

# MALE ATTITUDES TOWARD FAMILY PLANNING ON THE ISLAND OF KANGWHA-GUN, KOREA

SUNG-BONG HONG, M.D.\* AND JOONG-HI YOON, M.D.\*\*

**A** TOTAL population of 24,994,000 was estimated for South Korea on the basis of preliminary results from the general census of population taken on the last day of 1960. The annual rate of natural increase of almost three per cent over a decade, represented by this figure, is one of the highest in the world and is the result of a decline in mortality with a continuing high birth rate. Expansion of medical facilities and wide use of antibiotics during the 1950's have improved general mortality, with a particularly marked decline in infant mortality. No comparable decline has occurred in natality.

South Korea lacks the natural resources required for an expanding economy to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population. With the unsettled economic conditions which have prevailed since the 1950 hostilities, the task of maintaining the health and level of living of the population has become a difficult one. At the same time, it must be realized that further efforts to improve the welfare of the family, an important aspect of which is the health of the mother, will, under conditions of almost uncontrolled fertility, lead to a continued growth in the size of the population. Further population pressure on the already heavily burdened resources of the country will, in turn, threaten the advances that have been made in improving the health of the population and in raising the level of living.

The practice of family limitation through induced abortion is not unknown in South Korea and, in fact, has been widespread throughout urban areas for some time in spite of legal restrictions. It is believed that most married women of re-

\* Medical Division, Institute of Demographic Research, and Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Soodo Medical College.

\*\* Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Soodo Medical College.

productive age living in urban areas have experienced at least one induced abortion. It is hoped that recent government policy directed toward encouraging family planning will lead to the replacement of these unnecessary and perhaps harmful surgical procedures by more conventional types of family planning methods.

#### SAMPLE DESIGN

This paper presents the results of a pilot survey of attitudes toward family planning among 119 males, 20–54 years of age, married and living with spouse, conducted during the summer of 1961 on the group of three islands comprising the administrative unit of Kangwha-Gun.<sup>1</sup> The main island of Kangwha-Gun is situated less than thirty miles from Seoul, with easy access to the mainland by ferry, which makes frequent daily crossings carrying both passengers and buses. The authors believe that its proximity to Seoul has created among the predominantly agricultural peoples of Kangwha-Gun cultural attitudes which are more characteristic of an urban than of a rural population.

The men in the sample were those who presented themselves at temporary outpatient clinics set up in various villages on the main island of Kangwha-Gun by a medical team consisting of several physicians and graduate medical students, who interviewed those men who agreed to cooperate and who met the age and marital status qualifications. Because the clinics operated during the day, many of the younger men were away at work with the result that the proportion of men 45 years of age or over among those interviewed (44 per cent) was higher in the sample group than in the general population.

The occupational distribution of these men was as fol-

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lows: 116 were in agricultural occupations, 2 were school teachers, and one was a barber. Six of the men in agricultural employments had additional occupations: 2 worked in grocery stores, 2 as carpenters, and 2 owned ferry boats.

Data on characteristics of respondents such as age, educational attainment, duration of marriage, number of living children, and number of living sons, were obtained from clinical records. In addition, the men in the sample group were asked two attitude questions, one relating to desire for more children, and one to willingness to use contraception. The responses to the two attitude questions were then analyzed in relation to the various characteristics of the respondents. The relationship between the responses as to the number of children desired and the characteristics of the respondents were found to be statistically significant at a level of at least  $P = 0.0001$  (Table 1). The relationships between attitude toward contraception and selected characteristics of the respondents were significant at least at the  $P = 0.05$  level (Table 3).

#### ATTITUDE TOWARD MORE CHILDREN

About three-fifths (62 per cent) of the families in the sample had 3–5 living children and the remaining two-fifths (21 per cent and 17 per cent) were fairly evenly distributed between families with 2 children or fewer and families with 6–8 living children (Table 1). More than one-half (54 per cent) of the 119 men in the sample stated that they did not want more children.

The attitude toward additional children was closely related to the number of children already in the family. All of the men with 2 children or fewer stated that they wanted more. Among families with 3–5 children, 4 out of 10 men hoped to have more, while 6 out of 10 were satisfied with their present family size. Of the 20 families with 6–8 living children, only one man stated that he wanted a larger family. This man, a farmer with 7 living children—6 girls and one boy—illustrates the traditional emphasis, particularly among rural peoples, on

