that particularly for those of rural origins, the importance and pressures of financial preparation for marriage with premarital cohabitation as a buffer zone may outweigh the impact of the conservative attitudes toward such an unconventional option.

TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

In Table 5, I further include interactions between premarital cohabitation and years of schooling. The coefficients on cohabitation remain similar in directions as those in Table 2. Yet, the positive link between cohabitation and divorce and the negative link between cohabitation and marital satisfaction both get attenuated with more years of schooling. This echoes the diffusion perspective that since cohabitation is more common among those with better education as a modern behavior, it has fewer negative implications on better-educated individuals.

TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

We include the interactions between premarital cohabitation and income in Table 6. As shown, the direction of the influences of cohabitation on all the marital quality outcomes remains the same as in Table 2. However, the positive link between cohabitation and divorce becomes weaker with higher income. This is possibly due to couples who are financially better off facing fewer pressures and stress in their marital relationships, despite their cohabitation experience.

Discussion

In this paper, using data from the 2018 China Family Panel Studies, I examined the associations between premarital cohabitation, marital quality, and the probability of a subsequent divorce. I captured the gradated variations of marital quality by incorporating divorce and self-rated marital satisfaction into a generic measure of marital quality. Findings show a positive association

between premarital cohabitation and marital dissolution, and a negative association between cohabitation and marital quality controlling for gender, age, education, income, number of children, and the urban-rural divide. I further find that the negative association between premarital cohabitation and marital quality is weakened by better education, higher income, and rural origin. However, men's premarital cohabitation has a stronger negative association with marital quality.

Findings regarding interactions between cohabitation and education, and cohabitation and income align with the diffusion perspective, that is, cohabitation is more common among those with better socioeconomic status as a novel and modern behavior. Cohabitation has become more acceptable among individuals who are socioeconomically better off, and thus, the negative implications of cohabitation on marital quality are weakened among such groups. Yet, the weakening impact of having a rural origin may indicate the pragmatic nature of cohabitation. Given the entrenched tradition of a formal marital ceremony and decent marital housing in rural areas, those with a rural origin may be under greater pressures to get financially prepared for marriage entry. Cohabitation may therefore have served as an important buffer zone and a trial marriage for those with a rural origin. On the other hand, the strengthening negative influence of cohabitation on marital quality among men may indicate the persistent selection mechanism, particularly among men. That is, due to the less stringent moral and sexual constraints exerted on men than on women, those men who had the experience of premarital cohabitation are more likely to be less committed to their romantic and marital relationships and perceive cohabitation as a flexible and nonchalant experience rather than a precursor to marriage.

The diverse social gradients of the cohabitation-marital quality links reflect the complex social backgrounds in contemporary China that have shaped the various nature and social

meanings of cohabitation. While cohabitation becomes more acceptable to some Chinese due to their more cosmopolitan and liberal ideals about family choices and individual autonomy, others perceive cohabitation as a practical yet sub-optimal and temporary arrangement while transitioning to marriage. Overall, in China, cohabitation is still considered substantively distinct from marriage in terms of both legal status and social recognition, which is reflected by the consistent negative associations between cohabitation and all the marital quality outcomes.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

| | Mean/% | SD | Range | N |
|---|----------|----------|------------|------|
| Divorce (ref.=married) | 2.75% | | 0-1 | 8900 |
| Marital satisfaction | 12.89 | 2.54 | 0-15 | 8655 |
| General marital satisfaction | 12.53 | 3.28 | 0-15 | 8900 |
| Premarital cohabitation(ref.=no) | 19.71% | | 0-1 | 8900 |
| Men (ref.=women) | 48.29% | | 0-1 | 8900 |
| Rural <i>hukou</i> at age 12 (ref.=urban) | 89.21% | | 0-1 | 8900 |
| Age | 40.54 | 6.93 | 20-50 | 8900 |
| Years of schooling | 8.36 | 4.49 | 0-22 | 8900 |
| Personal annual income | 22625.67 | 35373.38 | 0.1-840000 | 8900 |
| Number of children | 0.91 | 0.66 | 0-5 | 8900 |

Note: 2018 China Family Panel Studies.

