投稿類別：英文寫作類

篇名：
How Many Children Do You Want?
Teenagers’ Attitude toward Childbearing

作者：
陳宛廷。臺北市立西松高中。高一恭班。
鄭羽舒。臺北市立西松高中。高一恭班。
鄧婷英。臺北市立西松高中。高一恭班。

指導老師：
陳詩賢老師
I. Introduction

A. Research Motivation

In recent years, the mass media have been bombarding us with one shocking statistic after another about the plummeting birth rate in Taiwan. (Figure 1) When the overall birth rate officially dropped to 0.9 in 2010, President Ma declared it as a crisis of national security. (羅印沖, 2011)

![Taiwan's Birth Rate](image1.png)

Figure 1   Taiwan’s Birth Rate  (內政部人口政策委員會, 2010)

The government has been working hard to come up with all kinds of new policies to encourage people to have more babies, ranging from birth and childcare subsidies, tuition waivers, tax cuts, to media propaganda and birth promotion slogan contest. (鍾寶慧, 2010) However, these measures mainly focus on adults in marital age. Few people pay attention to teenagers. In fact, teenagers are physically mature enough to give birth. Their idea about giving birth and raising children may greatly influence their current and future decision on this matter. We think it is an extremely important issue worth investigating, so we conduct this research on teenagers’ attitude toward childbearing.

B. Research Design

In this research, we are especially interested in finding out answers to the following three questions.
1. Do gender and family backgrounds shape teenagers’ beliefs regarding childbearing? If they do, how?
2. What is the current attitude of teenagers toward childbearing?
3. What are the major factors that might influence their willingness to have children?

In order to find out the answers, we devise a survey in which questions are separated into three categories. Each category responds to one of the three research questions mentioned above. The survey is as follows.

### Survey on Childbearing Attitude

**I. Background Information**
1. I am □ a boy. □ a girl.
2. In my family, □ I am the only child. □ I am not the only child.
3. Financially, my family is □ well-off. □ average. □ poor.

**II. Attitude toward Childbearing**
4. I think the ideal number of children for a family is _____ because ____________________________
5. In reality, I would choose to have _____ kid(s) in the future because ____________________________
6. If I can only have one child, I prefer □ a son □ a daughter because ____________________________
7. If one day I get married but choose not to have a child, what might be the reason(s)? (You can choose more than one answer.)
   □ Raising children is hard work. I want freedom.
   □ I don’t like kids. □ I can’t afford raising a child.
   □ There’s no guarantee that they will pay me back when I’m old.
   □ Others: ____________________________

**III. Source of Influence**
8. The frequent media reports on dropping birth rate in Taiwan □ make me more willing to have children.
   □ make me less willing to have children.
   □ make no difference to me.
9. The top 3 factors that influence my willingness to have children are (Please choose 3 items.)
   □ my family □ my same-sex friends □ my opposite-sex friends
   □ my teachers □ the media □ others: ____________________________
How Many Children Do You Want?  Teenagers’ Attitude toward Childbearing

We select one boy’s class, one girl’s class, and one co-ed class to conduct the survey. All of the students are freshmen in Xisong Senior High School, aged between 15 and 16.  106 people answer the questions, 56 girls and 50 boys.  Hopefully, these responses can give us deeper insight into teenagers’ notion of having children, and thus point to a possible solution to the present birth rate crisis.

III. Thesis

After collecting and analyzing all the data, we have some interesting findings. We will present the survey results, along with our analyses, in the order of survey questions.  Statistics for boys and girls are listed separately because we expect there will be differences between the two genders.  The results prove our assumption, which will be discussed in detail later.

A. Family Background.

Survey Question 2: In my family, □ I am the only child.  □ I am not the only child.

Analysis:

It is obvious that teenagers who are the only child in the family want to have fewer children than teenagers who have siblings. (Figure 2)  Especially for females, growing up alone seems to have a considerable negative impact on their willingness to have more than one child.  Interestingly, contrary to common belief, 20% of the female students are the only child in the family, while only 10% of male students don’t have brothers or sisters.  This peculiar phenomenon also shows up later in the questions regarding gender preference of one’s child.

![Figure 2 Average number of children wanted](image_url)
Survey Question 3: Financially, my family is □ well-off. □ average. □ poor.

Analysis:
It turns out that all the respondents were born in families with average income, except 5 of them who identify their families as “poor”. A closer look at the data reveals that 4 out of the 5 poor students want to have two children in the future, while one of them wants to have “as many children as possible.” Although we can’t jump to the conclusion that “poor families prefer to have more kids” with such a small sample, it is still worthy of our attention and requires further studies.

B. Attitude toward Childbearing

Survey Question 4: I think the ideal number of children for a family is ___

because_________.

Analysis:
Over 90% of the teenagers think the ideal number of children in a family is no less than 2. (Table 1) Among the various reasons they provide for their choice, “the kids can keep company with each other” tops the list. The majority (77%) of the teenagers say they want to have two of more kids because they don’t want their children to grow up alone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0 child</th>
<th>1 child</th>
<th>2 children</th>
<th>3 children</th>
<th>4 children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of females</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of males</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>76.0%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overall %</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Question 5: In reality, I would choose to have ___ kid(s) in the future

because_________.

Analysis:
Compared to the ideal number in Table 1, there is a serious decline of willingness to have children in reality. (Table 2) We can see a lot more teenagers want to have one or no child for themselves, especially females. More than 1/5 of the girls don’t want any child! What are the reasons that make these female students, though
wishing for two children or more ideally, choose to have none in the real world? The answers to survey question 7 may provide us some clues later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0 child</th>
<th>1 child</th>
<th>2 children</th>
<th>3 children</th>
<th>4 children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>% of females</strong></td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% of males</strong></td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>overall %</strong></td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Survey Question 6:** If I can only have one child, I prefer □ a son □ a daughter because ____________.

