

【Grant-in-Aid for Transformative Research Areas (B)】

The Ecology of Sexuality and Reproduction: A System Contributing to Declining Birthrates and Increasing Infertility

	Principal Investigator	Department of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, Hokkaido University Associate Professor MAEDA Eri	Researcher Number: 30778395
	Project Information	Project Number: 25B101	Project Period (FY): 2025–2027 Keywords: reproductive norms and behavior, declining birthrate, infertility

Purpose and Background of the Research

• Background

A global demographic transition toward low birth and death rates has been widely observed. While economic and sociological perspectives on this transition have been extensively discussed, the specific mechanisms by which they contribute to declining fertility—such as reduced sexual activity, increased use of contraception or abortion, and the role of assisted reproductive technologies—have not been thoroughly examined.

• Aim

This research project places reproductive norms and behavior—essential yet largely overlooked factors contributing to declining birth rates—at the core of its analysis. We aim to uncover the realities of reproductive norms and behavior and explore their interconnections with social norms, health, and medical practices across multiple levels, from the individual (micro) to the societal (macro). Through this comprehensive approach, we seek to establish a new interdisciplinary field dedicated to reproductive health and rights, with the ultimate goal of promoting the well-being and happiness of all individuals.

Building a Sustainable Society and Achieving Individual Happiness and Health

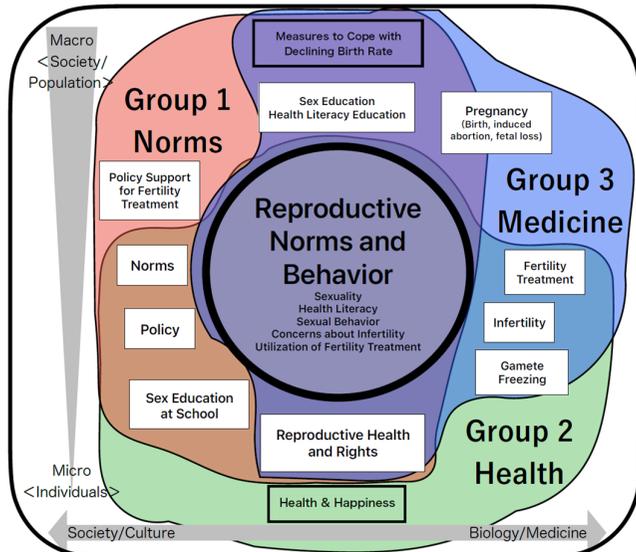


Figure: The Ecology of Sexuality and Reproduction: Interactions Between Socio-Cultural and Biomedical Factors from Society to the Individual

Expected Research Achievements

This research places reproductive norms and behavior—long overlooked as a major black box in conventional academic fields—at the center of analysis, examining social phenomena through the lens of sexuality and reproduction, which are deeply interconnected with both biological and social factors.

• Research 1 [Norms]

Following the “1.57 shock,” the Japanese government has gradually expanded its population policy framework to include initiatives such as public support for child-rearing, marriage, and pregnancy, as well as reforms in sex education to enhance health literacy. Considering this historical context, this research aims to examine the roles of policy and education in shaping norms related to sexuality and reproduction. It is also designed to explore how these norms appear within the household.



Principal Investigator
Naho Sugita
Osaka Public University,
Graduate School of Economics

• Research 2 [Health]

As depopulation and low fertility persist in Japan and many other countries, an increasing number of people seek medical support to conceive a child. According to the medical definition, infertility refers to the inability to conceive while having unprotected sexual intercourse for a certain period. However, preliminary research in Japan suggests that infrequent sex along with greater awareness of infertility has led to a rapid increase in “infertile” couples and a massive surge in the use of assisted reproductive technologies. Using quantitative and qualitative approaches, this study aims to understand and describe the system causing the increase of “infertility” by investigating the biological and sociocultural correlates of reproductive norms and behavior. The ultimate goal of this study is to contribute to all people’s happiness and well-being.



Principal Investigator
Shoko Konishi
University of Tokyo,
Graduate School of Medicine

• Research 3 [Medicine]

In Japan, the rise in infertility is attributed not only to delayed childbearing but also to infrequent sex. While traditional government policies have primarily focused on improving access to assisted reproductive technologies, it is also essential to develop systems that promote natural conception and to support treatments that are closer to natural pregnancy. Through surveys of physicians and patients, as well as an educational intervention study targeting couples trying to conceive, this research aims to propose a new approach to infertility policy that integrates both treatment and prevention.



Principal Investigator
Eri Maeda
Hokkaido University,
Faculty of Medicine

Homepage,
Address, etc.

Research website <https://ecor.m.u-tokyo.ac.jp/ja/>
Contact details: Department of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, Hokkaido University
publichealth@med.hokudai.ac.jp