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## A depopulation study based on analysis of factors correlating with the present number of children and with the number of additional children desired in two Okinawan cities

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### ABSTRACT

This family planning based research, aims at disclosing both problems and positive characteristics of childbirth patterns in Okinawa Prefecture by analyzing factors correlating with present number of children and number of additional children desired. It further aims at contributing to proactive family planning measures and countermeasures against population loss. The subjects were 1,165 volunteers who agreed to participate in a questionnaire survey. They were all brought their babies to the health centers for infant health examination in Naha and Urasoe between December 2000 and March 2001. They were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding present number of children, number of additional children desired, method of contraception, experience with pregnancy termination, etc. We analyzed to see how present number of children and number of additional children desired related to factors such as mother's age, father's age, age at marriage, educational background, occupation, residential condition, annual income and family planning methods. Ideal number of children correlated significantly with present number of children. One explanation of this is that couples with a higher ideal number of children are likely to indeed have a higher number of children. Mother's age correlated positively with number of children and negatively with number of additional children desired as expected. However age at marriage correlated negatively with present number of children. Early marriage therefore resulted in significantly more number of children, suggesting that measures to discourage late marriage are absolutely essential to counter population loss. Home ownership ratio and annual income were lowest in the mothers who desired 2 or more children. It is important to provide support for these families. Family planning awareness among mothers who did not desire children was clearly different from mothers desiring 1 or more children. This suggests that such awareness was reflected in childbearing activity. Considering attitudes toward family planning, we think that enabling couples to have their desired number of children would act as a countermeasure to depopulation. *Ryukyu Med. J.*, 23(4) 133~142, 2004

Key words: number of children, additional number of children desired, family planning, depopulation, total fertility rate

### INTRODUCTION

We previously conducted a family planning questionnaire survey of mothers living in Naha and Urasoe, two cities in Okinawa Prefecture, Japan, and reported the changes that had occurred over the

12 year period<sup>1)</sup> of 1988<sup>2)</sup> to 2000. In 2000, the ideal number of children had increased, but the present number of children was a little lower. Secondly, the mother who approved terminated pregnancies had increased, as had the approval rate of *in vitro* fertilization. Comparing this data with the national

data<sup>3,4)</sup> for 2000<sup>1)</sup>, the ideal number of children was higher in Okinawa, and in cases of pregnancy despite contraceptive use, mothers who live in Okinawa tended to keep the baby. Both factors contribute to the low number of artificial abortions in Okinawa. In that report we also discussed countermeasures against depopulation in Okinawa Prefecture. Nevertheless, the fall in birth rate has continued. The national figure per 1,000 populations was 9.2 in 2002, and the total fertility rate has declined to 1.32<sup>5)</sup> for the same period. Understandably, there has been increasing public concern about the Japanese economy and the future labor force<sup>6)</sup>.

Furthermore the result of the 12<sup>th</sup> birth trend survey<sup>7)</sup> showed a lower birth rate for married couples aged 25 years or older. The Ministry of Labor and Welfare has newly formulated countermeasures in addition to 'the new angel plan<sup>8)</sup>' in September 2002, and has promoted plans targeting families nurturing children<sup>9,10)</sup>. Okinawa Prefecture holds the top position in Japan both for birth rate and total fertility rate. However, the birth rate has declined year by year. The birth rate and the total fertility rate of Okinawa fell from 13.0 and 1.83 in 2001 to 12.4 and 1.76<sup>11)</sup> respectively in 2002.

The purpose of this study is to analyze what parental factors are related to the number of children and what factors are related to a conscious parental desire for more children among child-rearing married couples.

## SUBJECTS AND RESEARCH METHOD

The subjects of this research were 1,165 mothers, 839 from Naha and 326 from Urasoe City. They represent 87.2% of the 962 mothers from Naha City and 74.4% of the 438 from Urasoe City who brought their babies for health checks at the health centers for infant health examination, from December 2000 to March 2001. The number of babies brought represent 31.0% of the 2,707 infants in Naha and 21.3% of the 1,531 infants in Urasoe who had physical examinations in 2000, and also corresponds to 24.2% of all the births in Naha and 19.5% of those in Urasoe<sup>12)</sup>.