**Analysis:**
In general, the ratio of sons to daughters is 6:10. (Table 3) It seems that the next generation have a totally opposite view on gender preference from traditional values. However, when viewed separately, we can find that the majority of teenagers choose to have a child of the same sex. One possible reason is that the teenagers are in search of gender identity during this developmental stage. This may explain why 75% of those who choose a daughter give reasons related to feminine qualities like “daughters are considerate, cute, and obedient,” while 52% of those who choose a son do so for masculine qualities like “independent, strong, and dependable.”

Another result worth noticing is that 17% of the respondents think sons and daughters are equally good. Our survey question is designed in such a way that one is forced to choose either a son or a daughter. Still, nearly 1/5 of the respondents refuse to make a choice and give written answers instead, “Boys and girls are equally good.” The unexpected result reveals some hope for a world of gender equality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>son</th>
<th>daughter</th>
<th>*no preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>% of females</strong></td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% of males</strong></td>
<td>48.0%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>overall %</strong></td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Survey Question 7:** If one day I get married but choose not to have a child, what might be the reason(s)?
Analysis:

![Bar chart showing reasons for not having a child]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>% of females</th>
<th>% of males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>too much work and no freedom</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dislike kids</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not enough money</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no guarantee for a good old age</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 Reasons for not having a child

Overall, economic concern is the top reason for not having a child (64%). For teenagers who do not really have a financial burden, this concept may be adopted from the general pessimistic attitude of the society.

“Too much hard work and no freedom” is the second major reason for having no child (58%). When we compare the first two reasons, we have a shocking discovery. It is females (73%) that are more concerned about the hardship and loss of freedom in child-raising. On the other hand, males (72%) are more worried about not having enough money to support the family. The results reflect the different cultural expectations and stereotypes on men and women—“Mothers take care of the children and fathers bring home the bacon.”

Survey Question 8: How does the frequent media reports on dropping birth rate in Taiwan make you feel?

Analysis:

According to the statistics (Table 4), 80 percent of teenagers think the media have no influence over their decision. Even for those who are influenced by the media, the effects vary greatly—some negative, and some positive. We may conclude that the media is not a major source of influence on this matter.
Table 4  The influence of the media on the willingness to have children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>more willing to have a child</th>
<th>less willing to have a child</th>
<th>make no difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of females</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of males</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overall %</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Question 9: *What are the top 3 factors that influence my willingness to have children?*

Analysis:

Without surprise, 90% of the teenagers choose “family” as a major source of influence. (Table 5) Even in the modern society, the status of family remains unshakable in these teenagers’ mind.

As to friends, females and males seem to have completely different preferences again. When it comes to whether to have children, girls will turn to their same-sex friends, while boys will talk to their opposite-sex friends. On second thought, there might not be such a huge difference. In short, females possess more influence, no matter over boys or girls. This is a useful clue if we seek to change teenagers’ attitude toward childbearing.

Finally, we find that teachers have nearly no influence over teenagers. It is a pity to say that trying to change teenagers’ attitude through education may have little or no effect.

Table 5.  Sources of influence on teenagers’ willingness to have children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>family</th>
<th>same-sex friends</th>
<th>opposite-sex friends</th>
<th>teachers</th>
<th>media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of females</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of males</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>76.0%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overall %</td>
<td>89.6%</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. Conclusion

According to the statistics discussed above, we can reach several conclusions.
1. 91% of the teenagers think having two or more children is ideal for a family, and 74% are willing to bring that ideal into reality. It indicates that teenagers are generally willing to have children at this stage.

2. There are clear differences between males and females in almost every statistic. Females constantly show less willingness to raise children, regardless of their own ideal. Males, on the contrary, don’t seem to be discouraged, even by the financial burden which they consider most threatening.

   Traditional gender roles may provide us a theory to solve the myth. These teenagers, while believing men and women should be equal, still can’t get rid of the gender stereotypes. They assume men and women should have certain masculine or feminine qualities, and thus should play different roles in a family. Perhaps financial burden doesn’t stop males from having children because they haven’t experienced the pressure yet, and because most families have double income nowadays. On the other hand, females, in addition to the exhausting job of child-raising and loss of freedom, have to share part of the financial burden. No wonder they choose not to have as many kids as they would like to.

   If the theory proves to be true, the government has a lot to do in promoting healthy gender roles and breaking the hidden gender inequality.

3. Family remains to be the most powerful source of influence on teenagers. In this light, the government is right in targeting its propaganda and policies at parents. However, the current emphasis on financial subsidies may not be sufficient. After all, we learn from the data that females’ attitude is crucial to not only themselves but also people around them. Our research shows us what females want more than money is freedom and relief from never-ending childcare. If the government, as well as the husbands, can provide more mental and physical support, women will be willing to have more children.

   Of course, there are many other factors that might play a role in people’s attitude toward childbearing. In this research, we try to identify some factors at play and come up with feasible suggestions. We deeply hope that the government can put in more effort to enhance gender equality and share childcare burden. Then, the teenage girls today may enjoy a friendly and supportive environment in the future where they can have as many children as they wish to.
IV. References

1. 羅印沖 (2011)。馬：少子化成國安問題。 聯合報，1月9日，A1版。

2. 內政部人口政策委員會 (2010)。人口政策資料彙集。 臺北市：內政部人口政策委員會。


4. 內政部 (2008)。人口政策白皮書。 臺北市：內政部。