Marxist Feminism and Thai Gender Ideals: Patriarchy, Theravada Buddhism, and Generational Shifts in Contemporary Bangkok Thailand as a Case Study

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Abstract

In Thai society, the intersection of Theravada Buddhist traditions and patriarchal norms significantly shapes gender roles, particularly regarding domestic labor distribution. While men are typically oriented toward public spheres, women remain largely confined to domestic domains. Our research, drawing from 182 survey responses across four generations, examines how the "Thai Ideal Woman" concept persists through religious-philosophical precepts that reinforce traditional family dynamics. Despite modernization, these cultural norms demonstrate remarkable resilience, with many Thai women internalizing and reproducing traditional gender roles. The data reveals that women consistently perform disproportionate domestic labor compared to their male counterparts. This patriarchal structure, legitimized through religious traditionalism, perpetuates economic disparities by positioning men advantageously while limiting women's socioeconomic mobility. Addressing gender inequality in Thai society requires more than structural reforms; it demands a fundamental reassessment of the religious and social frameworks that historically constrain gender expression.

Keywords: Patriarchal; Gender Equality; Gender Expectation; Household structure and Religion; Thevarada Buddhism; Marxist Feminism.

1. Introduction

Contemporary statistical analyses regarding the distribution of domestic responsibilities between spouses in Bangkok, Thailand reveal a pronounced gender-based disparity, whereby women predominantly shoulder the burden of household management while men engage primarily in external pursuits. Empirical evidence indicates that an overwhelming 82% of Thai women express dissatisfaction with their male counterparts' minimal participation in domestic duties, highlighting a persistent and substantial divergence in spousal role perception.

To comprehend the intricate dynamics of gender perception and the ramifications of patriarchal hegemony, Sultana's [2010-2011] seminal work elucidates how patriarchal structures systematically maintain female subordination while ostensibly advocating for women's advancement. This patriarchal framework constitutes the fundamental impediment to women's professional trajectory and personal development. Moreover, in contemporary society, patriarchal constructs and social dynamics systematically undermine women's capacity to advance based on merit, effectively consigning them to a secondary status [1].

The entrenchment of male primacy in patriarchal cultures inherently circumscribes women's fundamental human rights. Scholarly discourse suggests that patriarchal societal structures in Thailand are inextricably linked to cultural and religious factors, particularly Theravada Buddhism [2]. Historically, male societal contributions have been quantified through productive capacity and military service, whereas female recognition has been predominantly confined to their auxiliary support of male endeavors [3]. This gender-based dichotomy is crystallized in the Thai aphorism, "A husband is the forelegs while the wife is the hind legs of an elephant" [ผู้ชายเป็นช้างเท้าหน้า ผู้หญิงเป็นช้างเท้าหลัง], which encapsulates the prescribed subordinate role of Thai women as

acquiescent supporters of male ambitions [4]. This ideological framework of female subordination within Thai familial structures perpetuates gender-based discrimination and limitations [5]. Consequently, the concept of "feminine mystique" manifests as a dystopian construct that imposes rigid gender roles.

The manifestation of this ideology is particularly evident in societal attitudes towards women's status in Thailand, where presumptions of diminished female capability and utility, compared to their male counterparts, persist. These assumptions relegate women primarily to the domestic sphere, while men's engagement in external employment confers economic advantages that facilitate familial governance.

Thailand's patriarchal social framework, deeply embedded within its cultural and legal infrastructure, perpetuates these inequitable gender expectations and reinforces deleterious stereotypes regarding gender-specific upbringing and treatment. This raises a fundamental question regarding the extent to which conservative Buddhist principles—which have been fundamental to Thai society for centuries—influence familial concepts while simultaneously reinforcing rigid gender role demarcation.

Furthermore, the symbiosis between Buddhist doctrine and traditional gender roles in Thailand provides the foundational justification for male claims to superiority [6]. Correspondingly, Thailand's social hierarchy confers absolute authority upon males through concepts of ownership, effectively reducing women's roles to those of followers rather than leaders, particularly concerning domestic gender equality [7]. The patriarchal system, entrenched within cultural and legal frameworks, historically established male authority while consigning women to subordinate positions. While men could exercise authority within both private and public spheres—accessing prestigious occupations—women's roles remained circumscribed by traditional expectations of inherent caregiving responsibilities. Thai women express significant dissatisfaction with the gender-based asymmetry in domestic labour distribution, particularly concerning men's limited participation in household responsibilities. This disparity manifests in multiple dimensions of daily life, creating a problematic paradigm where women must navigate the demands of both professional employment and domestic duties. The resultant

challenges are manifold: psychological strain from continuous multitasking, inequitable distribution of household responsibilities, and a pronounced work-life imbalance that disproportionately affects women while men remain relatively disengaged from domestic obligations.

The historical evolution of gender roles since the mid-twentieth century reveals a deeply entrenched societal framework that has systematically assigned instrumental roles to men while relegating women to expressive functions, thereby establishing and reinforcing social stratification [8]. Women have historically been constrained by cultural imperatives emphasizing familial honor, spousal obedience, and domestic proficiency. Moreover, the institutional framework of male hegemony not only circumscribes women's socioeconomic autonomy but also enforces their domestication in alignment with patriarchal expectations, a phenomenon further reinforced by the prevailing interpretations of Theravada Buddhist principles.

The religious dimension serves as a crucial mechanism in perpetuating gender disparities through behavioral regulation and task allocation, culminating in a rigid dichotomization of gender expectations and occupational segregation. This religious-social interface has engendered a binary power distribution along gender lines, whereby men predominantly occupy the political sphere while women are relegated to the economic domain [9]. This structural bifurcation aligns with Marxist Feminist theoretical frameworks, positioning women in subordinate societal roles.

Extant scholarly discourse has extensively interrogated the intricate intersections between Buddhist philosophical frameworks and gender performativity within Thai sociocultural contexts. Existing empirical investigations have predominantly delineated gendered institutional roles, whereby men are systematically positioned within political and administrative domains, while women are predominantly configured as economic agents, functioning as primary labor contributors.

Concurrent research trajectories have critically examined the epistemological mechanisms through which Buddhist theological constructs marginalize and systematically disenfranchise female subjectivities, revealing complex mechanisms of social normalization and exclusion. Notwithstanding these substantive scholarly contributions, a conspicuous lacuna persists in contemporary academic literature—specifically regarding the micro-political dynamics of domestic labor allocation in Bangkok. This research interstice encompasses critical analytical dimensions.