The research was conducted at the health centers for infant health examination in Naha and Urasoe using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was almost identical to that used by Shimajiri *et al*<sup>2)</sup>. It included questions about present number of children, number of additional children desired,

method of contraception, and experience with termination of pregnancy, etc. Out of ethical considerations, we explained the aim of the research directly to mothers while distributing the questionnaires, and collected anonymous data from consenting mothers. We performed the analysis by taking the number of children and the number of additional children desired as objective variables (dependent variables) and all other data obtained, such as mother's age, father's age, marriage duration, academic record, employment, annual income, etc. as explanatory variables (independent variables). We sought numerical correlations among the data available, and classified the results into levels of 1% and 5 % significance.

For the statistical analysis, we used SPSS version 10<sup>13)</sup> the statistical package and performed descriptive statistics. Correlation analysis and T-test were used for testing quantitative data. We used crosstabs to obtain crosstabulations and measures of association. An R×C table with Chi-Square test of independence<sup>14)</sup> was used for qualitative data such as academic record, residence and awareness of family planning that were significant at the 5% level. We grouped together the data of the present number of children (4 or more), and number of additional children desired (3 or more) because of the small number of subjects, and did not test more detailed categories on account of the large scatter. Also, there was a significant variation in the answers to questions concerning family planning, such as terminated pregnancies and contraception, between persons who had undergone sterility therapy and those who had not. We therefore excluded those who had undergone sterility therapy from the study.

We used the total of number responses, excluding deficient data such as no response and ambiguous answers<sup>15,16)</sup>, for the percentage values in the crosstable. In seeking factors related to the number of additional children desired, we increased all the numbers of additional children desired by one, because if we represented no additional children desired as zero, answers could not be statistically calculated.

## RESULTS

### 1. Items correlating with present number of children and number of additional children desired

The items having significant correlation with

Table 1 Correlation coefficients of the relationship between number of children and the basic attributes

Basic attributes	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧
①Present number of children	1.000	-0.541**	0.388**	0.392**	0.347**	0.335**	-0.183**	0.014
②Number of additional children desired		1.000	0.345**	0.157**	-0.301**	-0.264**	0.060*	0.154**
③Mother's ideal number of children			1.000	0.556**	0.103**	0.086**	-0.082**	0.204**
④Father's ideal number of children				1.000	0.071**	0.074**	-0.123**	0.574**
⑤Mother's age					1.000	0.729**	0.697**	0.751**
⑥Father's age						1.000	0.444**	0.523**
⑦Mother's age at marriage							1.000	0.659**
⑧Desired age to cease childbirth								1.000

Note: (\*) 5% significance (\*\*) 1% significance

present number of children are shown in Table 1. In order of significance, these factors were number of additional children desired, father's ideal number of children, mother's ideal number of children, mother's age, father's age and mother's age at marriage.

Similarly, items having significant correlation with number of additional children desired were present number of children, mother's ideal number of children, mother's age, father's age, father's ideal number of children, age at which mother desires to cease childbearing and mother's age at marriage. Interestingly, no correlation was seen between age at which mothers desire to cease childbearing and present number of children ( $r:0.014$ ), but a correlation was seen with number of additional children desired ( $r:0.154$ ,  $p=0.01$ ).

1) Relationship between the numbers of further desired children and the present number of children

Number of additional children desired correlated negatively with present number of children. Even those with 2 or 3 children still wanted to have more children<sup>2)</sup>.

2) Relationship between ideal number of children for mothers and fathers

Analysis showed that ideal number of children (upper half of Table 2) increases significantly with increasing present number of children for both parents, and averaged  $2.97 \pm 0.9$  and  $2.95 \pm 0.9$  for

mothers and fathers respectively. The correlation coefficients for mothers and fathers were similar (0.388 and 0.392 respectively). The lower part of Table 2 shows that mothers who desired 2 children had a higher average ideal number of children than those who desired 1 child, ( $3.33 \pm 0.6$  versus  $2.77 \pm 0.7$ ,  $P=0.001$ ). The correlation between number of additional children desired and ideal number of children was higher for mothers (0.345) than for fathers (0.157).

3) Relationship between present number of children and various critical ages of mother

The ages for mothers with higher numbers of children, was significantly higher and age at marriage was significantly lower (Table 3) than those with lower numbers of children. However there was no significant difference in the age at which mothers desired to cease childbearing. The average age at which mothers desired to cease childbearing was  $33.5 \pm 4.2$  years. 885 (76.0%) mothers desired to cease childbearing by 35 years of age.

