PREFERENCE FOR NUMBER AND SEX OF CHILDREN IN A KOREAN TOWN*

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This paper examines differentials and changes in the preference for number and sex of children in a Korean middle-sized town, based on the Coombs preference scale test, and attempts to identify major factors influencing the differences and changes.

The survey results indicate that preference for number of children and that for sex do not necessarily change concomitantly. Though the number preference have declined to a significant degree for the last two decades, the bias toward large family still persists. The preference for sons, changed only slightly and is prevalent now as in the past. The socio-cultural variables and other intervening factors affecting the number bias are not identical with those related to changes in sex preference. The changes in the attitudes toward the number of children occurred without disturbing much the existing traditional settings of social and family life. This can be regarded mainly as a simultaneous response to the rapidly declining infant and childhood mortality. The preference for sons is more closely intertwined with the traditional culture and family system of the Korean society, and this perhaps explains the extremely slow pace of changes related to the sex of children.

It is undoubted that the strong son preference will stimulate many couples to have more children than the number they desired by the end of reproductive period. The gap between the two preferences will be greater for women who have a preference toward smaller families.

INTRODUCTION

In traditional Korea, both large family size values and strong son preference have allegedly prevailed. The large family size values were undoubtedly a societal as well as individual response to the traditionally high level of infant and child mortality for the survival and continuation of the society prior to the demographic transition. On the other hand, the strong son preference was more related to the traditional social system, particularly the kinship institution and related normative culture, which was deeply rooted in Neo-Confucian philosophy.

Historical documents, classical teachings and folklore amply disclose norms on and practices of strong son preference.[1] A few early surveys on fertility and family planning

* This is a rivised version of the paper prepared for the Conference on the Measurement of Preference for Number and Sex of Children held at the East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, June 2-5, 1975. This study is a part of the research project, the 'Ichon Resurvey', of the Population and Development Studies Center, Seoul National University supported by a research grant of the Population Council in New York, and conducted in coordination with Clyde H. Coombs and Lolagene C. Coombs of the Population Studies Center, the University of Michigan.

1. Kyu Tae Lee, "Minsok'e natanan namchon sasang (Boy Preference in Korean Folkways)," Korean Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (KIRBS), *Research Bulletin,* Seoul, April 1973, and "Hankuksaui issuso'ui nam'a chonchung (Boy Preference in the Korean History)," KIRBS, *Research Bulletin,* Seoul, May 1973.

suggest that the average ideal family size of Korean women was about five children prior to the 1960s; three boys and two daughers.[2] Since 1960, the attitudes toward family size have undergone a rapid transformation throughout the country consistent with the fertility reduction. According to a series of national surveys on family planning, the ideal family size was reported 3.9 children in 1968 and reduced to 3.1 children in 1973 for the currently married women aged 15-44. The corresponding figures for 40-44 were 4.4 and 3.4.[3] The urban/rural difference in family size values was found to be significant and increasing as changes toward smaller family attitudes took place at different rates in both areas. Socio-economic background of individuals was also highly associated with their family size values.[4]

The major question here, however, is whether the trends and patterns of the ideal family size are consistent with those of the degree of son preference.

It has been repeatedly mentioned in Korea that changes in family size values in favor of smaller size were the prerequisite to fertility reduction through deliberate use of birth control methods. At the same time, it has also been pointed out that son preference was the major hinderance in lowering the family size values to a desirable level, say two children family. The present ideal family size exceeds the level of replacement even among a highly educated, young, urban population, regarded as possessing the smallest family size values.[5] This suggests that the insurance motivation of the family against possible loss of children persists strongly until now. But this motivation is considered to be influenced by sex bias. People tend to be highly desirous to have two sons if possible, regardless of the number of daughters. Here, naturally son preference can be claimed to be one of the most important obstacles to the current efforts of reducing fertility to near replacement level in Korea. In other words, the changing trends and patterens of son preference are essential to understand or predict the future development of the Korean population.

