

COMPLETION REPORT

Chee-Seng Tan

Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman

Choose to Stay Single? Unravelling The Factors in Japanese and Malaysian Young Adults

While both theories and empirical studies consistently support that having a romantic relationship is beneficial to human's well-being, an increasing tendency of staying single has been documented globally, for instance, the Sampo Generation in Korea, Tangpingism (躺平主义) in China, and the herbivorization phenomenon in Japan. More importantly, some studies have shown that singlehood can be a personal choice that brings benefits such as autonomy, temporal control, enhanced sociability, job advancement, and non-compliance to others' requests. Furthermore, some researchers have argued the existing findings of (involuntary) singlehood may not apply to voluntary singlehood. Therefore, investigation of the antecedent factors of the voluntary single movement is theoretically and practically essential. Guided by the Investment Model of Commitment (IMC) process, the present study examined the roles of subjective socioeconomic status (SSES), relational mobility, and desirability of control in attitudes toward singlehood among young adults in Malaysia and Japan, as well as India with the help of a collaborator.

A total of 1,108 undergraduate students were recruited using convenient sampling from Malaysia (n=444) and Japan (n=316), and India (n=348) to answer an online survey consisting of the Attitudes toward Singlehood Scale, MacArthur Scale of SSES, Relational Mobility Scale, Desirability of Control Scale, Mini-Social Phobia Inventory, and Single Item Narcissism Scale. Pearson correlation analysis showed that attitudes toward singlehood were positively associated with social anxiety and desirability of control, negatively associated with SSES, and had no relationship with narcissism and relational mobility. The planned hierarchical multiple regression analysis found a positive relationship between desirability of control, but not SSES and relational mobility, and attitudes toward singlehood, even after statistically controlling the effects of social anxiety and narcissism. A similar pattern was also observed among those who current singles. Moreover, an interaction effect of SSES and relational mobility was found in further exploratory analyses. Specifically, when the relational mobility score was low (i.e., 16th percentiles), there was a positive relationship between SSES and attitudes toward singlehood. Similarly, when the SSES level was low, relational mobility had a positive relationship with attitudes toward singlehood.

The results highlight the autonomy and flexibility of managing one's own life and financial concern as the key reasons young adults prefer staying single to engaging in romantic relationships. It is noteworthy that single individuals with higher income tend to stay single in social contexts with low possibilities in securing a partner. This could be due to them already having sufficient resources to support themselves (i.e., the importance of having a partner is low) and their wish to continue reaping the benefits of singlehood (e.g., freedom and personal space). On the other hand, single young adults with lower financial status than others would prefer to stay single to minimize financial burden despite having lived in social environment conducive for relationship establishment.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

1. July 29, 2021, Korea (virtual conference), The 14th biennial Asian Association of Social Psychology 2021, Why do Malaysian and Japanese youths desire to stay single, Chee-Seng Tan.
2. July 13-15, 2021, Taiwan, 2022 12th Conference for Chinese Psychologists, Singlehood and Well-Being: The Moderating Role of Attitudes toward Singlehood, Chee-Seng Tan.

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

1. Frontiers in Psychology (November 19, 2021), Antecedents of the attitudes toward singlehood among young adults in Malaysia, Japan, and India. Chee-Seng Tan, Siew-May Cheng, Tomokazu Nakayama, and Sanju George. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.756090>
2. Japanese Psychological Research (under revision), Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Psychometric Properties of the Japanese Version of the Attitudes toward Singlehood Scale. Chee-Seng Tan, Siew-May Cheng, and Tomokazu Nakayama.

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)