Existing research has explored the influence of Buddhism on gender roles in Thai society, highlighting the societal expectation for men to engage in public roles, such as politics and administration, while women take on significant economic responsibilities as primary laborers. Some studies also address the marginalization of LGBTQ+ individuals under Buddhist norms. However, there is limited analysis of the granular mechanisms of domestic task distribution in Bangkok, including quantitative and qualitative assessments of labor intensity, time allocation, and the systemic advantages or disadvantages rooted in Theravada Buddhist ideologies. By problematizing these underexplored conceptual terrains, this research aspires to generate nuanced insights into the intricate relationship between religious ideology, gender performativity, and domestic labor stratification from the perception of four generations.

This research endeavors to examine the fundamental implications of patriarchal systems within Thai society, investigating the interplay between gender expectations and family dynamics. It seeks to elucidate the underlying mechanisms perpetuating patriarchal structures within Thai households and explores how gender expectations and cultural barriers systematically disadvantage women within familial contexts. Furthermore, it addresses the fundamental question of why Thai household structures remain predominantly patriarchal and male-centric, and examines the societal hierarchies that systematically privilege masculine authority. While focusing primarily on family structures within Bangkok, Thailand, this research provides crucial insights into the persistent challenge of patriarchy, establishing a theoretical foundation for understanding why this system remains a critical issue requiring more substantial attention in contemporary discourse.

The trajectory of women's socioeconomic position in Thailand presents a complex paradox. While the post-1960s era has witnessed substantial improvements in women's access to educational institutions and integration into the labor market, resulting in enhanced career mobility and autonomous decision-making capabilities, fundamental inequities persist. These disparities manifest predominantly in the form of gender-based wage differentials and the perpetuation of the "glass ceiling" phenomenon—a metaphorical barrier that ostensibly permits visibility of upper-echelon positions while simultaneously impeding advancement toward them—across all societal strata [10]. This evolution is partly driven by increased access to education and the societal changes of Thailand's industrialization era since the 1960s. These factors have expanded opportunities for women to exercise equal rights compared to the more traditional gender hierarchies of the past.

A particularly illuminating indicator of contemporary women's status lies in the intersection between professional obligations and domestic responsibilities. The dual burden of managing both career commitments and household duties, including maternal responsibilities, has engendered significant psychological strain on women, who find themselves navigating increasingly complex external pressures. This stands in stark contrast to their male counterparts, whose societal obligations typically remain confined to professional spheres, unburdened by domestic expectations.

Contemporary research indicates that women increasingly advocate for a more egalitarian distribution of domestic responsibilities, seeking male participation in household management and collaborative decision-making processes. However, there remains a notable paucity of empirical evidence elucidating the mechanisms through which gender-based role divisions persist, particularly within domestic structures in 21st-century Thailand.

The persistence of these inequities is further substantiated by Thailand's relatively modest ranking—71st among 144 nations—in the 2016 Global Gender Gap Report. This positioning reflects widespread dissatisfaction among Thai women regarding the asymmetrical distribution of domestic responsibilities, particularly concerning the limited engagement of men in household duties.

The implementation of this cross-platform digital survey necessitates a methodologically rigorous approach to data collection through contemporary social media channels—X [formerly Twitter], Facebook, and LINE—with a prescribed temporal parameter of seven days for data collection, wherein this multi-platform deployment

strategy has been specifically designed to maximize respondent diversity and ensure comprehensive demographic representation within Bangkok, Thailand. The methodological framework encompasses a tripartite distribution strategy that leverages the distinct affordances of each platform: X facilitating rapid dissemination through professional networks and hashtag utilization, Facebook enabling targeted distribution through specialized professional groups and alumni networks, and LINE capitalizing on Thailand's predominant professional communication platform. The prescribed seven-day data collection period incorporates strategically timed dissemination phases, including initial deployment [Days 1-2], intermediate engagement [Days 3-5], and terminal data collection optimization [Days 6-7], while simultaneously implementing statistical considerations through cross-platform response validation protocols, demographic stratification analysis, and response rate monitoring across temporal segments, all calibrated to investigate the correlation between Gender Roles and Patriarchy System under the Theravada Buddhism in Bangkok Thailand's, with particular emphasis on the Patriarchy system that rooted the Gender Equality problem in Thai society.

Contemporary quantitative analyses, particularly the HILL ASEAN Gender Equality Perceptions survey, demonstrate that women in modern Thailand continue to shoulder disproportionate domestic responsibilities compared to their male counterparts [14]. This disparity raises critical questions regarding the extent to which traditional role expectations constrain women's position within Thai families, particularly in dual- income households where both partners maintain professional careers. For instance, research indicates that women in Bangkok's metropolitan families—whether in maternal or filial roles—predominantly assume household responsibilities with minimal male contribution, even in circumstances where both parties maintain full-time employment [15].

The roots of the patriarchal system contribute to the social hierarchy valuing men over women. Women are often viewed as "sensitive" and "weaker" than men, based on gender stereotypes. This perception stems from the intersection of how masculinity and femininity are socially constructed.

From the neoclassical tradition, the patriarchal model is the concept of decision-making that is dominated by male family leaders. This model has led to women entering the income-earning workforce, which was previously deprived of the process of wage earners within the family. This has resulted in the exploitation of women's labor, as they are now required to work outside the home while still completing their traditional domestic responsibilities [16]. Traditionally, women were confined to the home, responsible for child-bearing and domestic duties. However, the historical shift has forced women to seek employment outside the home while still maintaining these traditional responsibilities.

The hierarchical underpinnings of Thai family structures warrant critical examination, particularly through the lens of gender-based labour exploitation, most notably manifested in the distribution of domestic responsibilities [17]. The positioning of women within household hierarchies presents a complex dichotomy: while contemporary discourse suggests increasing flexibility in gender roles, empirical evidence reveals persistent structural inequities that relegate women to subordinate positions within domestic spheres [18]. This subordination stems not merely from the preservation of traditional roles but from the compound burden of professional and domestic obligations, as corroborated by recent survey data.