The marital period is naturally longer for those with higher present numbers of children. The total possible childbearing period was almost the same for mothers with 1 or 2 children, but was significantly longer for mothers with 3 or more children. The residual period for childbearing is significantly shorter for mothers who have more

Table 2 Relations of present number of children and additional children desired to the ideal number of children for mothers and fathers

Present number of children	Mothers		Fathers	
	N	Ideal number of children mean $\pm$ SD	N	Ideal number of children mean $\pm$ SD
1	493	2.69 $\pm$ 0.8	459	2.68 $\pm$ 0.8
2	364	2.98 $\pm$ 0.8	334	2.98 $\pm$ 0.8
3	195	3.37 $\pm$ 0.7	177	3.33 $\pm$ 0.7
$\geq 4$	56	3.93 $\pm$ 1.1	49	4.04 $\pm$ 0.9
Total	1,108	2.97 $\pm$ 0.9	1,019	2.95 $\pm$ 0.9
r		0.388		0.392

  

Additional children desired	Mothers		Fathers	
	N	Ideal number of children mean $\pm$ SD	N	Ideal number of children mean $\pm$ SD
0	269	2.79 $\pm$ 0.9	242	2.90 $\pm$ 0.9
1	484	2.77 $\pm$ 0.7	447	2.88 $\pm$ 0.7
2	330	3.33 $\pm$ 0.6	310	3.00 $\pm$ 0.8
$\geq 3$	46	4.30 $\pm$ 1.7	41	3.80 $\pm$ 1.0
Total	1,129	2.96 $\pm$ 0.9	1,041	2.90 $\pm$ 0.9
r		0.345		0.157

Note: (\*\*) 0.1% significance by t-test, when data with a mean of 4 or more children present number of children and a mean of 3 or more children number of desired children were excluded

r : correlation coefficient

children, as expected.

#### 4) Relationship between number of additional children desired and mother's age

Mothers who desire to have 2 additional children were significantly younger than mothers desiring 1 additional child (Table 4). There was no significant difference between mothers who desire 1 child and those who desired 2 children at age of marriage or by desired age to cease childbirth.

The marital period was 4.2 years for those who desire 1 child and 2.2 years for those desiring 2 children. The shorter the marital period, the greater number of additional children desired. The total possible childbearing period was 7.7 years for mothers with 1 additional desired child, and 7.9 years for those with 2 additional desired children respectively. There was hardly any difference in the period for additional children desired. So the residual childbearing period was 3.5 years in the case of 1 desired child, and 5.7 years for 2 desired children. The greater number of additional children desired, the longer the remaining period for childbirth. That is to say, number of additional children desired varied negatively with mother's age and positively with the residual childbearing period.

Analysis of the ages of the fathers revealed that it varies positively with present number of children, and negatively with number of additional children desired, just as in the mother's case.

#### 2. Type of residence, annual income, family planning awareness

We conducted an analysis of the relationship between social background and family planning awareness. The latter involves defining it, in terms of experience with contraceptives, knowledge of their reliability, awareness of artificial abortion, experience with termination of pregnancy, and desire to use contraceptive pills, etc. Two items showed a significant variation with present number of children. These were residence and predicted action on unplanned pregnancy. There were also six items that showed significant variations with number of additional children desired. These were residence, household annual income, experience of contraception, awareness of artificial abortion, desire to use pills and predicted action on unplanned pregnancy.

##### 1) Residence and annual income

Analysis of the residential condition (Table 5) shows that most mothers live in apartments. The

Table 3 Relationship between number of children and various critical ages of the mother

Present number of children	N	Mother's age① (years old)	Marriage age② (years old)	Desired age to cease childbirth③	Marital period ①-②	Total possible childbearing period③-②	Residual childbearing period③-①
1	451	28.3±4.6	26.4±4.2	33.6±4.3	1.9	7.2	5.3
2	345	30.4±4.3	25.7±3.7	33.3±4.0	4.7	7.7	2.9
3	191	32.1±4.7	24.9±3.8	33.4±4.6	7.2	8.5	1.3
≥4	60	33.8±4.0	23.9±3.2	34.1±4.1	9.9	10.2	0.3
Total	1,047	30.0±4.8	25.8±4.0	33.5±4.2	4.2	7.7	3.5

