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# Messages about the Family in the Press and Media: A Survey in Vietnam

**Nguyen Anh Nguyet**

Journal of Home Affairs Science, Hanoi University of Home Affairs, Vietnam

**Abstract**---Family is the most solid fulcrum and incomparable peace for every human being. It is always a place full of love to return to, so the message of marriage and family is mentioned often in the media in many different ways. This study explores which topics about marriage-family are mentioned the most, how male and female images appear in the family, specifically: the role in maintaining family happiness is assigned. Who are the perpetrators and causes of domestic violence, and how is the gender division of labor in the family reflected in the media? Through research to overcome and gradually eliminate gender stereotypes in media messages, contribute to promoting gender equality.

**Keywords**---gender equality, gender stereotypes, marriage and family, media message, survey.

## Introduction

Newspapers and media in Vietnam have developed rapidly in the context of international integration and the current industrial revolution 4.0. This is a means of influencing society with information through images and messages, thereby forming social consciousness, contributing to changing people's social behavior (Hollingshead & Fraidin, 2003). The impact of the media on people's perceptions, attitudes and behaviors is mostly positive, but it also has limitations. Studies on gender and media show that, on the one hand, the media has a great impact on the public in raising awareness and attitudes about gender equality, but it also contributes to perpetuating stereotypes gender in society, especially in building the image of women (Shannon et al., 2019).

Current specific activities are, women practice moral qualities “Confident, self-respect, loyal, responsible”; organize propaganda and education activities to arouse good traditional values and educate Vietnamese women's political awareness and civic responsibility. Continue to organize well the campaign “Building a family of 5 no, 3 clean” with the integration of cultural values into the

content of criteria to propagate, guide and support women to implement information through specific models. Promote educational activities on parenting knowledge and skills and organize models of “Building a happy family”, “Family of 4 standards”...; propagate and educate women to fulfill their responsibilities in marriage and family. At the same time, focus on well implementing programs and projects to care for and support women in terms of capital, knowledge, and sustainable livelihoods (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Continuing efforts, persistently mobilizing women, mobilizing the society to realize gender equality - this is considered a progressive value that positively affects modern families (Subrahmanian, 2005; Unterhalter, 2005).

### **Theoretical basis**

#### *Family*

Family is a group of people, related by marriage, blood or foster relationship, having sex characteristics through marriage, living together, having a common budget is the appropriate definition with Vietnamese family. This definition shows the characteristics of the Vietnamese family in the current situation (Van, 2011; Tung, 2021). Family is defined in the Law on Marriage and Family (2014): is a collection of people bound together by marriage, blood relation or nurturing relationship, giving rise to rights and obligations between them and their family according to the provisions of this Law, (Vietnam National Assembly, 2014).

#### *Media message*

Communication message is an issue that many economists as well as managers are interested in. Because the content of the media message is very broad in terms of research scope and approach, each point of view has different views on the communication message. There are several possible approaches as follows:

Messages are phrases, complete sentences, signs, symbols or means of conveying the meaning of specific content from one group of people, organizations, or communities to another group of people, organizations or communities.

A message is any thought, idea expressed in a concise, clear or discreet manner, designed and drafted in an appropriate form to be conveyed to the audience by different means of communication.

A message is a combination and synthesis of elements such as language, images, colors, and sounds in order to convey the intention of the subject to the receiving public (Tung, 2021).

From the perspective of marketing communication, the message needs to meet the tasks set by the administrator, and is defined as follows:

Communication messages are the expression of factors that communication managers want to keep in the minds of the recipients, which are necessary factors to influence, maintain or change perceptions and emotions and recipient behavior.

#### *Journalism and Media*

Journalism in the traditional view, is considered a mass media that transmits periodic news information to the masses. The press is a part of mass communication, but it is a part that occupies a central position, plays a fundamental role and is able to determine the nature, tendency, and influence

capacity and effectiveness of the media mass. Therefore, in many cases, the press can be used to refer to mass communication; and vice versa, when it comes to the mass media – first of all, the press.

From the systematic point of view of Prokhorop, the concept of journalism is understood as an institution, a whole. The press is a sub-system that constitutes the social system as a whole. In which, the press is a constituent part and is governed by a large system as well as the impact of sub-systems (or sub-systems), of many types of vertical and horizontal relationships, equality relations and dependencies (Prokhorop, 2004).

The proposed journalistic theory is based on the communication process. Journalism was created by the development of media that started with print media and are now electronic media. Thus, the channel has undergone fundamental changes. But the basic elements of the theory of journalism are still based on the knowledge system that has been determined from the theory of communication.