The historical trajectory of Thai women's societal position reveals a complex interplay of institutional, cultural, and religious factors that have shaped gender relations from pre-modern times to the contemporary era. During the Sukhothai period [1238-1378], the establishment of the monarchy system—analogous to the contemporary English feudal structure—instituted a patriarchal governance model predicated on familial hierarchy, wherein male authority figures, including monarchs, bureaucrats, and military officials, assumed paternalistic roles over the citizenry.

The period spanning from the mid-thirteenth century until 1932 was characterized by the profound commodification of women, who were legally classified as male property. This classification manifested in the authority of male relatives, particularly husbands and fathers, to commoditize female family members through slavery transactions without their consent, ostensibly to ameliorate economic hardship [20]. The social stratification of the era significantly influenced women's roles and autonomy, with marked disparities between social classes. Women of privileged backgrounds were groomed exclusively for domestic roles and concubinage, with their primary function being the provision of companionship and entertainment for their spouses [21]. In stark contrast, women of lower socioeconomic status faced severe restrictions on their autonomy and were frequently subjected to involuntary servitude or domestic service for affluent patrons [22]. The economic imperatives of lower-class women necessitated their active participation in maintaining societal stability, either through domestic management or, in cases of extreme financial duress, through their commodification as slaves [23]. The practice of families selling female members into slavery or concubinage was particularly prevalent among economically disadvantaged households as a means of financial sustenance.

Four fundamental factors have historically impeded, and continue to impede, the achievement of gender parity in Thai society. Primarily, traditional Thai customs and practices have systematically privileged masculine authority while objectifying women, prescribing them supportive and subordinate roles predicated on perceived physical and emotional limitations [24]. Secondly, the cultural preference for male offspring has perpetuated educational and developmental disparities through gender-differentiated child-rearing practices. Thirdly, the cultural enforcement of female subordination within marital relationships has reinforced gender hierarchies [25]. Finally, religious doctrines, particularly within Thai Buddhism—a syncretic fusion of Theravada Buddhism and animistic beliefs—have contributed to gender discrimination by characterizing women as sources of spiritual pollution due to biological functions, notably menstruation, and positioning them as potential threats to monastic celibacy [26].

Notably, qualitative data from open-ended survey responses regarding attitudes toward household duties and gender reveals a significant ideological shift: respondents predominantly conceptualize domestic skills such as cooking and cleaning as fundamental life competencies rather than gender-specific obligations. This perspective suggests an emerging rejection of traditional gender-role paradigms in Thai society.

According to feminist theory, the forms of "male-domination" are considered part of the social order. Additionally, the patriarchal model is structurally embedded in industry systems, which directly impacts women's economic status and opportunities. The problems of the patriarchal system also affect the concept of reproduction, leading to the perception of women as primary caretakers of the family [27].

2. Research Result

The evidence presented in the open-ended responses anonymous online survey regarding participants' attitudes towards household duties and gender roles provides nuanced insights. One participant noted that "in the daytime, a woman has to be a wage-earner in the office, but when she returns home, she has to be a housewife" [Anthor's own survey, 2024]. This comment highlights the persistent traditional gender norms that can relegate women to a subordinate position within the domestic sphere, even as they participate equally in the workforce.

The intricate interplay between religious doctrine and gender roles in Thai society illuminates how theological frameworks can serve as instruments of social control and gender stratification. While contemporary attitudes toward domestic labor distribution show signs of evolution, the fundamental religious structures continue to reinforce traditional gender hierarchies, particularly in spiritual and ceremonial contexts.

This persistence of religiously sanctioned gender discrimination merits further investigation, particularly regarding its implications for social equity and women's spiritual autonomy in contemporary Thai society. The tension between modernizing social attitudes and traditional religious restrictions presents a critical area for future research and potential institutional reform.

Participants across generations cite examples like the proverb "A husband represents the front legs, while a wife represents the back legs of an elephant," [ผู้ชายเป็นช้างเท้าหน้า ผู้หญิงเป็นช้างเท้าหลัง] which reflects beliefs of male dominance. The perceived hierarchy in Thai Buddhism, where women are seen as "merit clients" rather than "merit patrons," is also noted as contributing to gender oppression.

Overall, the survey highlights the complex and shifting relationship between Buddhism, gender, and Thai culture, with younger cohorts displaying a stronger awareness of the need to address longstanding biases in this domain.

The predominance of patriarchal structures in Thai familial units can be attributed primarily to Buddhism's conferral of superior spiritual agency upon men, particularly in the realm of merit-making, which legitimizes male authority. Indeed, the patriarchal configuration of Thai family systems can be fundamentally traced to Buddhism's profound societal influence in shaping gender relations and power dynamics. This religious underpinning serves to reinforce and perpetuate existing gender hierarchies, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of male dominance in both spiritual and domestic spheres.

Following the implementation of a digital survey instrument over a seven-day period [5-12 November 2024], the research garnered a corpus of 182 responses, representing a diverse generational spectrum encompassing Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z cohorts. The empirical data evinces significant intergenerational variance in perceptions regarding the intersection of Buddhist doctrinal interpretation and gender-based social stratification. The quantitative distribution of these perspectives is visually represented in the accompanying circular demographic visualization, the implications of which shall be subjected to rigorous analytical examination in the subsequent discursive section. This generational stratification of responses provides a nuanced lens through which to examine the evolving dynamics between religious orthodoxy and gender equality, particularly as mediated through distinct generational paradigms and socio-cultural frameworks. The

temporal delineation of respondents enables a granular analysis of how historical context and societal transformation have shaped perspectives on this complex interrelationship.
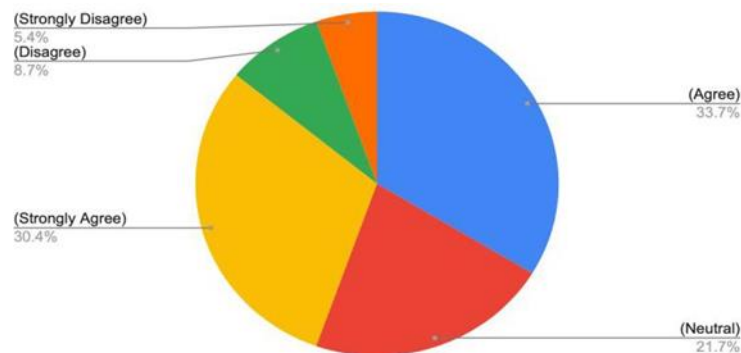

Figure 1: When ask Generation Z, Do you think that "Religion" plays a role in shaping the "Gender Role"?

