



Family identity on Chinese Television Programs

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Abstract

The purpose of this article “Family Identity on Chinese Television Programs” was to investigate the family identify, displayed on TV Programs of China, namely, 做家务的男人 (Mr. Housework) in three seasons, totally consisted of 36 episodes.

Findings showed that the family identity, displayed on TV programs was broadcasted in four aspects as follows; 1) the female was responsible for all housework, 2) the female paid attention to small things, 3) the housework connected the relationship among the family members, and 4) Chinese people paid most attention to the importance of the family. Moreover, apart from what previously mentioned which identified the being of Chinese family, TV programs also demonstrated the diverse ways of life of Chinese family.

Keywords: Identity, Family, Television Programs



1. Introduction

The characteristic of family in the People's Republic of China was the patriarchal society since the ancient time as Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo (2001) had mentioned about the family structure of Chinese that the husband was the leader of the family and was dominant in absolutely governing all in the family. The patriarchal society sometimes lessened the importance of the female because they were limited to stay in the house and became depressed by the surrounding environments which these values were influenced by Confucianism. The concept of Confucianism defined the goodness of the female into three principles as follows; she needed to be obedient to the teaching of parents before marriage, she needed to be obedient to her husband after marriage, and she needed to be obedient to her son when she became widowed (Margery Wolf, 2001). The way of life of the patriarchal society was often seen in soap operas on the television programs, consisting of the contents of working and family. Specifically, this study focused only to the television programs.

The characteristics of TV programs were to broadcast various stories via audio and visual media which were widely available nowadays since the form of presentation was quick and comfortable for the audients. That was the reason why television media became the most popular for people in the current age. Juthamas Tonchalernsuk (2006) stated that "Television was the media that the audients could be most accessible because it was simple, comfortable, and quick. Moreover, the audiences could watch both pictures and sound and TV media widely spread to all people, and it did not cost so much for purchasing the television. Nowadays, television programs were not only broadcasted via the television, but also through online platform so that the audiences could access various television programs of other countries. To talk about the platforms, the online platforms of China which were most popular around the world were as follows: WeTV and iQIYI.

iQIYI was a Chinese VDO stream provider affiliated to Baidu since 2010. It was the first VDO provider platform which had more than 100 million followers, higher than other Chinese competitor companies, like WeTV of Tencent and Youku of Alibaba. Since iQIYI has been established until July 2019, the company had broadcasted the contents in various language apart from Chinese. Moreover, iQIYI Internaional had officially opened in December 2019. The headquarter was situated in Singapore and six branches were also opened in Vietnam, Indonesia, Canada, Philippine, United Arab Emirates, and Thailand. The outstanding feature of iQIYI platform had two parts as follows. The first part was the contents which were designed for the consumers in Asia regions especially for the people who liked the contents from China. Since more than 50% of the contents on the platform were Chinese series, Korian series, and local contents of each country, another peak point was technology from Baidu company, for example, Zoom AI which the audiences could adapt the theater monitor more details than the past. That made iQIYI platform become more popular for Thai audiences until the present time.