Table 2. Premarital Cohabitation, Divorce, and Marital Satisfaction.

| Independent Variables | Divorce | Marital Satisfaction | General Marital Satisfaction | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| | (Logistic) | (OLS) | (OLS) | (Ordinal logistic) |
| Premarital cohabitation (ref.=no) | 0.620*** (0.145) | -0.211** (0.069) | -0.496*** (0.089) | -0.191*** (0.051) |
| Men (ref.=women) | 0.823*** (0.143) | 1.499*** (0.053) | 1.181*** (0.070) | 1.060*** (0.041) |
| Rural <i>hukou</i> at age 12 (ref.=urban <i>hukou</i>) | -0.540** (0.186) | -0.022 (0.091) | 0.22 (0.118) | 0.098 (0.066) |
| Age | -0.028** (0.010) | 0.015*** (0.004) | 0.024*** (0.005) | 0.015*** (0.003) |
| Years of schooling | -0.051** (0.018) | -0.007 (0.007) | 0.014 (0.009) | -0.006 (0.005) |
| Logarithm of personal annual income | 0.050*** (0.012) | -0.008 (0.004) | -0.023*** (0.006) | -0.010** (0.003) |
| Number of children | -0.915*** (0.114) | -0.019 (0.041) | 0.268*** (0.053) | 0.05 (0.030) |
| Intercept | -1.843*** (0.542) | 11.757*** (0.227) | 10.618*** (0.295) | omitted |
| <i>N</i> | 8900 | 8655 | 8900 | 8900 |

Note: 2018 China Family Panel Studies. Intercepts for the ordinal logistic model are omitted from the table.

Table 3. Premarital Cohabitation, Divorce, and Marital Satisfaction, with Interactions between Premarital Cohabitation and Gender.

| Independent Variables | Divorce | Marital Satisfaction | General Marital Satisfaction | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| | (Logistic) | (OLS) | (OLS) | (Ordinal logistic) |
| Premarital cohabitation (ref.=no) | 0.231 (0.275) | -0.280** (0.097) | -0.307* (0.126) | -0.156* (0.068) |
| Men (ref.=women) | 0.652*** (0.171) | 1.472*** (0.059) | 1.253*** (0.078) | 1.075*** (0.045) |
| Premarital cohabitation X Men | 0.542 (0.316) | 0.135 (0.133) | -0.361* (0.171) | (0.097) |
| Rural <i>hukou</i> at age 12 (ref.=urban <i>hukou</i>) | -0.549** (0.186) | -0.022 (0.091) | 0.221 (0.118) | 0.098 (0.066) |
| Age | -0.028** (0.010) | 0.015*** (0.004) | 0.024*** (0.005) | 0.015*** (0.003) |
| Years of schooling | -0.051** (0.018) | -0.007 (0.007) | 0.013 (0.009) | -0.006 (0.005) |
| Logarithm of personal annual income | 0.051*** (0.012) | -0.008 (0.004) | -0.023*** (0.006) | -0.010** (0.003) |
| Number of children | -0.914*** (0.114) | -0.018 (0.041) | 0.266*** (0.053) | 0.05 (0.030) |
| Intercept | -1.734** (0.544) | 11.768*** (0.227) | 10.592*** (0.295) | omitted |
| <i>N</i> | 8900 | 8655 | 8900 | 8900 |

Note: 2018 China Family Panel Studies. Intercepts for the ordinal logistic model are omitted from the table.

Table 4. Premarital Cohabitation, Divorce, and Marital Satisfaction, with Interactions between Premarital Cohabitation and Rural Origin.

| Independent Variables | Divorce | Marital Satisfaction | General Marital Satisfaction | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| | (Logistic) | (OLS) | (OLS) | (Ordinal logistic) |
| Premarital cohabitation (ref.=no) | 0.888** (0.310) | -0.519** (0.187) | -1.109*** (0.238) | -0.537*** (0.133) |
| Men (ref.=women) | 0.827*** (0.144) | 1.498*** (0.053) | 1.179*** (0.069) | 1.060*** (0.041) |
| Rural <i>hukou</i> at age 12 (ref.=urban <i>hukou</i>) | -0.404 (0.237) | -0.108 (0.104) | 0.039 (0.134) | -0.005 (0.076) |
| Premarital cohabitation X Rural <i>hukou</i> at age 12 | -0.337 (0.347) | 0.354 (0.200) | 0.708** (0.255) | 0.401** (0.142) |
| Age | -0.028** (0.010) | 0.015*** (0.004) | 0.025*** (0.005) | 0.015*** (0.003) |
| Years of schooling | -0.050** (0.018) | -0.007 (0.007) | 0.013 (0.009) | -0.006 (0.005) |
| Logarithm of personal annual income | 0.051*** (0.012) | -0.009 (0.004) | -0.023*** (0.006) | -0.010** (0.003) |
| Number of children | -0.917*** (0.114) | -0.018 (0.041) | 0.269*** (0.053) | 0.05 (0.030) |
| Intercept | -1.967*** (0.558) | 11.836*** (0.231) | 10.785*** (0.301) | omitted |
| <i>N</i> | 8900 | 8655 | 8900 | 8900 |