NUMBER OF LIVING CHILDREN AND SONS, DURATION OF MARRIAGE, AGE, EDUCATION	TOTAL	NUMBER		PER CENT		CHI SQUARE
		Wants More Children	Does Not Want More Children	Wants More Children	Does Not Want More Children	
<b>TOTAL</b>	119	55	64	46.2	53.8	
<i>Number of Living Children</i>						
0-2	25	25	0	100.0	0.0	44.20 P < 0.00005
3-5	74	29	45	39.2	60.8	
6-8	20	1	19	5.0	95.0	
<i>Number of Living Sons</i>						
0-1	37	37	0	100.0	0.0	65.45 P < 0.00005
2-3	69	18	51	26.1	73.9	
4-5	13	0	13	0.0	100.0	
<i>Duration of Marriage:</i>						
Less than 10 Years	30	28	2	93.3	6.7	37.04 P < 0.00005
10-24 Years	44	16	28	36.4	63.6	
25 Years and Longer	45	11	34	24.4	75.6	
<i>Age of Father:</i>						
20-29 Years	16	16	0	100.0	0.0	36.50 P < 0.00005
30-34 Years	18	14	4	77.8	22.2	
35-44 Years	33	12	21	36.4	63.6	
45 Years and Older	52	13	39	25.0	75.0	
<i>Education of Father:</i>						
No Education	54	16	38	29.6	70.4	18.23 P < 0.0001
Primary School	45	22	23	48.9	51.1	
Middle School and Beyond	20	17	3	85.0	15.0	

Table 1. Attitude toward additional children by number of living children and sons, duration of marriage, and age and education of father: Kangwha-Gun, 1961.

the importance of sons to provide for the future well-being of the family, regardless of the number of daughters.

That this preference does not necessarily imply a desire for a very large number of boys can be seen from the data in Table 1. All of the families with 4-5 living sons, and 3 out of 4 of those with 2-3 sons, were satisfied with the existing number of children. Only among the families with one boy, or no boys, was the wish for more male offspring unanimous. This is a striking change from a cultural pattern which prescribed an unrestricted number of children in order to have as many sons as possible.

Since families with more recent marriages undoubtedly have

fewer children and younger fathers than families whose marriages have lasted for a longer time, it is not surprising that the desire for additional progeny decreases with duration of marriage (Table 1). About 3 out of 4 men married at least 25 years, and about two-thirds of those married from 10 to 24 years did not want more children, compared with the 1 out of 15 of those married 10 years or less who wanted no more. The two men married 10 years or less who expressed a negative attitude toward additional children were quite atypical of their group. Both of these men had received a primary school education—an above-average achievement for the men in this sample.

While duration of marriage is a function of age, a clearer understanding of its effect on attitudes toward additional offspring can be obtained by studying the age of the respondents (Table 1). About 3 out of 10 men in the sample population were younger than 35 years of age, and about the same proportion were 35 to 44 years old. The remaining 4 out of 10 men were 45 years of age and older.

All of the men who were younger than 30, i. e., those whose marriages were of relatively short duration and who still had small families, wanted more children, compared with close to 8 out of 10 of the men 30–34 years of age, 1 out of 3 of those 35–44 years old, and one out of 4 of the men who had reached their 45th year. Thus, there appears to be a very real and expressed desire among a majority of the men in the sample—a desire which increases steadily with age—to maintain or to limit the size of their families.

To gain further insight into the socio-economic variables which affect attitudes toward family size, we have cross-tabulated the desire for children by the educational attainment of the father. Close to one-half of the men in our sample were without education, about two-fifths of them had received a primary school education, and 1 out of 6 had gone to middle school and beyond (Table 1). On the basis of these data, it would seem that the more educated men were also the ones who

wanted more children. A favorable attitude toward increasing the size of their families was manifested by 3 out of 10 men with no education, by about 5 out of 10 of the group with primary school education, and by more than 8 out of 10 of those who had gone to middle school and beyond.

Differences in attitudes between the educational level groups can be explained, in part, in terms of the number of children in the family, and particularly the number of sons. For instance, the 23 men with a primary school education, who did not desire more children, had an average of 4.9 living children with 2.9 sons, compared with 2.5 and 0.9, respectively, for the 22 couples in the same educational group expressing a desire for additional progeny. However, the impact of educational attainment on attitudes toward family size cannot be understood without reference to the age of the respondents. The recent establishment of a system of compulsory education in Korea has raised the general educational level, particularly among the younger people, while the older age-groups have not had the opportunity to benefit to the same extent.

Table 2 shows the age of the men in our sample cross-tabulated with their educational attainment. Of the 54 men who had no education, all but 9 were at least 45 years old and 7 of the 9 had passed their 35th birthday. There were no men younger than 30 years of age among the men in the "no education" group. Three out of 4 men who were younger than 30 years of age had received a middle school education or beyond and there was none at this educational level who had reached his 45th birthday. Among the men with a primary school education, 2 out of 5 were younger than 35 years of age and only one out of 6 or 7 was older than 45 years of age.

