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KEY WORD : AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE / PHILIPPINES / WOMEN

JOSEFINA UMALI STA. MARIA : AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE IN THE PHILIPPINES: EVIDENCE FROM THE 1993 NATIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY. THESIS ADVISOR : CHAI PODHISITA Ph. D., ALAN NOEL GRAY, Ph D., PREEYA MITIRANON, M.A., 56 p. ISBN 974-661-500-9

This study is an assessment of several variables assumed to influence the decision of Filipino women to enter into marriage. The main purpose of this cross-sectional study is to investigate the determinants of age at first marriage, analyzing the educational and regional level variations, as well as other demographic, socio-cultural and modernization factors influencing age at first marriage of ever-married women, 25 years and older. Data were drawn from the 1993 Philippine National Demographic Survey (PNDS).

Descriptive analysis of the proportion of ever-married women at exact age reveals a broad pattern, but tests of significance using the Chi-square analysis provided linkages between the age at first marriage and the chosen variables. All of the hypotheses of the study were supported at this stage. However, after a more comprehensive examination of the association using multiple regression, some of the relationships changed. After controlling other independent variables, the multi-variate analysis revealed that as a whole, education is the most significant factor essential in explaining the incidence of late age at first marriage. Results of region and religion factors on the other hand, were not so distinct as those of education. While educational attainment is positively related to age at first marriage, the expected urban-rural and exposure to mass media differentials largely disappear when related factors are controlled. Contrary to expectations, exposure to mass media does not make any difference, but it is interesting to note that those who do not read newspapers marry earlier than those who do. This phenomenon cannot be readily attributed to exposure to media (newspapers) since most of those who read newspapers in the Philippines tend to be educated from the National Capital Region or other urban areas and therefore, exposed to new ideas, all attributes conducive to late marriage. The direct or indirect effect of education, in relation to other variables, would not only lead to later age at first marriage of Filipino women, but also, hopefully, to lower fertility which in turn is said to be related to population growth.