Another crucial question in the study of family size values lies in the measurement of future fertility based on answers to the questions on the ideal or wanted number of children. From a simple question on the ideal family size, it is very difficult to obtain a reliable estimate of fertility in the near future since the desired number of children with a certain sex composition can not be always achieved, and in cases of failure, the information provided does not help much in predicting the further behaviour of the couples. If a couple attach more importance to the number than sex composition of children, they may stop having children when the number of children desired is reached regardless of the sex composition of their family. On the other hand, for a couple who considers a son as minimum requirement of marriage, the number of children desired will not matter much until a son is born to the couple. Stopping rules are far more complicated and may change in terms of couple's age, and differ by their background. They also change with changes in value system.

The major concern of this paper is directed to this problem. The present paper intends to provide information on the preference of children by number and sex, to examine the relations between the number preference and sex bias, and to discern their socio-economic

2. Suggested by, for example, Hae Young Lee, Tai Hwan Kwon & Chin Kyun Kim, "Family-size Value in a Korean Middle Town, Ichon Eup," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 1968, pp. 330–332, and Yunshik Chang, "Fertility and Mortality," Yunshik Chang, Hae Young Lee, Eui-Young Yu & Tai Hwan Kwon, *A Study of the Korean Population 1966*, the Population and Development Studies Center (PDSC), Seoul, 1974, p.89.
3. Korean Institute for Family Planning (KIFP), *1973 National Family Planning and Fertility Survey-A Comprehensive Report*, Seoul, 1974, pp. 30–38.
4. See *ibid.* and H.Y. Lee and others, *op. cit.*, pp. 329–337.
5. According to various survey results, the current average ideal family size for this population sector is thought to be about 2.5.

as well as demographic differentials as a way to find out the major factors affecting them in the Korean context. There is, however, some doubt concerning whether the ideal or first preferred family size and sex composition provided by individuals can be taken as reliable indices of their biases in number and sex of children. In a rapidly changing society like recent Korea, it is possible that the influence of traditional cultural elements upon attitude and actual behavior of individuals is more clearly revealed by the subsequent preferences rather than the first preference alone. In this regard, we have adopted Coombs preference scale for number and sex of children, which is based on the 'unfolding theory' in psychological measurement.[6] In this paper, some brief empirical consideration about this question will be given. Our present attempt is, however, very limited due mainly to small sample size in an area.

DATA

The data for the present analysis were obtained through the 'Ichon Resurvey,' a differential fertility and family survey in a Korean middle sized town, Ichon Eup, conducted in 1974. The main field survey was carried out during February, 1974, and a supplementary one in August, 1974. The main survey used two sets of structured questionnaires on fertility and household characteristics and all ever married women aged 15–59 in the area consisted of the survey population. The total number of the respondents for the main survey were 3112. The later one was a sample survey of around 500 couples. Family structure, husband-wife relationship and family size values were the major items of interest and information on those items was collected through in-depth interviews and structured questionnaires. The questions on Coombs preference scale for number and sex of children were put in the family size value questionnaire directed to the currently married women aged 20–39, of the supplementary survey. The total number of respondents for this particular questionnaire was 322 women. Excluding the case of incompletion, inconsistency or false reporting, a total of 302 cases were utilized to perform the analysis of the preference for the number of children, and 285 cases for the preference for the sex of children.

The study area, Ichon Eup is located south-east of Seoul, about one and a half hours distance from Seoul by express bus. Besides Seoul, Wonju and Choongju are nearby cities to the town. Ichon Eup is comprised of two ecologically distinct areas; the central area which has more or less urban characteristics, and surrounding rural farming villages. The sample for the sub-survey on family size values was drawn by employing a two-stage area sampling technique. First, out of 23 *Li*, the lowest areal administrative units consisting of 100–300 households, 12 *Li* were selected, then one-third of the eligible women in the sampled areas were drawn randomly.