Source: Author's own survey, Anthika Manowong, 2024

As evidenced by the empirical data, a pronounced majority of Generation Z respondents [64.1% cumulatively] affirm the significant impact of religious institutions on gender role construction within Thai society, with 33.7% indicating agreement and 30.4% expressing strong concordance. Conversely, a markedly smaller proportion of respondents [14.1% in aggregate] contest this sociocultural correlation, comprising 8.7% who express dissent and 5.4% who strongly repudiate the premise. It is noteworthy that approximately one-fifth of the sample population [21.7%] maintains an equivocal stance on the intersection of religious doctrine and gender role manifestation in the contemporary Thai context.
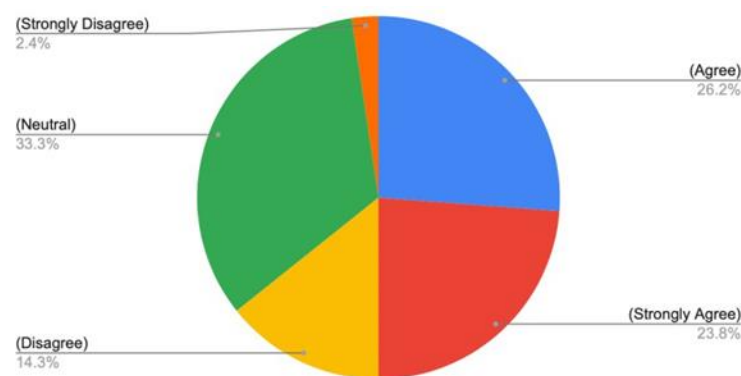

Figure 2: When ask Generation Y, Do you think that "Religion plays a role in shaping the "Gender Role"?

Source: Author's own survey, Anthika Manowong, 2024

An examination of the generational variance reveals that among Generation Y respondents, approximately half [50% cumulatively] acknowledge the religious underpinnings of gender role construction in Thai society, with

26.2% indicating agreement and 23.8% expressing robust affirmation. This represents a notably lower proportion compared to their Generation Z counterparts. In terms of opposition, 16.7% of Generation Y participants contest this sociocultural correlation, with 14.3% expressing disagreement and a mere 2.4% indicating strong opposition. Perhaps most striking is the substantial proportion—precisely one-third [33.3%]—who maintain an ambivalent stance regarding the religion-gender nexus.
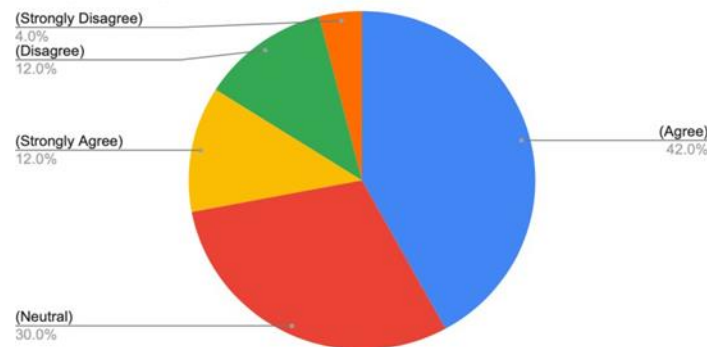

Figure 3: When ask Generation X, Do you think "Religion" plays a role in shaping the "Gender Role"?

Source: Author's own survey, Anthika Manowong, 2024

An examination of the empirical data concerning Generation X and Baby Boomer cohorts reveals a substantive majority [54% cumulatively] affirming the correlation between religious institutions and gender role formation in Thai society, with 42% indicating agreement and 12% expressing emphatic concordance. This demographic distribution merits particular scholarly attention, as it demonstrates a marked predisposition toward acknowledging religion's sociocultural influence, albeit with varying degrees of conviction.

In contrast, a relatively modest proportion of respondents [16% in aggregate] contest this sociocultural paradigm, with 12% expressing dissent and 4% indicating strong opposition. Notably, nearly one-third [30%] of participants maintain an equivocal stance regarding the intersection of religious doctrine and gender role manifestation, suggesting a significant degree of ambivalence within these generational cohorts.
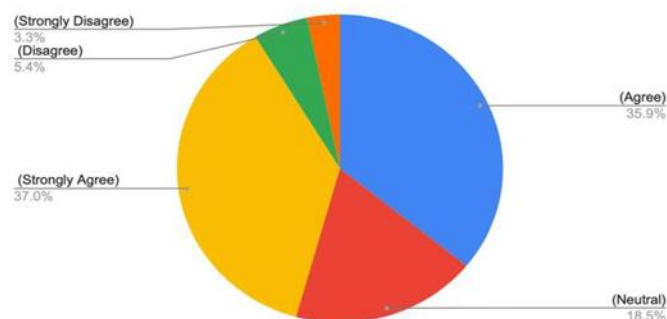

Figure 4: [Question 2.1]: Do you agree that the relationship between Buddhism and Gender Oppression are influenced by a patriarchal, male-dominant social system?

Source: Author's own survey, Anthika Manowong, 2024.

According to the additional information provided, the Generation Z participants had a different perspective on the relationship between Buddhism and gender bias in Thai society compared to the other generational groups: The survey results show that among Gen Z participants, 35.9% "agree" and 37.0% "strongly agree" that the relationship between gender and Buddhism is influenced by a patriarchal, male-dominant social system. Only 5.4% "disagree" and 3.3% "strongly disagree" with this view, while 18.5% remain "neutral" on the issue. Another survey section from participant on how people think about the discrimination that Buddhism had created gender bias. Do you agree that Buddhism generated the gender bias that led to the misogyny and discrimination between men and women?
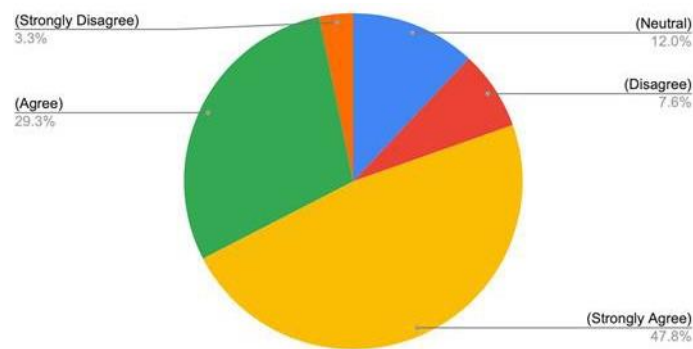

Figure 5: [Question 3.1]: When ask Generation Z, Do you agree that Buddhism generated the gender bias that led to the misogyny and discrimination between men and women?

