

Analysis of the Controversy of Housewife Image in Social Media Based on Case Description

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Abstract: The housewife used to be a marginalized social role. But nowadays, with the advancement of technology and the development of social media, Many housewives choose to share their domestic life, making this role the focus of public opinion, and housewife videos have become a kind of landscape. At the same time, the consciousness of gender equality and female independence has been on the rise, and whether the image of housewives should be encouraged has aroused a lot of discussion. This paper uses the literature method and case analysis method to deeply analyze the videos and comments of housewife bloggers on social media. The study finds that the audience evaluates housewives with the attitude of rulers, among which whether to encourage women to become housewives was the biggest controversy, and there is even a "group imitation" of housewives. The conclusion is that the diversity of evaluation views is related to the historical development of China, and group imitation is a substitute practice. This phenomenon shows that housewives are recognized as a profession but lack respect and do not get rid of the patriarchal gaze. Housewives are recognized as a profession but lack respect and do not get rid of the patriarchal gaze.

Keywords: housewife vloggers, female identity, audience attitude

1. Introduction

A housewife is defined as a person who, except a domestic helper, is responsible for most household duties or supervises a domestic helper to perform those duties [1]. Historically speaking, the housewife is the person who replaced the role of "maid" or "servant" after the class factor disappeared. Therefore, It is not the housewife who does housework, but begins to do housework after becoming a housewife. This gives the concept of the housewife the symbolic attribute of "servant", and gives them the undertone of inequality in the first place. Oakley's definition allows men responsible for housework to be classified as homewives. But in a gender-differentiated society, housemakers are still reserved for women. In a male-dominated society, people pay more attention to men's interests and activities, housework is almost not in the scope of men's work, which is another reason why housewives are neglected and discriminated against [2].

However, at present, housewives gradually breaking away from the status of "being ignored" and are increasingly focused on public opinion. The rise of social media allows housewives to appear in public view. Coupled with the social demand for the labor force, the progress of ideological concepts, and the awakening of female consciousness, for one thing, the career of housewives are no longer advocated; for another thing, housewives nowadays will integrate into social communication by

opening up "side jobs", being a vlogger is a common way to get noticed by the public [3]. The new concept of housewives does not break away from the traditional concept, but there are more options than traditional. Many housewives choose to create social media accounts to share housework routines and ultimately achieve the purpose of income. But their images have caused a lot of controversy on social media.

In traditional society, "being a housewife" was deeply rooted in women's self-consciousness, the equality between women and housewives was the basis of the family life system and gender division of labor, which is also the reason why the status of housewives in the past lost its privilege and became popular [4]. However, with the promotion of gender equality awareness, the male-female partnership model was gradually established, and more women chose to break away from the fixed role of men ruling women and actively unbind themselves from the status of housewives [5]. The popularity of this value is in great contradiction with the attitude of housewife vloggers to cater to the traditional family model.

Housewife vloggers on social media represent the image of new housewives and the changing attitudes towards them. This paper will focus on the study of housewife vloggers in social media, summarize the disputes arising from the image of housewives in social media, analyze the reasons in detail, and try to put forward corresponding suggestions.

2. Research Process

The massive increase in the number of homemaker vloggers occurred during the pandemic when families lived at home and had more time to spend together and film. And the lives of housewives, a once-neglected group, can attract a lot of interest. Housewife vloggers' videos often have a set pattern, shooting around the lives of their husbands and children.

When housewives post their videos, for one thing, people find that the work of housemakers is not as simple as they thought, for the other thing, their videos resonate with other housemakers. Coupled with the upgrading of the new definition of housewife, shooting and releasing housework videos has become a new mainstream, which also makes these videos a kind of landscape worth studying.

When housewife vloggers rush to the hot list, people are also re-examining the concept and connotation of housewives in the new era. Comments on the same video, and different videos from the same vloggers, also have completely different evaluation styles.

3. The Manifestation of Problems

Housewives have largely given up the experience of autonomy. The day-to-day pace of work ultimately leads to their objectification [6]. Therefore, it is not difficult to find that each housewife vlogger usually has a fixed video pattern, such as shooting the breakfast cooking, the reaction to the family dinner, and so on from a constant angle. But every video presents the reaction of family members to their housework, which is the expression of their being instrumented. Based on this, the following questions are summarized from the attitude of the audience and the family of the vloggers.

3.1. The Process from Objection to Understanding by the Audience

Even if the content of daily life is similar under the fixed video pattern, people's evaluation of the same housewife vloggers also goes through the process from opposition to support. The author found that the attitude change of vloggers' audience and family members shows a convergence trend.

When the videos of vloggers reveal the family's disrespect for the identity of the housewife, the audience will also show a lack of understanding. But as the number of videos and followers has increased, the attitude of their family members is becoming more gentle and respectful, and more and more netizens express understanding and praise as well.