A few words of the major limitations of the present study is due in connection with the data. Our sample does in no way represent Korea as a whole and the sample size limits the analysis. In this sense, this study may rather be regarded as a pilot attempt which provides basic ideas, frameworks and understandings for more refined large scale studies on the preference for number and sex of children in the future.

NUMBER VS. SEX PREFERENCE OF CHILDREN

The Coombs preference scale consists of seven ordinal values from one to seven. The scale can be thought of as a psychological continuum on either number or sex preference, with a range of values from 1 to 7. On the preference for number of children (*IN*), the

6. See Clyde H. Coombs, Lolagene C. Coombs and Gary H. McClelland, "Preference Scale for Number and Sex of Children," *Population Studies*, July, 1975, pp. 233–298.

range is from a small family (*IN*-1) to a large family (*IN*-7). A value of *IN*-4 indicates a preference for a moderate size family; *IN*-3 values would be a small family preference and *IN* 5–7 a large family preference. Every respondent has a 'bias' or number preference, and they may range from very small to very large. Simiarly, for *IS*, the range is from on extreme girl preference(*IS*-1) to extreme boy preference (*IS*-7). The *IS*-4 value indicates a positive preference for a balance of sexes, *IS* 1–3 indicates girl preference, and *IS* 5–7 indicates boy preference.

Table 1 discloses the distribution of *IN* and *IS* values, their mean values and the difference between the two means for each quinquennial age cohort of the respondents. The following are clearly observed from the table:

1. Both *IN* and *IS* are highly skewed toward the higher values 5–7 for all age groups.
2. The difference of means among age groups is very significant for *IN* values, but for less marked for *IS* values.
3. The mean *IN* scores reveal a strong positive association with the age of the respondents. On the other hand, the association between *IS* values and the age of the respondents is much weaker and not even always consistent between age groups.
4. A greater difference between mean *IN* and *IS* scores is seen in younger age group.

These observations clearly suggest that, as far as the survey area is concerned, there is more extreme son preference than there is extreme large family size preference, and that the gap between the two preferences may have grown. The findings also appear to confirm the general claim that traditional Korean society was oriented toward larger family and strongly sex biased in favour of sons. No study on family size value in Korea has ever failed to document changes in attitude toward smaller family since 1960 on both societal and individual levels. The same is shown in the present study. The change in family size values is undoubtedly and primarily a response to the drastic decline of infant and childhood mortality during the past half century extending back to the early twentieth century and prompted by the overall societal transformation of Korea since the Korean War (1950–53) with the increasing perception of population pressure in everyday life.

It is believed that changes in the attitude toward a smaller number of children have preceded the fertility transition and motivated strongly many families to adopt birth control methods in Korea even prior to the introduction of the national family planning programme in 1962.[7] One of the important aspects in rapidly declining family size values is the fact that smaller families and lowered fertility did not interfere with the traditional settings of social and family structure which had predisposed large family size values. Actually, the average family in Korea tends to have more children surviving up to a marriageable

Table 1. **Per Cent Distribution and Mean Scores of *IN* and *IS* by Age**

a) *IN* Distribution

age\score	1-3	4	5	6-7	Mean Score
20-24	9%	44%	36%	11%	4.49
25-29	7	50	28	16	4.53
30-34	2	31	43	24	4.92
35-39	2	15	45	38	5.22
Total	4	33	39	24	4.84

7. Suggested by the findings from in-depth interviews of women on their fertility and related behaviour in Ichon Eup in 1965. Concerning the development of strong motivation to control family size among a significant portion of the population before the introduction of the national family planning programme, see Tai Hwan Kwon, Hae Young Lee, Yunshik Chang & Eui-Young Yu, *The Population of Korea*, the Population and Development Studies Center, Seoul, 1975, pp. 12–15.

b) *IS* Distribution

age\score	1–3	4	5	6–7	Mean Score
20–24	2%	2%	51%	44%	5.44
25–29	3	3	54	41	5.30
30–34	0	4	38	58	5.59
35–39	0	5	28	67	5.68
Total	1	4	41	54	5.53

age nowadays than one or two generations ago. This point can be easily seen by examining the trends in the net reproduction rate which was estimated as 1.2 in the early 1910s before Korea definitely entered the demographic transition and increased to 1.8 in the late 1960s.[8] On the other hand the economic burden for average family to raise their children increased considerably.