Source: Author's own survey, Anthika Manowong, 2024.

The data presented in Figure Five indicates that the majority of Generation Z participants in the study perceive the presence of gender biases generated by Buddhism in Thai society. Specifically, 47.8% of respondents "strongly agree" and 29.3% "agree" with the statement that Buddhism has produced gender biases. Conversely, 7.6% "disagree" and 3.3% "strongly disagree" with this assertion, while 12% of participants maintained a neutral stance on the issue.
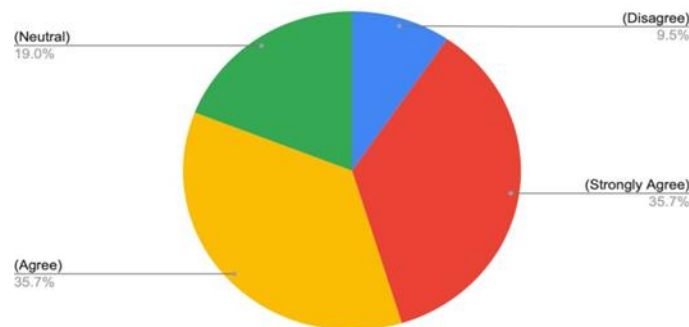

Figure 6: [Question 3.2]: When ask Generation Y, Do you agree that Buddhism generated the gender bias that led to the misogyny and discrimination between men and women?

Source: Author's own survey, Anthika Manowong, 2024.

The data presented in Figure Six indicates that the perspectives of Generation Y participants regarding the influence of Buddhism on gender biases in Thai society differ somewhat from those of Generation Z. Specifically, 35.7% of Generation Y respondents "agree" and an additional 35.7% "strongly agree" that Buddhism has created gender biases. In contrast, only 9.5% of Generation Y participants "disagree" with this notion, while 19% responded neutrally.
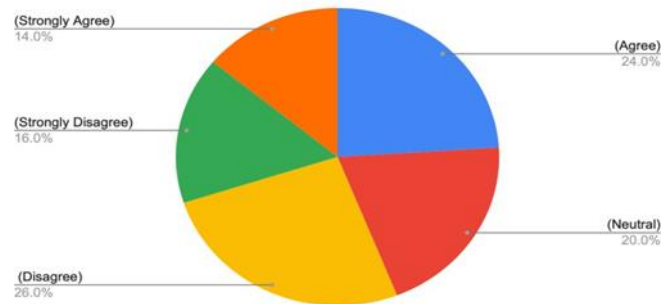

Figure 7: [Question 3.3]: when ask generation X and Baby Boomers, Do you agree that Buddhism generated the gender bias that led to the misogyny and discrimination between men and women?

Source: Author's own survey, Anthika Manowong, 2024.

The data in Figure Seven [Question 3.3] indicates that among Generation X and Baby Boomer participants, 24% "agree" and 14% "strongly agree" that Buddhism has generated gender bias in Thai society, leading to misogyny and discrimination between men and women. However, 26% "disagree" and 16% "strongly disagree" with this notion, while 20% remained neutral on the issue.
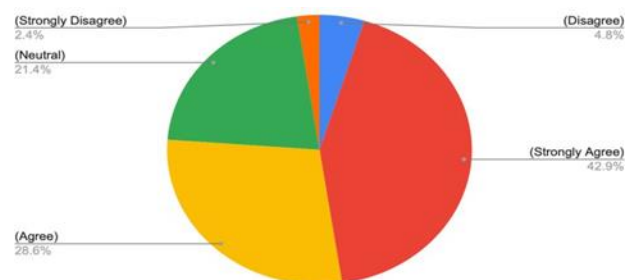

Figure 8: [Question 2.2] when ask generation Z, Do you think that the relationship between Buddhism and Gender oppression are influenced by Patriarchal system?

Source: Author's own survey, Anthika Manowong.

The data in Figure Eight [Question 2.2] indicates that a large majority of Generation Y participants recognize the influence of patriarchal, male-dominant social structures on the relationship between Buddhism and gender

oppression in Thailand:

Among Generation Y participants, 42.9% "strongly agree" and 28.6% "agree" with the view that the relationship between gender and Buddhism is influenced by a patriarchal, male-dominant social system. Only 4.8% "disagree" and 2.4% "strongly disagree", while 21.4% remain neutral on the issue.
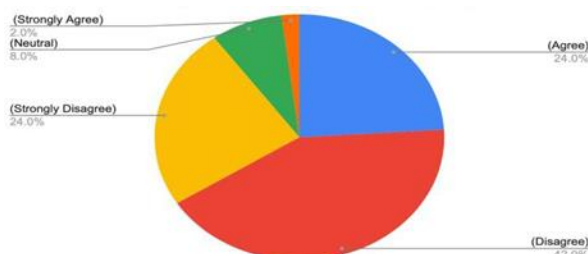

Figure 9: [Question 2.3]: when ask Generation X and Baby Boomers, Do you agree that the core issues of gender oppression and inequality are related to Buddhism?

Source: Author's own survey, Anthika Manowong, 2024.

The survey results in Figure Nine [Question 2.3] indicate that the Thai population had mixed views on the relationship between Buddhism and gender equality issues:

A significant portion of participants does not perceive Buddhism as a source of gender oppression, with 42% indicating they "disagree" and an additional 24% expressing that they "strongly disagree" with this idea. However, some participants believe Buddhism may negatively influence gender equality, as 24% "agree" and 2% "strongly agree" that it has an adverse effect on gender balance. This range of responses highlights diverse perspectives on the impact of Buddhism concerning gender equality.

The survey results also suggest that women's domestic labor and caretaking responsibilities within the family structure are viewed as forms of gender-based exploitation. Marxist-feminist perspectives highlight how the family, as a product of patriarchal capitalism, has confined women to the private sphere and unequally distributed household duties.