3.2. The Controversy about Housewives

The comments on the housewife vloggers' videos mainly have the following three views: First, a wife should be ruled by her husband, and being a housewife is a traditional family view of nature. Second, Only by entering society can women realize the value of life. Becoming housemakers is the "active regression" of women's thinking. Third, housemakers are supposed to be treated with equal respect as a profession, and women shall have the right to choose any profession.

With the theme of "Whether women should be encouraged to become housewives", they mainly debit the housework behaviors in videos, all trying to persuade each other or make housewives change their minds.

3.3. The "Ruler" Attitude of the Audience

The closer we get to the latest videos, the more people are approaching housemakers as a profession, but their attitude toward them is patronizing. Audiences have criticized their job for "unqualified" work: the food is not nutritious, the suspected preference for sons rather than girls, the suspicion of being ingratiating to their husbands, and so on, housewives have shouldered more scrutiny when posting videos. Interestingly, using the perspective and tone of the "top person", people ask the housewives to rebel against their husbands - the real "top person".

3.4. Group Imitation of the Audience

Some typical housewife vloggers, ' videos use "it is five o'clock, I get up to make breakfast for my husband and children" as the beginning. She got up early and stayed up late, but her husband still complained. It was puzzling and people didn't understand her persistence.

After they went viral, countless people imitated her classic opening line. Most of the audience has an entertaining attitude and comes into contact with the work content of housewives in the imitation process, but a small part has the meaning of ridicule. During this round of large-scale copycat activities, housewives are no longer considered idle and idle, and the public image of housemakers changes to work that is "harder than others, but not necessarily rewarding." Therefore, the rise of the phenomenon of mass imitation also reveals different attitudes toward housewives, including admiration and ridicule.

4. Analysis of Reasons for Different Audience Attitudes

4.1. The Ambiguous Attitude Towards the Homemaker Occupation

The audience's attitude toward housewives is from the mainstream of not supporting to the mainstream of understanding. It seems that housewives have been affirmed as a profession, but in fact, it still has not got rid of the status of "the other" that are judged.

When the private sphere of life was transformed into a space to be visited, the housewife took on more scrutiny [7]. Through the video content, the audience can find that the vlogger's family is becoming more and more gentle towards her, believing that the status of a housewife is respected, so they express their support for the vlogger's decision to be a housewife. But in fact, the attitude has changed because housewives have earned more money as vloggers and have more speech rights. According to the new definition of housewife, they are still in this framework but have been removed from the situation of housewives in general.

It is still the individuals with wealth and income who are respected, rather than the whole group of housewives. As soon as she loses her income, she will immediately return to being unappreciated.

Therefore, the change in the attitude of the audience to housewives seems to be the tolerance of social progress to women's different choices, but it is still not recognized.

4.2. Diverse Perspectives Related to Historical Development

It was an agricultural society in ancient China, "male plowing and female weaving" was the basic mode of gender division of labor in the agricultural economy. Women's labor is not subordinated in the beginning and can even create higher value than men's [8].

However, the concept of male superiority and female inferiority was deeply rooted in Neo-Confucianism, women were gradually marginalized, housework was taken for granted, and female labor was ignored, which was also the origin of the discrimination against the status of housewives.

In modern times, the slogan of women hold up half the sky was put forward when the People's Republic of China was founded and labor was scarce, later transformed into the national discourse of women's liberation and gender equality. At this stage, women's gender identity was respected and labor was affirmed, but "encouraging women to go out of the family" laid the groundwork for the stereotype that "housewives are not serious occupations." This slogan, combined with the idea of female independence, partly produced the extreme idea of not accepting the right of women to choose to be housewives.

Therefore, with the continuous development of society, people's views are also constantly improving, and a variety of different ideas have been derived, so that different views on the phenomenon of housewives can appear.

4.3. Difficulty in Selective Understanding

Selective understanding means that only part of the information noticed by the audience can be deeply understood, thought about, and processed. In this selection process, due to differences in cognitive factors such as interests, beliefs, original knowledge, attitudes, needs, and values, people with different cognitive structures will have different understandings of any complex stimulus, that is, give meaning to it [9].

People with different attitudes have a selective understanding of the videos of housewives, and those who hold the traditional family view substitute the husband's perspective, realizing that men can get the most benefits in such a family model; Those who hold that "independent women are only independent when they go out of the family" are concerned about the grievances and discrimination of housewives reflected in the video, believe that women can only get more right of speech by creating wealth value; Those who Advocate women's freedom of choice note that while housewives maintain family harmony and stability, the work of housemakers is equally valuable.