Unlike size preference, son preference waned only to a minor degree and still prevails strongly even for the newly wed. No significant positive relationship is observed between number preference and sex preference scores as Tables 2 and 6 illustrate. Although cross-sectional data can not be properly used to examine time trends of any social phenomenon, it has been widley demonstrated in Korea that differences in behavioral patterns by age coincide very closely with their longitudinal trends experienced by a population.

On this ground, we may reasonably assume that the very slight differences in sex preference scores by age groups of the respondents indicate minor changes in the degree of son preference on the societal level at least during the last two decades. This has an important implication in fertility behaviour of Korean women and future population control through fertility reduction. With this prevailing strong son preference, it is highly doubtful whether the number preference toward large family can completely disappear. According to the first preference, two sons-one daughter is predominant attitude among the group with the lowest family size values. Also most Korean families still consider that a couple should have at least one son no matter how many daughters they may have. Although the findings from this study are based on a very small sample, they are highly consistent with what is suggested by the results from national and large area surveys,[9] and may thus be taken as revealing the national picture.

This persistently strong son preference can only be attributable to the socio-cultural system of traditional Korea. The Korean society was basically family-oriented and the Korean family was charaterized by the patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal system during the past several years. Strong normative emphasis upon the succession of the family name by the male line, the dependence on sons in one's old age, and the absolute authority of men over women are a few examples of the cultural elements fostering and supporting the strong preference of sons to daughters in traditional Korea. Bearing no son to the family was considered a sin for a couple, and a man could desert his wife in such circumstance. Also agricultural production in Korea was entirely dependent upon the family labour forces, and children were the only source of labour supply. In a word, son preference was an institutionalized value rather than personal preference of individuals.[10] In spite of drastic transformation of the Korean society, no satisfactory institutions have so far

8. Tai Hwan Kwon, *ibid.*, "Population Growth," Table 1,2.
9. For example, ①Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, *The Findings from National Survey on Family Planning*(for 1965–67), Seoul, 1966–69, ② KIFP, Report on *1973 Fertility-Abortion Survey*, Seoul, 1973, ③KIFP, *op. cit.*, 1974, ④Y. Chang, *op. cit.*, and ⑤H.Y. Lee and others, *op. cit.*
10. Concerning the social and cultural factors in family size values, see Doo Hun Kim, *Hankuk gajok jedo yunku* (*A Study of the Korean Family Institution*), Seoul National University Press, Seoul, 1969, pp. 218–374, and Bom Mo Chung, Jae-Ho Cha & Sung Jin Lee, *Boy Preference and Family Planning in Korea*, KIRBS, Seoul, 1974, pp. 214–229.

Table 2. **Distribution of *IN* by *IS***

IS\IN	1-3	4	5	6	7	Total
1-3	1	1	0	1	0	3
4	1	4	4	1	1	11
5	6	45	50	10	2	113
6	5	40	55	34	6	140
7	0	3	1	9	1	14
Total	13	93	110	55	10	281

$T_c = 0.175$

evolved, to take over the major functions of the son in the traditional family. Therefore, the strong son preference even among young married women seems to be a due response. Initiation of social welfare programmes for the aged and equal economic opportunity for female might help clear the barrier to unbiased attitude toward sex of children.

Consequently the significant and widening gap in *IN* and *IS* scores among young women can be considered as an indication that the completed family size of the cohorts must in fact be greater than their current ideal family size and also that the discrepancy between the two will widen. If the present conditions remain unchanged, the pace of fertility reduction in the future will be increasingly behind that of the decline in ideal family size.