3. Discussion

The data analysis reveals that patriarchal ideas deeply rooted in Thai society, influenced by traditional religious beliefs, have deprived women's status and limited their roles within the family. However, the findings suggest a gradual shift, with women gaining more independence and household responsibilities becoming more equally shared, though variations persist across families. The research highlights how religion and culture have influenced gender roles in Thai society, and the hope is that this can promote greater understanding and challenge the mental "handcuffs" imposed by patriarchal interpretations of Buddhism. While progress has been made, continued efforts are needed to achieve more equitable gender dynamics within Thai families.

In Southeast Asia, the traditional role of mothers as primary caregivers has limited women's participation in public life. The disproportionate burden of housework when there are young children further entrenches this gendered division of labor within the family.

The disproportionate allocation of household responsibilities directly contributes to a Gender Equality Problem that women disproportionately face compared to men. This is due to the gendered division of labor as well as the structure of society, which not only compels women to sacrifice themselves by working overtime on household activities, but also forces them to relinquish their position in the labor market in favor of the role of housewife [28]. As a result, Thai women remain solely responsible for this burden without domestic support from their husbands [29]. Conversely, not all families relegate women to a subordinate position - this is contingent on the family culture and etiquette. Additionally, in some households, women maintain traditional roles, transitioning from laborers in the workplace to caretakers of the entire family, especially if the family includes elders [30]. Neuroscientific research has shown that females exhibit greater innate caregiving tendencies compared to males. In light of this, the caregiving rituals and child-rearing responsibilities are frequently passed down to mothers or daughters rather than fathers and sons [31].

Eventually in contemporary Bangkok, while men and women tend to share household duties more equitably than in the past, women still grapple with the gender roles designed to confine them. This directly and indirectly compels them to work harder in comparison to men. Furthermore, Thai women express dissatisfaction with the unequal division of domestic labor due to men's reduced sense of responsibility in the home [32]. Qualitative analysis indicates these generational differences reflect evolving societal attitudes, with modern views tending to value gender equality over traditional male-dominant norms previously reinforced by religious and cultural influences. However, the persistence of misogynistic proverbs and beliefs demonstrates the enduring impact of these patriarchal structures. Overall, the survey results highlight the complex relationship between Buddhism, gender, and Thai culture, with younger cohorts demonstrating greater recognition of the need to address long-standing biases in this domain.

Contemporary generational perspectives, particularly among Generation X, advocate for comprehensive gender equality across all societal dimensions. This cohort predominantly supports the modernization of Thai society through the embrace of democratic principles and merit-based leadership, transcending traditional gender constraints. They actively challenge patriarchal paradigms and seek to dismantle negative gender stereotypes that perpetuate notions of female inferiority. Similarly, Baby Boomers advocate for the reconceptualization of gender roles and the establishment of more equitable distribution of responsibilities.

However, divergent perspectives exist within Generation X regarding the methodology and timeline of social transformation. Some maintain that structural changes to deeply embedded social constructs present significant challenges, arguing that contemporary society has already undergone substantial positive evolution. This faction posits that the dissolution of patriarchal systems will occur gradually through generational succession rather than through immediate, revolutionary change.

These findings suggest that there may be generational differences in the perception of the gendered impacts of

Buddhist teachings and practices within the Thai context. Whereas the majority of Generation Z participants recognized such biases, the Generation Y cohort displayed a more even split between agreement and disagreement. Further investigation would be needed to fully elucidate the factors underlying these divergent perspectives across age groups.

Moreover, findings suggest more mixed perspectives on the gendered impacts of Buddhism within this older demographic, compared to the more pronounced recognition of such biases among Generation Z and, to a lesser extent, Generation Y participants. Further research would be valuable to explore the factors contributing to these generational differences in perceptions. Besides, findings suggest that a significant portion of the population does not perceive a strong link between Buddhist teachings/practices and gender inequality in Thailand. This contrasts with the perspectives of younger generational cohorts discussed earlier, who demonstrated greater recognition of Buddhism's gendered impacts. The data also suggests that younger generations are more attuned to the gendered implications of Buddhist teachings and practices, which have historically shaped patriarchal family structures and norms in Thai society. Older participants display more polarized and ambivalent perspectives on this issue.

On the other hand, quantitative data provides empirical evidence of the generational perspectives held by the sampled population regarding the intersection of gender and Buddhist influences within the sociocultural context of Thailand. The findings suggest that a substantial proportion of the younger demographic recognizes the gendered implications of Buddhist teachings and practices, whereas a smaller subset disputes or remains ambivalent towards this perception. Further qualitative research may be warranted to elucidate the nuanced reasoning and experiential factors underlying these divergent viewpoints.

The survey results shed light on the complex and diverse views within the Thai community regarding the intersection of religion, culture, and gender norms. Further research would be valuable to explore the nuanced factors underlying these differing perceptions across the population, underscores the need for systemic reform in Thai society's approach to gender roles and domestic labour distribution, highlighting the tension between traditional hierarchical structures and emerging egalitarian aspirations. The path forward requires not only individual attitudinal changes but also institutional support and policy reforms to address these deeply rooted social inequities.

The distribution pattern demonstrates a marked shift in perspective between generational cohorts, with Generation Y exhibiting greater equilibrium across response categories and a pronounced tendency toward neutrality. This nuanced distribution might be indicative of this cohort's positioning at the intersection of traditional religious paradigms and emergent secular worldviews in contemporary Thai society. Among Generation X and Baby Boomers presents a distinct pattern from their younger counterparts, characterized by a more pronounced tendency toward moderate agreement rather than strong affirmation. This nuanced positioning might reflect these cohorts' prolonged exposure to both traditional religious frameworks and evolving secular influences in Thai society, culminating in a more measured acknowledgment of religion's role in gender construction.

4. Women Belong to the Kitchen

The pervasive influence of conservative Buddhist ideology and entrenched traditional gender paradigms fundamentally shapes familial structures in Thai society, manifesting not merely in gender-differentiated socialization patterns, but in the construction of a prescriptive framework that delineates the characteristics of the 'virtuous woman' and 'exemplary wife.' These societal constructs serve as parameters within which women must navigate to achieve social integration and survival. The question of women's positionality within domestic hierarchies reveals a complex tapestry: while women may theoretically assume diverse roles—from leadership to financial stewardship—the practical reality often reflects persistent gender-based power asymmetries.