The above three kinds of selective understanding are indeed the contradiction of the housewife, but the three sides stand in different angles and debate with different concerns, and there will be no possibility of reconciliation.

4.4. Not Free from the Patriarchal Gaze

By comparing the housewife to the nanny, people have more stringent requirements on the behavior of the housewife. Rather than treating housemakers as a profession, people objectively judge housewives in the name of evaluation work.

Society calls on women not only to balance family and work but also time, deliberately ignoring the hardships and chaos behind housework [10]. Therefore, the essence of the definition of new housewives is to use the value of independent women to rationalize the unequal status of housewives, "housewives should be discriminated against if they do not make money", resulting in housewives facing the double pressure of performing housework duties and having the ability to make money.

Housewife videos always shoot the feedback of her family on her work, to regain the right to speak from the interaction with men, but inadvertently approve the way of "pleasing men to achieve the purpose", misting it as another shackle of women.

4.5. "Alternative Practice" for Housewives

The housewife video uses life scenes familiar to ordinary people, and viewers can substitute the perspective of the protagonist, constructing a mode of interactive passivity [10]. The audience's imitation changes from "interactive passivity" to "initiative". They can have the same experience without actually being a housewife and live up to their ideal housewife image in a new video shot, They complete the symbol construction of housewives in the imitation, and it is easier to deconstruct the stigmatization of housewives through personal experience.

5. Suggestion

Housewives earn their income through side jobs, and vloggers, as one of the explicit jobs, are more likely to be seen by the public and more likely to cause controversy. According to the analysis of housewife videos and the audience's attitude, the author finds that the symbol of housewife gradually has the symbolic meaning of "occupation", but it has not been respected as other professions. The fact that earning homemakers are respected suggests that it is the occupations other than homemakers that are truly respected, not the housemakers themselves. As society promotes "creating social value", therefore, the current situation of encouraging full-time women to have extra income is a helpless measure to deal with social discrimination against housewives. The following suggestions may be effective in changing the public opinion situation of housewives.

5.1. Change the Concept

Housewives are more persuasive than others when it comes to housework. Clean home, nutritious meals, no need to worry about taking care of the children, the housewife's work is not easy to be noticed. Each occupation has its unique professionalism, and housewives have more rights of speech than the general public about the work content of housework. Housewife vloggers have made the hidden housework obvious. As an audience, they are not qualified to examine housewives as objects. They should take housewives as independent subjects and appreciate the professionalism and irreformability of their work.

5.2. Respect for Housewives' Personal Choices

There may be truth in the three perspectives of "women should be ruled", "being a housewife is an active regression" and "respect every choice", but the ultimate choice is made by housewife vloggers themselves. And they still release videos that illustrate the results. The audience also does not have to mock the housewife's ingratiating attitude in the video, which will make the housewife in a period of low self-esteem and confusion lose the sense of accomplishment obtained by work. As mentioned above, based on the concept of selective understanding, people with different points of view can't convince each other, so give the choice back to the housewife, rather than fight for victory in the comments section.

5.3. Make Full Use of Influence to Develop "Entry Criteria"

Choosing to be a housewife must have their considerations: the respect of their husband, sufficient living funds and emotional benefits for the family, etc., since it is a profession, it is necessary to consider whether to join this profession.

Housewife vloggers' videos show the work content, for one thing, to let the public understand the hardships behind them, for the other thing, it is also easy to understand as "housewife is a thankless job, but there are people who are willing to follow", resulting in people's self-inflicted discrimination against housewives.

Therefore, housewife vloggers, as a part of the group with a higher voice, in addition to displaying the work content, can also explain to the public why they choose this job, and finally summarize it into an "entry standard", which is not only makes the public more correct view of housewives but also gives some guidance to those who hesitate to become housewives.

6. Conclusions

During the research, this paper finds that people have diversified evaluations of housewife vloggers. Most people hope that housewives can get out of the family and realize a better life value, but the discriminatory evaluations of many audiences are themselves suppressing the image of housewives. Although housewife has been recognized as a profession, it has not been respected accordingly, and some extremely independent female thoughts have restricted women's free choice.

This study analyzes in detail the controversies and causes of housewife images in social media, reflecting the widespread discrimination against housewives in society. According to China's historical development, people have diversified interpretations of the concept of housewives. But in general, the audience's evaluation does not break away from the patriarchal gaze, housewives are still trapped by the concept of "not creating economic value".

Given the dispute over the image of housewives vloggers, the audience should first change their concept and treat housewives as independent professional subjects. Remove the condescending gaze and leave the ultimate choice of "whether to be a housewife" to the vloggers. At the same time, as housewife vloggers, women should also make full use of their right to speak, so that the public can "disenchantment" this profession of housewives, and fully understand it to fully respect it.

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