Note: 2018 China Family Panel Studies. Intercepts for the ordinal logistic model are omitted from the table.

Table 5. Premarital Cohabitation, Divorce, and Marital Satisfaction, with Interactions between Premarital Cohabitation and Education.

| Independent Variables | Divorce | Marital Satisfaction | General Marital Satisfaction | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| | (Logistic) | (OLS) | (OLS) | (Ordinal logistic) |
| Premarital cohabitation (ref.=no) | 1.581*** (0.338) | -0.325 (0.176) | -1.092*** (0.226) | -0.319* (0.130) |
| Men (ref.=women) | 0.812*** (0.143) | 1.499*** (0.054) | 1.187*** (0.070) | 1.061*** (0.041) |
| Rural <i>hukou</i> at age 12 (ref.=urban <i>hukou</i>) | -0.530** (0.186) | -0.02 (0.091) | 0.227 (0.118) | 0.1 (0.066) |
| Age | -0.027** (0.010) | 0.015*** (0.004) | 0.024*** (0.005) | 0.015*** (0.003) |
| Years of schooling | -0.020 (0.021) | -0.009 (0.007) | 0.004 (0.010) | -0.008 (0.005) |
| Premarital cohabitation X Years of schooling | -0.101** (0.033) | 0.012 (0.017) | 0.061** (0.021) | 0.013 (0.012) |
| Logarithm of personal annual income | 0.049*** (0.012) | -0.008 (0.004) | -0.022*** (0.006) | -0.010** (0.003) |
| Number of children | -0.911*** (0.114) | -0.019 (0.041) | 0.266*** (0.053) | 0.05 (0.030) |
| Intercept | -2.142*** (0.555) | 11.770*** (0.228) | 10.691*** (0.296) | omitted |
| <i>N</i> | 8900 | 8655 | 8900 | 8900 |

Note: 2018 China Family Panel Studies. Intercepts for the ordinal logistic model are omitted from the table.

Table 6. Premarital Cohabitation, Divorce, and Marital Satisfaction, with Interactions between Premarital Cohabitation and Income.

| Independent Variables | Divorce | Marital Satisfaction | General Marital Satisfaction | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| | (Logistic) | (OLS) | (OLS) | (Ordinal logistic) |
| Premarital cohabitation (ref.=no) | 1.131*** (0.218) | -0.267** (0.093) | -0.634*** (0.120) | -0.244*** (0.068) |
| Men (ref.=women) | 0.806*** (0.143) | 1.500*** (0.054) | 1.184*** (0.070) | 1.061*** (0.041) |
| Rural <i>hukou</i> at age 12 (ref.=urban <i>hukou</i>) | -0.518** (0.185) | -0.023 (0.091) | 0.216 (0.118) | 0.097 (0.066) |
| Age | -0.028** (0.010) | 0.015*** (0.004) | 0.024*** (0.005) | 0.015*** (0.003) |
| Years of schooling | -0.054** (0.018) | -0.007 (0.007) | 0.015 (0.009) | -0.005 (0.005) |
| Logarithm of personal annual income | 0.077*** (0.016) | -0.010* (0.005) | -0.027*** (0.006) | -0.012** (0.004) |
| Premarital cohabitation X | -0.072** (0.024) | 0.010 (0.011) | 0.024 (0.014) | 0.009 (0.008) |
| Logarithm of personal annual Income | -0.911*** (0.114) | -0.019 (0.041) | 0.267*** (0.053) | 0.050 (0.030) |
| Intercept | -2.010*** (0.547) | 11.764*** (0.227) | 10.637*** (0.295) | omitted |
| <i>N</i> | 8900 | 8655 | 8900 | 8900 |

Note: 2018 China Family Panel Studies. Intercepts for the ordinal logistic model are omitted from the table.