Note: (\*)1% and (\*\*) 0.1% significance by t-test, when data with a mean of 4 or more children was excluded

Note: the marital period = (average mother's age—average marriage age); the total possible childbearing period = (desired age to cease childbirth—marriage age) ; the residual childbearing period = (desired age to cease childbirth—mother's age)

Table 4 Relationship between numbers of additional children desired and various critical ages of the mother

additional children desired	N	Mother's age① (years old)	Marriage age② (years old)	Desired age to cease childbirth③	Marital period ①-②	Total possible childbearing period③-②	Residual childbearing period③-①
0	264	31.8±5.0	25.0±4.0	32.2±4.6	6.8	7.2	0.4
1	453	30.4±4.6	26.2±4.0	33.9±4.1	4.2	7.7	3.5
2	310	28.0±4.1	25.8±3.8	33.7±3.9	2.2	7.9	5.7
≥3	40	28.3±4.7	25.9±4.1	35.6±5.1	2.4	9.7	7.3
Total	1,067	30.0±4.8	25.8±4.0	33.5±4.3	4.2	7.7	3.5

Note: (\*) 1% and (\*\*) 0.1% significance by t-test, when data with a mean of 3 or more children was excluded.

percent of the total however, varies according to the number of children they have. 75.9% of mothers having only one child lived in apartments, while 70.1% of mothers having 2 children, and 50.4% of mothers having 3 or more children live in apartments. There was a significant difference (p<0.001) in the ratio for families with 1 or 2 children and those having 3 or more. Chi-Square test also showed a significant difference (p<0.001) in home ownership ratio for families with 1 or 2 children and those having 3 or more. Analysis of the residential condition in relation to the number of additional children desired showed that 75.6% of the mothers who desired 2 or more additional children were living in apartments. Their home ownership rate was the lowest at 14.4%, compared with 56.3% and 27.2% respectively of mothers who didn't desire any additional children. This difference was significant (p<0.001).

Analysis of the annual income by the number of additional children desired showed that 53.5% of

mothers who desired 2 or more children, 44.9% of mothers who did not desire any additional children, and 40.4% of those who desired only one child had an annual income of less than 3 million yen. Mothers who desired 2 or more children were a significantly larger proportion of this lower income group.

2) Awareness of family planning

We found that 1,011 (86.8%) mothers, excluding those who had undergone therapy for sterility, had awareness of family planning that varied with present number of children and additional children desired.

Analysis of predicted action on an unplanned pregnancy due to contraceptive failure showed that 87.9% of mothers having 1 child would prefer to give birth. This was a significantly higher proportion (p<0.001) than mothers having 2 (78.6%) and 3 or more (72.8%) children. Looked at in relation to number of additional children desired, the percentage of mothers who answered that they would give birth was highest among mothers who desired 2 or

Table 5 Present number of children, number of additional children desired, the residence, annual income and the awareness of family planning