In the following paragraphs, we will examine to what extent the background of the respondents is associated with their preference for number and sex of children. This will further highlight socio-economic mechanisms and factors affecting the value of children in terms of number and sex.

FERTILITY AND MARRIAGE AS FACTORS AFFECTING NUMBER AND SEX BIASES

Considering that age of the respondents is the prime determinant of the family size values in Korea,[11] we have controlled all variables by broad age groups of the respondents, 20–29 and 30–39. In this study, the number of live births, number of living children and expected number of children are adopted as fertility variables, and the duration of marriage and age at first marriage as additional demographic variables particularly related to fertility behaviour.

As shown in Table 3, all these variables are associated with the degree of number bias, while the relationships are rather negligible with that of sex bias. Of the three fertility indices, the expected number of children bears the strongest positive association with the number preference, and the number of live births shows the least relationship. This observation seems to suggest that the level of fertility *per se* may not have much impact on the attitudes toward family size, rather that actual survivorship and perception of mortality of children through the whole reproductive span of women may act as an important intervening factor in the preference for number of children and also in the sex preference to a lesser extent. In this regard, we may assume that perception of infant and childhood mortality is one of the crucial determinants in reducing fertility through effective birth control.

Of the two marriage variables, the duration of marriage is found to have been more clearly related to the number bias of children than age at first marriage. No apparent associations between sex bias and the two marriage variables are observed.

There is some indication that when the duration of marriage is controlled the age differentials in number preference tend to disappear. This could imply that family size

11. All major studies in the family size values in Korea, such as those listed in footnote 9 are agreed upon this point.

Table 3. **Mean *IN* and *IS* Scores by Broad Age Groups and Fertility and Marriage Background of the Respondents**

	IN			IS		
	20–39	30–39	Total	20–29	30–39	Total
Total	4.51	5.06	4.84	5.35	5.63	5.53
a) Number of live births						
0–2	4.36	4.77	4.45	5.36	*	5.40
3	4.88	4.97	4.93	5.32	5.46	5.40
4	*	4.89	4.88	*	5.70	5.62
5+	*	5.31	5.28	*	5.68	5.69
b) Number of living children						
0–2	4.42	4.83	4.52	5.35	5.56	5.40
3	4.76	4.89	4.84	5.32	5.56	5.47
4	*	5.05	5.00	*	5.67	5.64
5+	*	5.31	5.31	*	5.68	5.68
c) Number of children expected						
0–2	4.19	4.70	4.38	5.29	*	5.37
3	4.37	4.95	4.62	5.22	5.53	5.37
4	5.03	4.98	5.00	5.60	5.66	5.64
5+	*	5.33	5.31	*	5.69	5.68
d) Duration of marriage (years)						
0–4	4.36	*	4.36	5.41	*	5.43
5–9	4.68	4.54	4.61	5.28	5.55	5.40
10–14	*	5.05	5.05	*	5.58	5.54
15–19	*	5.25	5.25	*	5.69	5.69
20+	*	5.39	5.39	*	5.71	5.71
e) Age at first marriage						
13–17	*	5.43	5.31	*	5.54	5.52
18–19	4.89	5.23	5.09	5.29	5.82	5.61
20–21	4.31	5.11	4.85	5.52	5.53	5.53
22–23	4.49	4.84	4.65	5.32	5.76	5.53
24–29	*	4.70	4.49	*	5.46	5.39

* Less than 20 cases.

values are more or less a function of marital life or reflect the selectivity of lower family size values among those who marry at older ages, hence have lower marital duration time within each age group.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AND BIAS TOWARD NUMBER AND SEX OF CHILDREN

Table 4 presents *IN* and *IS* scores by various indicants of socio-economic background of the respondents and their husbands. The socio-economic variables selected for the survey are of two types; namely modernization and urbanization variables. The first group of variables consists of the degree of educational attainment, religion, occupation of the husband, wife's working status before marriage, and the degree of contact with the mass media. The urbanization variables include the past and present residential background and the frequency of visiting cities of the respondents.