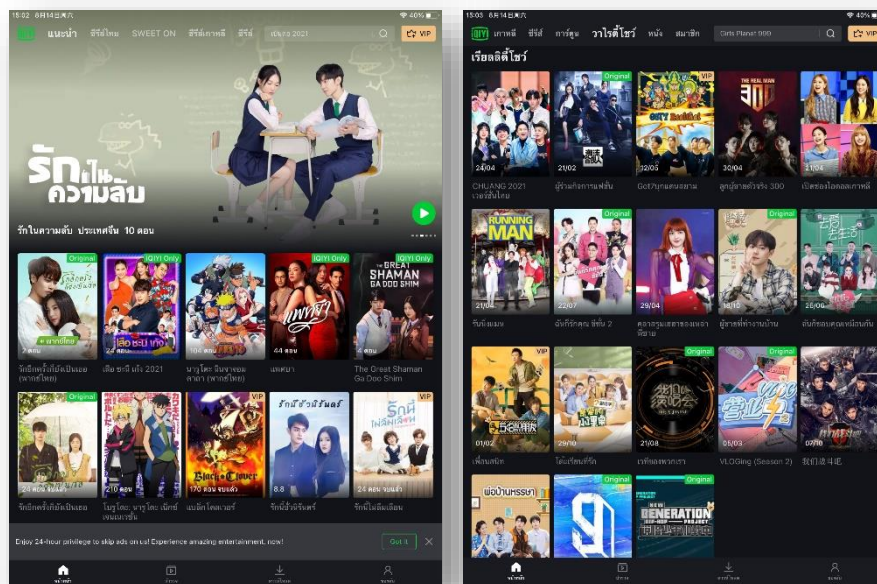


Figure 1: iQIYI Platform

做家务的男人 or Mr. Housework was a reality show, produced by iQIYI and broadcasted through iQIYI platform since 2019-2021. It was the variety that observed the man doing housework in the house which the producer aimed to grow good moral, and to create the new culture for the people within the family in order for the man who did housework to have the unity in the social. In addition, it also aimed to create the equality between the male and the female by presenting daily ways of life of the group called “family”, asking for the responsibility in the house, adding conversation methods, exchanging good and not so good stories, pulling out the warmth, beauty, and happiness for the normal life, reflecting family life, lover, and roommates which most of these people were people in the entertainment business of China. There were totally three seasons. Each season had 12 episodes. Each episode took 1 hour 15 minutes. In each season, it consisted of people from various folks such as a family of the father, the mother, and the son, a family of a lovers, and roommates. As a reason, the researcher examined that the stories about the family, broadcasted on the TV programs reflected the ways of life of people in Chinese society, and wanted to know whether in what aspects that the TV program like 做家务的男人 or Mr. Housework had presented the family identity



Figure 2: 做家务的男人 in iQIYI Platform

2. Research Methodology

The current research study was to investigate “Identity of Chinese-ness on the Chinese Television Programs”. The researcher focused to study the Chinese television program, namely, 做家务的男人 (Mr. Housework) in 3 seasons, totally consisted of 36 episodes.

The researcher utilized the concept of identity to analyze the data which many educators had mentioned “identity” in the following.

Barker (2012) defined the identity as “creating temporary stillness of meaning or describing about oneself. Identity was the meaning of oneself that one specifically selected with some emotion or feeling. Identity was the process of “becoming” rather than fixed entity. Identity concerned the connection of external discourse and internal discourse. It was the meeting of temporary connection between our internal oneness and positioning social discourse that created by the social.”

Jenkins (1996) mentioned that identity concerned understanding of oneself “Who am I?” and “Who are others?”. On the contrary, identity was related to understanding of others towards oneself. Identity in social perspective was as the issue of “meaning”. Identity was the product that happened from the consensus and conflict between oneself and others. It could be said that identity was the negotiation between meaning and one-ness.



Bastos and de Oliveira (2006) gave definition of identity in the interaction perspective that identity was the action to convey the meaning concerning one-ness. The presentation of identity could happen while having social interaction when expressing who that person was. In addition, identity was the process of negotiation about the meaning presentation and interpretation about the position, workplaces, role, status, and groups of social.

From the above points of views of the educators, it could be concluded that identity referred to specific characteristic of people including intelligence, morality, ethics, and behavior that expressed one's personality.

3. Results

From the study of family identity displayed on the Chinese television programs, it was found that 做家务的男人 or Mr. Housework program has presented family identity as follows.

1. The female was responsible all housework. Since the characteristic of the People's Republic of China was the patriarchal society, the male was dominant while the female was restricted the rights. Rights between the male and the female was not equal since Han dynasty and still existed nowadays. Because of the patriarchal society, it affected the female moving to her husband's house after marriage, especially for the female displayed on the television programs every seasons. From season 1-3, the family that came to broadcast in this program came from small family which was different from the big family in the past. Once she moved to her husband's family, it was her husband who needed to go out for earning money for living while the wife needed to take care of everything in the house and all housework. It could be said that the female who displayed on the television program was responsible all housework as seen from the following example.

Conversation in the family of Wang Zhu Lan

Wife: You look so tired when you arrive home, do you need to do housework? I feel like I am not responsible for my duties.