Since the younger men can be expected to have smaller families than the older ones, it is not surprising that most of the men who had received at least a middle school education had small families (0-2 children) while 3 out of 4 men in the illiterate group had 3-5 children and one out of 4 had 6-8 children (Table 2). Men with a primary school education,

AGE OF FATHER AND NUMBER OF LIVING CHILDREN	TOTAL	NUMBER			PER CENT		
		No Education	Primary School	Middle School and Beyond	No Education	Primary School	Middle School and Beyond
<b>TOTAL</b>	119	54	45	20	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Age of Father:</i>							
20-29 Years	16	0	4	12	0.0	8.9	75.0
30-34 Years	18	2	13	3	3.7	28.9	16.7
35-44 Years	33	7	21	5	13.0	46.7	15.2
45 Years and Older	52	45	7	0	83.3	15.5	0.0
<i>Number of Living Children</i>							
0-2	25	0	8	17	0.0	17.8	85.0
3-5	74	41	30	3	75.9	66.7	15.0
6-8	20	13	7	0	24.1	15.5	0.0
<i>Number of Living Sons</i>							
0-1	37	5	15	17	9.3	33.3	85.0
2-3	69	41	25	3	75.9	55.6	15.0
4-5	13	8	5	0	14.8	11.1	0.0

Table 2. Educational status by age of father and number of living children and sons: Kangwha-Gun, 1961.

most of whom were between 30 and 45 years of age, were also in the middle category with regard to family size. Two out of 3 had 3-5 living children and the remaining one-third was evenly distributed between 0-2 children and 6-8 living children.

#### ATTITUDE TOWARD USE OF CONTRACEPTION

Eleven of the 119 men who were asked the question, "Would you like to learn a method by which you and your wife can avoid pregnancy for at least two years?" refused to express an opinion even though they had cooperated fully in their responses to the first question regarding their attitude toward having more children. Rather than omit these 11 men from our study, it was decided to base the analysis and the computations in this section of the report on the total of 108 unequivocal responses that we were able to obtain.

Out of the total of 108 men, 74, or 69 per cent, indicated their willingness to use birth control.

EDUCATION, NUMBER OF LIVING CHILDREN AND SONS	TOTAL	NUMBER		PER CENT		CHI SQUARE
		Willing to Use	Not Willing to Use	Willing to Use	Not Willing to Use	
<b>TOTAL</b>	108	74	34	68.5	31.5	
<i>Education of Father:</i>						
No Education	49	27	22	55.1	44.9	15.54
Primary School	42	30	12	71.4	28.6	P < 0.001
Middle School and Beyond	17	17	0	100.0	0.0	
<i>Number of Living Children:</i>						
0-2	20	18	2	90.0	10.0	
3-5	68	46	22	67.6	32.4	7.48
6-8	20	10	10	50.0	50.0	P < 0.024
<i>Number of Living Sons:</i>						
0-1	33	27	6	81.8	18.2	6.80
2-3	63	42	21	66.7	33.3	P < 0.034
4-5	12	5	7	41.7	58.3	

Table 3. Attitude toward contraception by educational status, number of living children and sons: Kangwha-Gun, 1961.

The factor most closely associated with a positive attitude toward the use of contraception was education (Table 3). Willingness to use contraception was expressed by somewhat more than one-half (55 per cent) of the 49 men with no education, 7 out of 10 of the 42 men with a primary school education, and all of the 17 men with at least a middle school education. Conversely, a negative attitude toward birth control was expressed by 45 per cent of the men with no education, 3 out of 10 men with primary school education, and none of the men with middle school education or better. It may be concluded, therefore, that increasing education and willingness to utilize contraceptive methods are directly and significantly associated.

Attitude toward contraception was also inversely related to family size, i.e., the larger the family, the more negative the attitude toward birth control (Table 3). Willingness to use contraception was expressed by 9 out of 10 men with 2 children or fewer, 2 out of 3 men with 3-5 living children, and one-half of those with 6-8 living children. Since the men with small families, who were also the younger and better-educated men



(Table 2), wanted more children, we may conclude that these men are motivated by the concept of spacing their families.

Since the number of living sons was found to be an important factor influencing attitudes on family size, we present in Table 3 a cross-tabulation of the responses to the question on use of contraception and the number of boys in the family. Of the 33 men with 0-1 son, 8 out of 10 were willing to use birth control. Most of the men in this group had had at least a primary school education. Of the 63 men with 2-3 living sons, two-thirds were willing to use contraception. More than one-half of the 21 men with 2-3 boys who were not willing to use birth control did not have any education. The remaining families, those with 4-5 living sons, were about evenly divided between those who were willing to use contraception and those who were not, with the favorable attitude associated with some education and the unfavorable attitude with no education. It seems, therefore, that education plays a more important role in determining male attitudes toward the use of contraception than did such variables as family size or the number of sons.

#### SUMMARY

This paper discusses some socio-cultural variables which were found to be significantly associated on the one hand with the desire for additional offspring, and on the other, with the willingness to use contraception among the sample drawn from the male population of Kangwha-Gun. More than one-half of the men in the survey (54 per cent) desired no additional offspring and more than two-thirds (69 per cent) expressed their willingness to use contraception. Variables such as number of living children, number of living sons, duration of marriage, and age appeared to be more significantly associated with attitudes toward additional children than did education. By contrast, education was the more important factor in the determination of attitudes toward family planning. The great majority of the men who were negative in their attitude toward birth control had a limited education or none at all. With the increasing con-

solidation of compulsory education in the school system of Korea since 1945, it is hoped that rural as well as urban populations will provide a favorable climate for the adoption of family planning in conformity with the new governmental policy toward birth control.