These fixed gender roles remain prevalent in the present day, driven by the concept of the 'Ideal Woman' stemming from patriarchal ideas. Consequently, the transitions in a woman's public and private self are affected by her position within the Thai family structure, while traditional gender norms skew household duties heavily toward women in Thai families, the situation is nuanced [33]. Women maintain the autonomy to choose their roles, but societal and familial expectations continue to shape their domestic responsibilities, with income level also playing a factor. The persistence of the 'Ideal Woman' concept further entrenches these gendered dynamics within the Thai household.

The historical confinement of women to domestic spheres, juxtaposed against male dominance in public domains, illuminates deeply embedded social strictures. The culturally specific metaphor comparing daughters to "toilets outside the home" [มีลูกสาวเหมือนมีส้วมอยู่หน้าบ้าน] reveals profound gender-based devaluation analogous to preferences observed in Chinese familial systems. This metaphor encapsulates societal anxieties regarding female sexuality and family reputation. The biological capacity for pregnancy, combined with stringent Buddhist moral

precepts regarding premarital sexuality, creates a particularly vulnerable position for women. Premarital pregnancy often precipitates severe social consequences, including ostracism and verbal degradation. Within the Buddhist theological framework, the prohibition of premarital sexual relations—codified in the fundamental Five Precepts—frequently leads women to seek clandestine terminations, resulting in both physical jeopardy and profound psychological trauma [34]. This intersection of biological reality, religious doctrine, and social mores exemplifies the multifaceted nature of gender-based constraints in Thai society.

In the traditional Thai household, the division of domestic responsibilities between women and men is dramatically skewed, with the expectation that women bear the burden of most chores and childcare [35]. This results in women having to participate more extensively in the household sector, which can often be strenuous and difficult. However, it is not the case that all women are well-suited to take on all these responsibilities by themselves [36].

Interestingly, Thai men with lower incomes tend to assist their wives more with these household duties, while those with higher incomes rarely, if ever, help [37]. This suggests that household duty allocation is influenced by relative income levels within the family.

Table 1: Women's Primary Role in Housework, Segmented by Age and Region

Women responding with 'housework' as main role by age and region, 2019
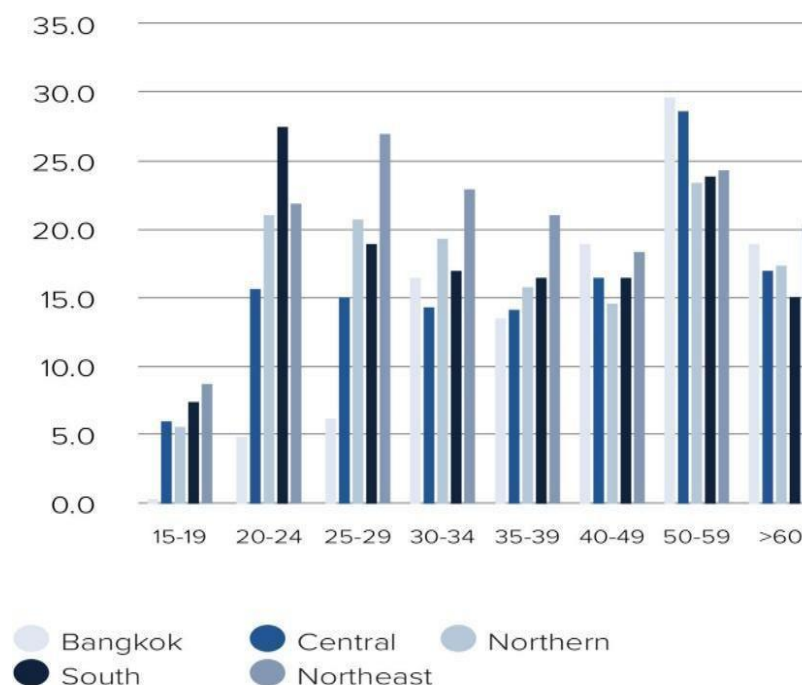
* Source: Calculations by author, based on data from Labour Force Survey data in published summary report, 2019, NSO.

Source: UNDP [2022]. Thai Women's Unpaid Care and Domestic Work and the Impact on Decent Employment. Bangkok: UNDP

The lack of workplace flexibility, demands from family members, and gender stereotypes about men's greater efficiency under pressure contribute to structural barriers that disproportionately burden women. Women end up spending more overtime on housework, sacrificing time in the workplace that hinders their economic advancement. This creates an imbalance between professional and family responsibilities due to entrenched gender role expectations.

While women's roles have evolved over time, some differences from pre-modern eras persist. The equilibrium between work and family life remains unequal, constrained by lasting gender stereotypes and norms.

For example, participants cited "gender-restriction laws" [**Section 1461**: Refers to the husband's role as the head of the household, though later interpretations have balanced gender roles in marital decisions and **Section 1563**: Discusses parental authority, usually shared but influenced by societal gender norms. in the workplace as evidence of how gender affects the Thai social structure]. The underlying reason is the notion of innate psychological differences, such as women's perceived "born-to-be-caretaker" reproductive ability. These gendered assumptions are deeply embedded within the patriarchal system and its interaction with the broader political-

economic structure.

In summary, the devaluation of women and preferential treatment of men are products of the patriarchal system in Theravada Buddhism and its pervasive influence on social hierarchies, gender norms, and workplace policies.

The perpetuation of gender-based preferences within Thai familial structures manifests primarily through the intersection of Buddhist doctrinal interpretations and traditional concepts of filial obligation. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the marked societal predilection for male offspring, a preference intrinsically linked to the theological significance of male monastic ordination in Thai Buddhism.

The fundamental basis for this gender asymmetry lies in the ecclesiastical structure of Thai Buddhism, wherein the institution of ordination remains exclusively patriarchal. This gendered exclusivity derives from the absence of sanctioned facilities for female ordination within the nation's religious infrastructure. The ramifications of this structural limitation extend beyond mere religious participation, penetrating deeply into the fabric of familial dynamics and intergenerational relationships.