(Mr. Housework, Season 2)

From the example above, it was the conversation of a couple of a lover in the family of Wang Zhu Lan, a famous actor and master of ceremony (MC) of China. When her husband got home from work, he needed to help his wife doing housework until his wife felt presumptuous. Since his wife thought that it was her duty, it was irresponsible for her to let her husband who came home, helped her doing housework.



Conversation in the family of Wang Zhu Lan

Wang Zhu Lan: After my mother gave birth, she did not work. Only the father worked.

Wife: He (husband) told me that he will cook three meals a day and dishes must be various.

Wang Zhu Lan: Sometimes I saw the pictures of my mom and my grandma in you. I can do everything for the family.

(Mr. Housework, Season 2)

From the example of the conversation of Wang Zhu Lan and his wife above, he felt that the female forfeited everything for the family. When she had a child, she would do everything for the child and the family. The wife could be responsible for all housework in the family especially for taking care and preparing foods for the child and her husband.

Conversation while opening VTR of weidaxun family

MC: You were like the tools. (When arrived home, mom began to do housework, cleaned house, and arranged things appropriately.

weidaxun 'mom: The original female of China was like this.

(Mr. Housework, Season 1)

From the conversation example above, it reflected that the female was usually responsible for housework which weidaxun's old mother told the MC that this was the characteristic of the original female of Chinese family, she needed to do housework and was responsible for everything in the house. As a reason, it affected Chinese female needed to be responsible for all housework when she had family, husband, and child no matter how old she was.

2. The female paid attention to small things. Since the female was sensitive in nature, more sensitive than the male. Thus, most female always paid attention to small thing which the male never expected. Like the female displayed on the television program (做家务的男人), she paid attention to small things which the male never expected as shown in the following example.



Yuan Hong and Zhang Yixing came to visit the parents of Yuan Hong. Yuan Hong collected things that his mom has collected to throw away. Suddenly, he found his toy that he used to play when he was young.

Yuan Hong: These were the toys that I used to play when I was young, dinosaur toy, dinosaur's eggs. It was more than 30 years. This was the shell I played when I was young. Some was my favorite.

Yuan Hong's father: These were the toys you played when you were young. Every time your mother cleaned them, she always said that please keep them well for the child. It gave good memory.

Yuan Hong: It was in good condition, my tape cassette.... Liu Dehua's album. This was my shirt that I never wore.

Yuan Hong's mom : Since I bought this shirt, it looked too small so I kept it. It was very interesting..... keep it for your child.

(Mr. Housework, Season 1)

From the conversation example above, it was the conversation when Yuan Hong and Zhang Yixing came to visit the parents of Yuan Hong at home and Yuan Hong wanted to throw away the broken things. While collecting things, he suddenly found his belongings such as toys, tape cassette, or even his shirt when he was young. His father said that it was the mother to keep things because they wanted to keep good memory of their child. Some was purchased but never used it. They kept things with the hope that their nephew could use it in the future. This was to insist that the female paid attention to small things.

3. The housework connected the relationship among the family members. In the television program 做家务的男人, Every families that came for broadcasting unanimously said that doing housework helped to connect the relationship among the family members. It showed the equality and it felt that everyone was a part of the home, as shown in the following example.

Conversation of the guests in the television program

Wei's father: It helps the male understand that doing housework is a kind of love expression to express that you love home.

MC: Have you found happiness or pride from doing housework?

Xiaohaozhun : Yes, I have. I feel that the relationship in my family is better than before because I never help my wife do any housework even I live in the same house, so I need to clean and eat. I cook delicious dish. And now I feel that it is thing I should do. It is my responsibility. It is not what my wife has to do all.

(Mr. Housework, Season 1)



From the conversation example, it was found that the male who was on the television program tried doing housework even though he has never done it before. He felt that he was valuable and has good feeling towards family members. Some felt that housework helped to connect relationship among the family members. They were responsible doing things together. When housework was shared to everyone, the housework was not difficult so far.

4. Chinese people paid most attention to the importance of the family. No matter where the Chinese lived, they all paid attention to the importance of the family such as a couple of a lover to each other, parents to children, children to parents, as shown in the following conversation example.

Conversation of Zhangjike's Family

Zhangjike: Where is my sandals?

Father: I will bring my son the sandals.