In general, *IN* scores or number preference show fairly systematic differentials in terms of most socio-economic variables examined here, with the notable exceptions of wife's religion and the frequency of visiting cities. From this observation, we may argue that

Table 4. **Mean *IN* and *IS* Scores by Broad Age Groups and Socio-Economic Background of the Respondents**

	IN			IS		
	20–29	30–39	Total	20–29	30–39	Total
Total	4.51	5.06	4.84	5.35	5.63	5.53
a) Wife's education						
None	*	5.81	5.80	*	5.35	5.38
Primary	5.75	5.05	4.97	5.45	5.74	5.64
Jr. high	4.82	4.62	4.35	5.37	5.46	5.41
Sr. high+	4.11	*	4.28	5.08	*	5.20
b) Husband's education						
None	*	*	*	*	*	*
Primary	4.78	5.21	5.08	5.57	5.68	5.65
Jr. high	4.87	5.08	5.00	5.48	5.59	5.55
Sr. high+	4.14	4.67	4.38	5.14	5.52	5.31
c) Husband's occupation						
Small business proprietor	4.27	5.15	4.75	*	5.78	5.52
Skilled worker	4.75	5.19	4.98	*	5.65	5.54
Clerical or Secretarial	4.12	4.58	4.35	5.16	5.67	5.41
Farmer	4.83	5.16	5.07	5.48	5.51	5.50
Unskilled worker	*	5.29	5.00	*	5.76	5.64
d) Wife's employment status before marriage						
Not employed	4.61	5.11	4.94	5.45	5.61	5.56
Employed	4.34	4.77	4.50	5.20	5.80	5.42
e) Wife's religion						
Protestant	*	*	4.59	*	*	5.30
Buddhism	4.48	5.17	4.94	5.50	5.85	5.74
Others	*	*	5.13	*	*	*
None	4.57	4.99	4.81	5.34	5.52	5.45
f) Frequency of newspaper reading						
Daily	4.11	*	4.30	5.08	*	5.30
Weekly	*	*	4.96	*	*	*
Rarely or never	4.58	5.12	4.94	5.47	5.64	5.38
g) Frequency of magazine reading						
Regularly-often	4.40	4.64	4.49	5.14	5.56	5.30
Occasionally	*	*	4.63	*	*	5.52
Never	4.63	5.18	5.02	5.47	5.66	5.61
h) Wife's rural residence						
Rural>1 year	4.62	5.13	4.95	5.39	5.65	5.56
Never rural or rural<1 year	4.17	*	4.23	5.23	*	5.29
i) Wife's residential background						
High urbanity	*	*	4.29	*	*	*
Low urbanity	*	*	4.68	*	*	5.27
Low rurality	4.63	5.01	4.85	5.44	5.60	5.54
High rurality	*	5.46	5.29	*	5.74	5.71
j) Frequency of visiting cities						
Frequently or often	4.16	4.89	4.56	5.18	5.70	5.46
Occasionally	4.82	5.21	5.07	5.48	5.66	5.60
Never	4.50	5.00	4.79	5.36	5.58	5.49

* Less than 20 cases

modernization and urbanization have been the major forces to cause and facilitate the changes in the traditional large family orientation. As shown in Table 4, age differentials in family size values disappear when wife's education is controlled. Such tendency is less apparent with other variables. This suggests that education is the most important single factor which has contributed to the transformation of value system on family size. This observation is consistent with the general findings from other surveys in Korea. In many cases, relationships between socio-economic variables other than education such as occupation and the degree of contact with mass media have been observed to be spurious result of the association between education and the variables involved. Besides education, residential background is thought to account for some differentials in family size values, judging from the previous studies on similar subjects.[12]

The above table also helps us identify the group of women with the lowest family size values and the lowest family size bias; namely, young women or newly married women with high school or more education, residing mostly in urban areas whose husbands engage in white collar or professional occupations and who participated in labour force before marriage. On the other hand, the illiterate women in the late reproductive ages with long duration of marriage and mostly rural residential background show strong bias towards large number of children; the mean *IN* value for this group approximates 6.