Communication is a process taking place in chronological order, which includes factors: source, message, communication channel, receiver, effect, feedback and interference. “In this process, the source and the receiver can swap places, interact and intertwine. In terms of time, the source performs the act of initiating the communication process first” (Dung, 2006; Tung, 2021).

According to Nguyen Van Dung, the social nature of communication is the process of social communication, the process of social association and the process of social intervention (Dung, 2011; Tung, 2021). In other words, it is a dialectical process. People after being socialized by the media can become more civilized as people and society develop, the higher the demands, capacity and responsiveness of the media.

In human society, communication is a prerequisite for forming a community or a society. Social life is essentially the process of exchanging information. People can live with each other, communicate with each other, first of all, thanks to the act of transmitting and receiving information between one person and another to keep in touch with each other. Talking, responding, arguing, confiding, reading books, watching movies, listening to music... are all behaviors in a communication process. Communication is therefore a fundamental form of human behavior in society.

Communication is the process of social intervention because the purpose of communication is to change behavior. This process aims to increase the similarity and gradually reduce the difference in perception of groups or between groups of media public and media subjects. Because after all, conflicts in behavior mainly stem from differences in perceptions and interests (Dung, 2011; Tung, 2021). Therefore, in order to change behavior and increase the similarity in public perception, the communication process often goes through different stages with different specific purposes such as providing information, knowledge, sharing skills and experiences... To create a two-way communication process, there must be necessary conditions (source, message, message transmission channel and receiver) and sufficient conditions (barriers, feedback flows, return).

## Research Methods and Data Collection

The article used the method of textual content analysis (analysis of news/article content) based on the maximum quantification of the content through the built-in charset. Sampling was carried out for representatives of 4 types of media (print press, radio press, online newspaper and video press) with a high number of readers and audiences. The study collected information on 30 consecutive days of broadcasting and posting of the above 4 media types during the period from May to December 2021 with a total of 400 news/articles. Specifically, analyze news/articles of the following types of media:

Table 1  
Survey sample structure in four types of media

Type of media journalism	Type of newspaper/analysis program	Number of samples
1. Newspapers write	Vietnamese women	80
	Women in Hanoi Capital	70
	Women in Ho Chi Minh City	50
2. Electronic newspaper	afamily.vn	50
	Eva.vn	50
3. Broadcasting	VOV2	50
4. Television	VTV6	50
Total sampling units for analysis		400

To measure communication messages about marriage and family, the study focused on looking at specific aspects such as: Which of the following topics: marriage, divorce, child marriage, family happiness, Family relationships are often mentioned. At the same time, the study also provides variables related to the topic: Family happiness, domestic violence, gender division of labor in the family, thereby to see a picture of the image of men and women are reflected in media messages (Pogrebnyakov & Maldonado, 2018).

### Some problems discovered in research on marriage and family through media messages

#### *Reflection on the main themes of marriage and family*

The family is the cell of society. A harmonious, peaceful and happy family is a factor for society and the country to go up and develop sustainably. At the same time, the family is the place to nurture people, an important environment for the formation and education of human personality. Therefore, the issue of marriage and family is increasingly concerned by society and is mentioned a lot in various types of newspapers (Fu, 2008).

Through the analysis of 400 research samples collected from 4 types of newspapers, there were 166 news/articles, accounting for 41.5%, referring to marriage and family issues (the remaining 234 news/articles accounted for the proportion of rate 51.5% mention other issues such as economy, politics). This is a significant percentage referring to various family issues such as: family happiness, family relationships, domestic violence, divorce, marriage, child

marriage... That shows, the media has reflected the importance of this topic, and also reflects the public's need for information on issues related to marriage and family.

Table 2  
Main topics on marriage and family mentioned in the media (%)

No	Content Frequency	Content Frequency	Ratio
1	Family happiness	50	30,0
2	Family relationship	48	29,0
3	Domestic violence	41	24,7
4	Divorce	17	10,3
5	Get married	7	4,2
6	Child Marriage	3	1,8
7	Total	166	100

Among many topics on marriage and family, the data analysis shows that there are some topics that are mentioned the most, including: Family happiness, intergenerational and intergenerational relationships in the family and domestic violence.

#### *Reflection on family happiness*

“Family happiness is a broad category and there are many different views that come from different real-life situations. Articles on various types of media related to family happiness can be news articles, comments, interviews, reportages, advice, replies to letters from readers. Although based on real-life events to build journalistic products, there are many reporters who often incorporate their own subjective judgments and judgments into journalistic products. Judgments, comments or advice of reporters, collaborators, and psychologists about events and phenomena related to family happiness, sometimes follow a prejudiced path gender. One of the typical examples of such prejudice is the assumption of the important role of the wife - the woman in maintaining family happiness, rather than the reference to this responsibility for men” (Duong Thi Thu Huong, 2010). The saying "Men build houses, women build homes" has often been mentioned when analyzing and commenting on the responsibilities of spouses in the family.

