

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Children are productions of the family and make family into a real family. Children are believed to be gifts from heaven to make the bond between men and women tighter in the family unit. Many couples, rich or poor, expect to have their own children. Historically, the primary purpose of childbirth was to maintain the human race; however, in this century, this idea has changed because of the process of industrialization. The industrialization process has played an important influence on woman's attitudes toward childbirth today. Since the last century women have had more roles to play in society. They were able to enroll in schools and obtain higher education. This had led them away from their traditional role, bringing up children and tending the members of family at home. Nowadays, more women have contributed their social involvement in such work forces as industry, in government or non-government sectors. In other words, women can generate income for the family, which in turn has changed their status at home. Moreover, women who can earn outside the home can have more say in the family. The two most significant social changes of women are rights and status. However, there are still many societies where the status of men is superior to the status of women, i.e. women should be responsible for giving birth, bearing children, caring for the elderly, taking care of the family and doing the housework. For these reasons, the role of mother and wife are considered as important roles for women. The community will pay high respect to mothers who can successfully give birth to and raise their children to adulthood (Bencha Yoddumnern-Attig, 1992, p. 25). Women's basic human rights and education rights were overlooked and disrespected in a male dominated society. Women are treated unjustly, it is only men who can ordain, select their mate, get education and make decisions by themselves. There are some high class women who have chances to get an education. Due to the lack of education and equality of women in the past, an additional attitude towards childbirth is to claim men's responsibilities for family. The rate of broken families in the past is quite different to the present.

In 1975, the United Nations declared it the International Woman's Year. Since that year, more women have the right to get an education, to select their mate, and make decisions by themselves as equal to men. The literate women in the world has risen from the past by large numbers.

One of the most significant economic changes for women is their role. In Southeast Asian countries, most families rely on the patriarchal family type. Janssens indicated in her book that Frédéric Le Play, one of the founding fathers of modern empirical social science described the patriarchal family type found in nomadic communities in the East, and encompassing all male descendants of the family head and their associated dependents. They all lived and worked together as a unit under the absolute authority of the father who represented the interests of the family as a whole. The patriarchal family placed great emphasis on authority and lineage and was dominated by a spirit of tradition which stifled change (Janssens, 1993, p. 2). We can describe the patriarchal family type as a kinship family. The Report on Thai family situation of the office of women's affairs and family development, Ministry of Social development and human security describes the characteristics of a Thai family as that of a nuclear family. They would live nearby each other or within the house compound of the extended family which belongs to their parents. Within the extended family, there are at least 3 generations living together, grand parents, parents, and children (The Report on the Thai family situation, 2549, p. 6). The tight relationship in the family encourages women to have good attitudes about childbirth. The rate of divorce, children abandoned and children escaping from home are low. Since industrialization arose, the way of traditional values in Southeast Asian family has changed. The kinship organization is growing gradually smaller. Besides, the governments of some Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand, have set up family planning programs to control marital fertility. The family was robbed all of its productive economic functions to become a unit of consumption.

Romantic love replaced economic calculation between husband and wife (Janssens, 1993, p. 2). Joan Scott and Louise Tilly stated that the increasing participation of women in the labour market was strongly related to the traditional values of the family economy. (Janssens, 1993, p. 18). Because of the family set up from love but without any responsibility, the divorce rate today is higher than the past.

Some women, especially children, are effected from these events and they can cause social problems in the future. The tough economic results of industrialization increase the rate of divorce, children abandoned and children escaping from home because some women have bad attitudes toward having a child and regard it is a burden.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Oranuch Chatratananon (2007, p. 4) indicates in her study of factors influencing the decision to stay single or delay marriage by working singles aged between 30-50 years old that today women tend to delay their marriage and stay single which may cause a decline in fertility. Her research leads to the question as follows.

1.2.1 Do the working women of a fertile age (25-35 years old) have as their intention to have a child?

1.2.2 What are the factors influencing the decision to have a child by working women?

1.2.3 What are the attitudes toward children of working women at a fertile age (25-35 years old)?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Main Objective

To investigate working women's attitude towards having a child (aged between 25-35 years old.)

1.3.2 Sub-Objective

1. To look at the characteristics of women who have positive or negative attitudes toward having a child; and
2. To describe their reasons for having or not having children.

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Definitions of the terms of this study are the following:

- 1) "Attitude" means The way the women think and feel about having a child.
- 2) "Women" means The female sex who earn their living by working.

3) “Childbirth” means the condition in which a woman is carrying a developing offspring within her body, a state of being pregnant.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study proposes to reveal the attitudes of working women, both single and married who are between 25-35 years old, towards having a child, to focus on characteristics of women who have positive or negative attitudes toward having a child and the factors that influence their attitudes whether or not to have a child. The subjects are two hundred and fifty working women, aged between 25-35 years old from various places. The questionnaire is used to collect data regarding their opinions.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is to identify the problem resulting from the low ratio of having a child by Thai women and the trend of delayed childbirth.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of the working women’s attitudes towards having a child in this paper is divided into five chapters: Introduction, Review of Literature, Methodology, Results, Conclusions, Discussions and Recommendations.