(Mr. Housework, Season 3)

Zhangjike's family, a former table tennis player of Chana was a small family which consisted of a father, a mother, and a child like the current Chinese family type. Zhangjike did not stay at home all the time. Only the father and mother lived together. Obviously, when the child came home, the parents would feel extremely happy. No matter what the child wanted, the parents provided. Even when Zhangjike could not find his sandals, it was his father looking for it for him immediately.



Conversation between Wang Zhu Lan's family and the MC on the TV program

MC: I don't know if you are happy or not when you live with me. Have you ever talked about these problems in your family?

Wang Zhu Lan: We travel together to various beautiful places on our wedding anniversary such as Maldives Island. On such a romantic place, we can talk about problems that occurred last years that in what ways, we don't understand each other, so that we can edit and change our family to be happier and we don't get angry of what we are talking about.

(Mr. Housework, Season 2)

From the conversation example, it was giving the importance between a husband and a wife which both paid attention and respected each other. It could be seen when the wedding anniversary each year came, they would travel and talk about problems that they faced in order to find the solutions and to change the family to be happier. The most important thing for every family to live happily was to understand each other in the family.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Conclusion

This study investigated the family identity on the television program “做家务的男人 or (Mr. Housework)” which was a reality variety show and broadcasted about doing housework of the Chinese male in Chinese family with various relationship such as the parents of a father, a mother, and a child, a family of a couple of lovers, a family of roommate. It was found that the producer has presented the family identity through the ways of life of the Chinese family in various aspects as follows: 1) the female was responsible for all housework, 2) the female paid attention to small things, 3) the housework connected the relationship among the family members, and 4) Chinese people paid most attention to the importance of the family.

In terms of presentation the responsibility of the female in doing all housework, it was found that after the female got married and had a child, she did not go out for working because of the responsibility of all housework such as taking care of the child and husband, and cooking for the child and the husband. Ever meals, they had various dishes. This was the responsibility for the female to do from the past to the present time which all female was willing to do for her family. It could be concluded that apart from doing housework, the female was held to make a sacrifice.

The presentation of paying the importance to small things that the male never expected such as mother kept toys or various things that her son used to play was important. That was to say, these things were beautiful and full of great memory, and the female never forgot this valuable memory.



The presentation of housework was the key objective that the television programs were produced since it showed the equality between the male and the female. No matter what roles they took on the TV program such as son or husband, when they began to do housework, they all agreed that doing housework was a good connection of relationship among people in the family. Moreover, they would feel valuable when they stayed home. It was a way to express love to their home and it also helped understanding the complexity of the female.

The presentation through paying the importance to people in the family no matter what status they were such as roommate, a couple of lovers, or a family of the father, the mother, and the child, was also interesting. All Chinese paid attention to the importance of people in the family as the priority as shown from all three season which presented such this importance. For instance, parents paid attention to their son even other people saw that it was not important thing but everything that parents did was always the great thing that they should pay attention to. Like the child, sometimes they seemed not to be interested to what they should do for the parents on the important day such as on birthday, they also planned to organize the unforgettable anniversary on that important day. These things expressed paying attention to the importance to each other in Chinese family which was considered as the important identity that displayed on various Chinese television programs.

Discussion

The study of the family identity on Chinese television programs indicated that family identity, displayed on Chinese television programs expressed the identity of the Chinese in the social dimension and ways of life which these things were carried on for a long time such as the identity of Chinese family which was presented through the responsibility of all housework of the female was carried on from the past to the present time. Thus, the social of China became the patriarchal society since the Han dynasty which reflected the Chinese identity, consistent with the remark of Seksan Sansornphisut (cited in Nutcharee Tabtim, (2010), stated that the identity of the community was caused by coexistence, having interaction to each other, having experience for living together in the community until it has the rule, regularity, tradition and culture of the community, and it was carried on until it became the culture of living in the community. Thus, the family identity that displayed on the Chinese television programs not only presented the ways of life of the people with various relationship, but also the audiences knew the identity of Chinese family existing from the past such as the patriarchal society and paying attention to the importance of the family as the first priority which these things had appeared for a long time in various medias such as Chinese drama, Chinese movie as well as other Chinese television programs. Even Thai drama that the content concerned Thai-Chinese people also took this identity to broadcast for the audiences.



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