Talking about the happiness of the family is talking about love, the sharing of psychology and affection between husband and wife. This is an important and key factor that creates the foundation for the bond between family members. Therefore, the study wanted to find out whether in the communication messages about the relationship between husband and wife in the family, who plays an important role in building and maintaining family happiness: Men, women or women both. When discussing the important role in maintaining family happiness is assigned to whom? Analyzing survey data, 56% of all articles mentioning this issue believe that this is the responsibility of both husband and wife. This shows that this is a progressive view in line with the development and integration process of the country. Today, to maintain and keep happiness in the family, that role does not belong to only one person. Both husband and wife shoulder the burden and share together, then the new family happiness is sustainable and long-lasting.

Besides such positive articles, 34.1% of the articles said that this was the responsibility of the wife alone, while only 9.1% of the articles attributed this responsibility to the wife husband. If these messages are constantly present on media products, it will create a biased view of journalists, thereby deepening the burden on women.

#### *Reflections on domestic violence in the media*

Domestic violence is a burning problem of the whole society, leaving many serious consequences for people. Domestic violence is expressed in many forms (physical violence, emotional violence, economic violence, sexual violence) and with different objects (such as violence between husband and wife; violence between fathers and mothers). Mother to child, child to parent; among other family members). Therefore, this is a topic that is mentioned quite a lot in the media ([Rinartha et al., 2018](#)).

In the family, building and maintaining happiness must be against family conflicts/domestic violence. In Vietnam today, in many families, domestic conflict/violence is still a frequent problem. In some families, in some localities, domestic violence is still a fairly common phenomenon. It is because of this that the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam promulgated the Law on Marriage and Family in 2000 and continuously amended and supplemented to protect the rights and obligations of the parties. What role does the media play in publishing content related to this issue? This is the problem that the research wants through the news / articles published in various types of media to accurately assess the research problems on media messages with the topic of marriage and family ([Ji et al., 2019](#); [Lazard, 2021](#)). The variables identified were: “Who are the victims of violence mentioned and under what forms of violence? perpetrators of domestic violence, causes of domestic violence?”

Research results show that the press has reflected the fact that this problem still exists quite popular and diverse in society. At the same time, this should be considered as an effective information channel to help relevant authorities soon grasp the situation to intervene. In addition, through this information channel, it contributes to creating a quick and strong public opinion, in order to push back negative phenomena and violations of the law on marriage and family out of social life, promote gender equality, especially in the field of marriage and family ([Duong Thi Thu Huong, 2010](#)).

When considering victims of domestic violence, all four types of media refer to women as victims of violence. The aggregated data from the study shows that 79.5% of all news/posts mentioning marriage and family issues, reflecting women as victims of violence, were mentioned in the online press. Meanwhile, men accounted for a very low proportion, only 7.7%, and 12.8% attributed both sexes to the same source of violence.

Likewise, when considering the perpetrators of domestic violence, men are frequently mentioned as the protagonists of domestic violence. Men accounted for 64.1% of the perpetrators of violence mentioned in the online press, while only 17.9% of women were mentioned as perpetrators of this violence. Regarding the forms of domestic violence mentioned in the study such as: mental violence,

physical violence, economic violence, sexual violence, most women are victims of all four types of violence above. In which, the form of physical violence against women with the number of articles/articles mentioned (34 articles/articles out of 73 news/articles) accounted for the highest rate of 94.1%, followed by images awareness of mental violence with 31 news/articles mentioned, accounting for 77.4%. Economic violence (5 articles/article) and sexual violence (3 articles/article) were mentioned less often than the above two forms of violence (Table 3). In contrast, with the same forms of violence mentioned above, very few men are mentioned as victims of domestic violence: only 9.7% suffer from mental violence and 5.9% suffer from domestic violence physical strength (Table 3).

Table 3  
Types of violence and gender of domestic violence victims (%)

Types of violence	Character's gender			Number of Posts
	Male	Female	Both	
1. Mental violence	12,9	77,4	9,7	31
2. Physical violence	0,0	94,1	5,9	34
3. Economic violence	0,0	100	0,0	5
4. Sexual violence	0,0	100	0,0	3

When looking at the causes of violence raised in the media, there are many causes of male fault. In which, the causes are alcohol, gambling, drugs; The conflict between husband and wife and the cause of infidelity are the reasons that have more news/articles mentioned than other causes. The image of women is not only victims of domestic violence, but they are also victims of violence with many causes that are not entirely their fault. The majority of women experience violence due to the husband's alcohol, gambling, drug abuse, lack of understanding of the law, economic difficulties, and the idea of respecting men and women in society and in men themselves.