There are very small differentials in sex bias in terms of socio-economic background of the respondents. Education, the status of reading magazines and urban-rural residential background are the notable exceptions. Although the influence is minor compared to the case of number preference, high education of both wife and husband and urban residential background appear to have somewhat affected the traditionally strong sex bias toward sons. It is already well documented in Korea that the highly educated and urban residents are less tradition-bound in their behavior than their counterparts, and this is not an exception even for sex bias. Generally speaking, however, Table 4 suggests that as far as the survey area is concerned no particular stratum of women crossed the threshold of a rapidly waning preference for male children.

BIRTH CONTROL PRACTICE AND BIAS IN NUMBER AND SEX OF CHILDREN

In a society where effective birth control methods are available for majority of the population, it is usually assumed that those who are less large family-oriented and less biased for sex of children start to control fertility earlier and more effectively than those with larger family values and high degree of sex bias. As a result, the proportion of family

Table 5. **Mean *IN* and *IS* Scores by Broad Age Groups and Status of Birth Control of the Respondents**

	IN			IS		
	20–29	30–39	Total	20–29	30–39	Total
Total	4.51	5.06	4.84	5.35	5.63	5.53
a) Ever used contraception						
Ever used	4.54	5.05	4.92	5.33	5.64	5.56
Never used	4.49	5.10	4.76	5.37	5.62	5.48
b) Current use of contraception						
Using	4.46	4.97	4.83	5.35	5.63	5.55
Not using	4.53	5.13	4.85	5.36	5.63	5.51
c) Abortion status						
Ever	4.39	4.98	4.81	5.45	5.67	5.61
Never	4.54	5.10	4.86	5.33	5.61	5.49

12. See footnote 9

Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked here that the analysis was very limited and the findings from the survey are not necessarily representative of Korea as a whole. This study however appears to have shed much light upon the patterns and trends in the attitudes of Korean women toward number and sex of children and the problems attended in measuring fertility from the individual data on family size values.

The survey results indicate that preference for number of children and that for sex do not necessarily change concomitantly. The socio-cultural variables and other intervening factors affecting the number bias are not identical with those related to changes in sex preference. Actually changes in the attitudes toward the number of children occurred without disturbing much the existing traditional settings of social and family life. In this light, the changes in number bias can be regarded mainly as a simultaneous response to the rapidly declining infant and childhood mortality among other things. The preference for sons is more closely intertwined with the traditional culture and family system of the Korean society, and this explains the extremely slow pace of changes in values related to the sex of children.

Though the family size values have declined to a significant degree for the last two decades, the bias toward large family still persists. Preference for sons, however, changed only slightly and is prevalent now as in the past. The number bias reveals high degree of relationship with various socio-economic as well as demographic variables which is consistent in a situation in flux. The most important variables related or affecting number preference were age, duration of marriage, education and urban-rural residential background. These variables are also found to differentiate sex preference though not significantly consistent with a more static and stable norm. Other analyzed variables do not show any particular association with preference for sex of children. As a result, the gap between the two kinds of preference has widened among various age-duration of marriage cohorts and socio-economic groups. Anyway it is undoubted that strong son preference will stimulate many couples to have more children than the number they desired, by the end of reproductive period. The gap between the two preferences will be greater for women who have a preference toward smaller families.

Here naturally important questions arise: To what extent the sex bias and number preference respectively affect actual fertility behaviour of women; How couples resolve the conflict between attitudes toward number and sex of children, particularly for the educated young urban couples for whom the discrepancy between the kinds of bias is the widest. These questions will be partly answered by a thorough examination of the relations between fertility behaviour and the preference for number and sex of children using individual data, and such inquiries will suggest the direction of further research on family size values.

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