Residence and Awareness of F.P	Present number of children			N (%)
	1	2	$\geq 3$	
Residence (total)	486	361	258	1,105
Apartment	369(75.9) y	253(70.1) y	130(50.4) z	752(68.1)
Their own house	76(15.6) y	62(17.2) y	92(35.7) z	230(20.8)
Renting/others	41( 8.4)	46(12.7)	36(14.0)	123(11.1)
Action on unplanned				
Pregnancy (total)	430	322	239	991
Give birth	378(87.9) y	253(78.6) z	174(72.8) z	805(81.2)
Artificial abortion	1( 0.2)	7( 2.2)	10( 4.2)	18( 1.8)
Not clear/others	51(11.9)	62(18.3)	55(23.0)	168(16.9)
Residence, Income and Awareness of F.P.	Number of additional children desired			N (%)
	0	1	$\geq 2$	
Residence (total)	279	477	361	1,117
Apartment	157(56.3) y	335(70.2) z	273(75.6) z	765(68.5)
Their own house	76(27.2) y	102(21.4) y	52(14.4) z	230(20.6)
Lender/others	46(16.5)	40( 8.4)	36(10.0)	122(10.9)
Annual income	272	468	359	1,099
Under 3 million yen	122(44.9) y	189(40.4) y	192(53.5) z	503(45.8)
3 to 5 million yen	79(29.0)	169(36.1)	100(27.9)	348(31.7)
Above 5 million yen	71(26.1)	110(23.5)	67(18.7)	248(22.6)
Action on unplanned				
Pregnancy (total)	249	423	339	991
Give birth	148(59.4) y	369(87.2) z	307(90.6) z	805(81.2)
Artificial abortion	18( 7.2)	0( 0.0)	0( 0.0)	18( 1.8)
Not clear/others	83(33.3)	54(12.7)	32( 9.4)	168(16.9)
Approval of artificial				
abortion (total)	249	430	344	1,023
Approval	60(24.1) y	65(15.1) z	47(13.7) z	172(16.8)
With reservation	128(51.4)	251(58.4)	188(54.7)	567(55.4)
Disapproval	22( 8.8)	57(13.3)	43(12.5)	122(11.9)
Others	39(15.7)	57(13.3)	66(19.2)	162(15.8)
Contraception (total)				
Using regularly	149(60.3) y	223(51.9) z	164(47.5) z	536(52.4)
Occasionally	49(19.8)	105(24.4)	64(18.6)	218(21.3)
Used before	24( 9.7) y	49(11.4) y	62(18.0) z	135(13.2)
Never use	25(10.1)	53(12.3)	55(15.9)	133(13.0)
Anticipation to use				
Pills (total)	250	432	346	1,028
Wish to use	52(20.8) y	48(11.1) z	30(8.7) z	130(12.6)
Do not wish to use	118(47.2) y	242(56.0) z	202(58.4) z	562(54.7)
Not clear	80(32.0)	142(32.9)	114(32.9)	336(32.7)

Note1: F.P; Family planning

Note2: Percentages with the different letters (y, z) show statistically significant differences with each other in any horizontal line at a significance of 5% or less level by Chi-Square test.

Mothers who underwent sterility therapy were excluded from awareness of F.P. data.

more children (90.6%) and was significantly ( $p < 0.001$ ) different from mothers who did not desire any additional children (59.4%). All 18 mothers who answered that they would prefer to terminate the pregnancy did not desire additional children. With regards to awareness of artificial abortion, 24.1% of the mothers who did not desire additional children approved of abortion versus 15.1% of those who desired one additional child and 13.7% of those who desired 2 or more. There was again a significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ) between the mothers who desired additional children and those who did not. The ratio of mothers who were currently using contraception and did not desire additional children was the highest at 60.3%, while mothers who desired one more child were 51.9% ( $p < 0.05$ ) and those who desired 2 or more were 47.5% ( $p < 0.01$ ). 20.8% of mothers who wish to use contraceptive pills did not desire any more children and 8.7% ( $p < 0.001$ ) were those who desired 2 or more and 11.1% ( $p < 0.01$ ) were those who desired one child.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Factors correlating with number of children and additional children desired

Nakamura *et al.*<sup>1)</sup> showed that the average number of additional children desired in mothers who had 3 children was 1.23 and that this number almost the same (1.24) in mothers who had 2 children. They also showed that 72.0% of mothers who had 2 children and 39.8% of mothers who had 3 children wanted more babies. This suggests that it is necessary to support married couples that think of having additional children, and to provide them with selective financial assistance. As ideal number of children and present number of children correlated significantly, it is also important to support newly wed couples to imagine a happy family life with 2 or if possible 3 or more children.

Moreover countermeasures are needed to reduce the mothers' burden in parenting, because there is a stronger correlation for mothers than for fathers (0.345 to 0.157) between number of additional children desired and ideal number of children. Also there is a strong possibility that it will be the mothers who decide themselves whether to bear additional children or not. Mothers may abstain from bearing their ideal number of children due to physical and economic burdens of nurturing.

Our results show that the average age of mothers at marriage is inversely proportional to the number of children they had. This reflects the fact that early marriage provides a longer possible child-bearing period. The mothers who had 2 children had married for an average of 4.7 years, and those who had 3 children had married for an average 7.2 years. This agrees with the opinion that late marriage is one major cause of the falling birth rate<sup>17, 18, 19, 20)</sup>. It is desirable for women to marry before the age of 25 to increase their chance of having 3 or more children.