Thus, it can be seen that the media has reflected many outstanding issues in marriage and family relations, but more importantly, there should be specific messages sent to the necessary addresses such as the authorities, the competent people, the responsible for settlement, the relevant social institutions... Through the investigation and analysis data, it shows that there are not many news and articles condemning a powerful way, sending clear, specific messages to the objects to be handled. When the victims of violence are women, the messages for them are still only advice: patience, humility, sacrifice, acceptance. Women still suffer the same injustices. Obviously, there is a need for more reasonable and legal analysis and explanations, there is a need for news/articles to provide information and education to help men be properly aware of their behavior, contributing to reducing reduce violence in the family as well as in society (Mohan & Kumar, 2018; Suacana, 2016).

### **Reflections on the gender division of labor in the family in the media**

The gender division of labor in the family is an interesting topic that has been discussed a lot in empirical studies and in the media. Because when it comes to the family, it is impossible not to mention the roles, responsibilities and

obligations of the members, specifically that of women - wives and men - husbands.

Along with the social advancements brought by the scientific and technological revolution, there are more and more tools and items to help people reduce their labor in household chores. Although the ideology of patriarchy, respecting men and disrespecting women has gradually decreased in society, a paradox still exists in our society, which is the notion that housework, raising children, taking care of members Family members are still women's jobs, which have no economic value. Article 18 of the Law on Gender Equality stipulates: "Husband and wife are equal in civil relations and other relationships related to marriage and family...the male and female members of the family have the responsibility to share housework". However, in fact, the working time of women in the family is often longer than that of men. Men are still considered the head of the family, having the right to decide on major issues and represent the family in foreign affairs. Housework and taking care of family members are still considered "natural duties" of women.

In fact, the conservative nature of the traditional division of labor by gender in different degrees is still preserved in a part of Vietnamese families. This has greatly limited girls' educational opportunities, prevented women from participating in social activities and reaching high social positions. On average, women work longer hours per day than men. This disparity is mainly due to the fact that women are also responsible for housework and childcare, in addition to production and working roles like men. The division of labor in the family in many regions across the country is still clearly gender-discriminatory. The work still focuses on the role of women mainly. So how is this issue published in the media messages?

The study provides indicators to measure the level of reflection expressed through media messages. Specifically: who has the right to decide on household chores? Do men share with women in household chores? Are household chores that are often considered a natural vocation of women to be counted as economic value-creating activities like men working in the community? According to statistics on the division of labor by gender in the news/articles of various types of media, it is reflected that there is a huge difference between men and women in terms of "The role of raising children" and "Internal work" support and take care of the family". With these two roles, women account for a very high percentage. 71% of women are involved in the upbringing of their children, while men account for only 21.1%. Similarly, 79% of women perform housework and family care, while only 11.3% of men participate in these tasks. In addition, with the role of taking care of big things in the family, the responsibility of shouldering belongs to both men (husbands) and women (wife) with an almost equal rate of 47.1% of men and 50% of women (Table 4). It shows that it is the woman who has to shoulder most of the household chores from the smallest to being considered as male. This invisibly will create more burden for women because at the same time they have to take care of both domestic and social work and these two jobs are recognized as the main jobs of women.

Thus, women appear as the main in-charge of most of the household chores. Maybe, this is the actual situation of society that the press has reflected.

However, it must be reflected in such a way that the reader does not see it as a model, a correct social standard that needs to be maintained and followed. The press needs to take a more positive view when publishing images related to the roles of both sexes in the family. It is necessary to share many images of the two sexes in household chores so that the public can clearly realize that it is the responsibility of both, contributing to eradicating outdated prejudices that have existed for a long time.

Table 4  
Roles of men and women mentioned in news/articles in all 4 types of press (%)

TT	Role	Character's gender			Total number of news/articles
		Male	Female	Both	
1	Take care of the big things in the family	47,1	50,0	2,9	34
2	Housework and take care of family	11,3	79,0	9,7	62
3	Raise your child	21,1	71,0	7,9	38

## Conclusion and discussion

The message on marriage and family in all four media shows that the topic of marriage and family is the most concerned and mentioned topic in online newspapers. The contents related to marriage and family are mentioned focusing on some main contents such as: family happiness, family relationships, domestic violence, divorce. Here, in addition to reflecting the status of marriage and family and the division of labor by gender, the media, especially online newspapers, have reflected the image of women according to existing stereotypes and prejudices. available in society and even in some journalists (Hively & El-Alayli, 2014). With objective causes of social reality or subjective reasons from journalists, the image of women in media products should be removed from biased prejudices. This is something that needs to be paid attention to in the process of information, education and communication to contribute to promoting gender equality and realizing the radical liberation of women in both the present and the future.

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