The Ministry of Labor and Welfare announced that the average marriage age of women in 2002 was 27.4 years old nationwide and 27.0 in Okinawa. In the 12<sup>th</sup> nationwide birth trend survey<sup>6)</sup> carried out in 2002, the average marriage age of wives was 26.8, which was 0.7 years older than in the 11<sup>th</sup> survey<sup>3)</sup> in 1997 (26.1 years old), and 1.5 years older than in the 9<sup>th</sup> survey<sup>21)</sup> in 1987 (25.3 years old). The late marriage of women is an extreme trend that is considered to have accelerated the decreasing population of children.

Home ownership rate was highest in households with 3 or more children. It is predictable that people will refrain from bearing additional children to avoid further economic burden. However the majority of mothers who desired 2 or more children were living in apartments, and the greater proportion of them had an annual income of less than 3 million yen. We consider this wish for larger families, despite somewhat restricted living space and resources, to be due to a couples' youth, and to the general phenomenon of still wishing to bear many children despite relative poverty. It is related to Okinawan customs such as<sup>22, 23)</sup> Monchu (a strong extended family) and seeking Yuimahru<sup>24)</sup> (mutual support, another traditional Okinawan custom), which encourage the irresponsible idea that someone will help if one has another child. Such childbearing circumstances may have contributed to the prefecture's high incidence of 'child neglect'<sup>25, 26, 27)</sup> compared to other prefectures.

We must not think only in terms of increasing the number of children, but must also consider the quality of the nurturing environment in which the children will grow. We recommend providing economic support to couples that have or desire 3 or more children to encourage them acquire their own residence, and to offer them benefits such as a

reduction of interest rates and rent for detached houses.

From the awareness of family planning data, contraceptive activity depended on the number of additional children desired. The approval rate for abortion, and the wish to use the pill was highest among mothers who did not desire additional children. All the 18 mothers who selected to terminate any unplanned pregnancy did not desire additional children. Ishii *et al*<sup>28)</sup> reported have similar results. In other words, there is a strong possibility that when mothers have decided that they would not have any more children, they are likely to ensure they don't; including resorting to artificial abortion. In view of these points, a backup system<sup>29)</sup> will be necessary to encourage mothers to bear unplanned children rather than resort to abortion and its associated risks.

## 2. Measures to encourage happy family life and avoid future depopulation

It is important to support not only engaged and newly married couples but also older couples to bear as many children as they want. To do this, we might need professional family supporters<sup>30)</sup> who can discuss the couples' child bearing plans with them and advise them to bear and nurture children. Such family supporters must be caregivers<sup>31,32)</sup> who provide practical care in childbearing and nurturing that will lead to satisfactory childbirth and joyful childcare. Their support could also improve parental affection and deepen the tie between parent and child, based on their abundant experience in parental education, nurturing by breast milk, the importance of close physical proximity, etc. In addition, it is desirable that those supporters<sup>33)</sup> be able to provide practical guidance on family planning to young and newly married couples in order to avoid abortions. Furthermore, they have to encourage the mothers to make the most of nurturing policies, nurturing facilities and social resources. They also have to strive to improve<sup>34,35)</sup> the mother's work environment, and influence couples to divide labor equally to reduce the mother's burden in childcare. Family supporters could form self-help groups in which the couples can discuss their worries about childbearing and childcare. They could also organize regional activities such as Yuimahru. By these means the couples will be able to consider bearing additional children.

Irrespective of low annual income and minimum residential circumstances, many young couples still desired 2 or more children. It is necessary to provide economic support selectively and generously to such couples to prevent them from giving up bearing additional children, or from abandoning their present children for economic reasons.

As age at marriage was inversely correlated with present number of children, and as a longer marital period is prerequisite for a higher number of children, incentives towards early marriage are required. Efforts must be made to persuade young women in their 20s and 30s to embrace the merits of getting married and the joy of nurturing children, and able to encourage them to break out from the vicious circle of being "social parasites<sup>36, 37)</sup>". They need to step in the 2 stage of family development; the joining of families through marriage<sup>38, 39)</sup> and a supportive environment in which they can encounter partners and form new relationships.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis of factors relating to present number of children and number of additional children desired, we found that residential condition, annual income, ideal number of children, the couple's age, age at marriage, and family planning awareness all affect the number of children. Indeed many mothers in this research desired to have 3 or more children. Economic assistance is therefore necessary to support both married couples and newlyweds who are going to have children. Furthermore it is essential to deter late marriage and to train professional family supporters who can encourage couples to bear and nurture children to their full potential, in both quantity and quality. These measures will contribute to the resolution of the depopulation.

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