Central to this paradigm is the theological conception of merit transfer through ordination. The prevailing Buddhist soteriological framework posits that parents may achieve celestial ascension through the metaphysical mechanism of grasping their ordained son's monastic robes. This belief system creates a complex matrix of spiritual interdependence, wherein sons become instrumental in their parents' posthumous spiritual trajectory. The doctrinal emphasis on this particular pathway to salvation effectively privileges male offspring as uniquely capable of fulfilling this crucial filial obligation.

5. Son-preference in Thai Society

This gender-specific capability for facilitating parental salvation engenders a hierarchical valorization of male children within Thai society. The inability of daughters to participate in this significant aspect of merit-making creates an inherent asymmetry in their perceived capacity to express filial piety through religious means. This limitation is not merely symbolic but has tangible implications for gender relations within Thai familial structures.

The persistence of this gender-based disparity in religious practice raises significant questions about the intersection of traditional Buddhist doctrine with contemporary social dynamics. The exclusion of women from ordination represents not only a religious restriction but also manifests as a mechanism for the perpetuation of gender-based social hierarchies. This systematic limitation of women's religious agency has profound implications for their status within both familial and broader social contexts.

Furthermore, this religious-structural constraint on female spiritual agency demonstrates the complex interplay between institutional religious practices and societal gender norms. The absence of legitimate paths for female ordination effectively institutionalizes gender inequality within the religious sphere, which subsequently radiates into broader social contexts, reinforcing and legitimizing gender-based preferences within Thai society.

This analysis illuminates how religious doctrine and institutional structures can serve as mechanisms for the

perpetuation of gender-based preferences and inequalities. The exclusive association of male ordination with parental salvation creates a theological framework that inherently privileges male offspring, contributing to the persistence of son preference in contemporary Thai society. This phenomenon exemplifies the profound influence of religious institutions and practices in shaping social attitudes and familial preferences regarding gender.

The discourse surrounding Thailand's familial structure presents a complex dialectic between matriarchal and patriarchal paradigms. Historical evidence indicates a patrilineal nomenclature system that mandated the adoption of paternal surnames [38], while contemporaneous practices in certain regions demonstrate matrilocal post-marital residence patterns, wherein men relocate to their wives' familial domiciles—a practice indicative of matriarchal elements [39]. This apparent contradiction exemplifies the intricate interplay between competing social forces in Thai society. While vestiges of patriarchal hegemony and gender- based stereotypes persist, contemporary Thai women increasingly exercise autonomy in decision-making processes, facilitated by evolving societal attitudes toward gender equality. The previously entrenched notion of 'son-preference' and the pejorative metaphorical equation of daughters with external lavatories has diminished as society progressively adopts more nuanced perspectives on gender performance rather than biological determinism. Nevertheless, the imperative for continued social evolution toward enhanced gender parity and broader acceptance of women's rights remains salient.

6. Theravada Buddhism and Thai Family Structure

These findings underscore the enduring salience of religious frameworks in shaping gender-related social constructs among Thailand's youngest adult demographic, despite the increasing secularization often associated with generational progression. The substantial majority acknowledging this influence suggests the persistent embeddedness of religious paradigms in Thai social architecture, particularly concerning gender role conceptualization and enactment.

The ethnographic evidence presents a compelling exposition of the intricate interplay between Buddhist orthodoxy, traditional gender paradigms, and familial structures within contemporary Thai society. The data reveals a deeply entrenched system of gender-based socialization that manifests through asymmetrical child-rearing practices and differentiated behavioral expectations between male and female offspring.

Of particular scholarly significance is the respondent's articulation of persistent gender-based constraints, exemplified through the quotation: "women are weaker than men, so men should take care of them, women must reserve themselves, keep their legs close, and must be good housewives."[40]. This narrative encapsulates the enduring patriarchal underpinnings that characterize Thai social architecture, wherein female autonomy is circumscribed by religiously-sanctioned behavioral protocols and domestic obligations.

The data illuminates a striking dichotomy in gender socialization processes: female children are subject to more stringent behavioral regulations and are inculcated with values emphasizing premarital chastity, while male children experience considerably greater behavioral latitude. This asymmetry is particularly noteworthy given its religious legitimization through Buddhist doctrinal interpretation and its reinforcement via traditional

cultural mechanisms.

7. Education and Gender Roles

In contrast, the same data also revealed households where "women stand on equal footing with men in the household structure." This suggests a more egalitarian domestic dynamic, grounded in principles of shared responsibility and joint decision-making. Statistical research corroborates this finding, indicating that higher levels of education and socioeconomic status are associated with a more equitable division of household labor. Specifically, studies have shown that educated fathers are more likely to be actively involved in childcare compared to their less educated counterparts [41]. This may be attributable to the tendency of well-educated individuals to marry partners of similar educational and professional standing, fostering a climate of mutual support and collaborative domestic arrangements. The gender expectations and cultural barriers influencing women's familial position in Bangkok persist, albeit to a lesser degree than in previous generations, owing to evolving social dynamics. Conversely, across all generational cohorts, the prevailing sentiment is that Thai families typically espouse a "shared responsibility" ethos rather than imposing burdens disproportionately.

Ultimately, the qualitative and quantitative data paint a complex picture, with traditional gender norms persisting in some households while more progressive, egalitarian practices emerge in others. This underscores the multifaceted nature of household dynamics and the need for a nuanced understanding of the interplay between socioeconomic factors, educational attainment, and evolving cultural attitudes regarding the distribution of domestic responsibilities.

In many Thai households in BKK, expectations dictate that women are primarily responsible for family caregiving, which often restricts their role and authority within the family. This setup is further reinforced by a patriarchal family structure, where men traditionally hold authority—a dynamic influenced by Buddhist beliefs. These patriarchal ideals uphold a social hierarchy that values men over women, fostering double standards in the upbringing of boys and girls. The concept of the "ideal Thai woman" is frequently used to regulate female behavior, placing additional social controls on women. Many families also limit women's autonomy in household roles, maintaining attitudes that prioritize control over female independence.

The data analysis reveals that patriarchal ideas deeply rooted in Thai society, influenced by traditional religious beliefs, have deprived women's status and limited their roles within the family. However, the findings also suggest a gradual shift, with women gaining more independence and household responsibilities becoming more equally shared, though variations persist across families. Consequently, in some households, women can assume any role, but this is contingent on the respective family's culture and socialization processes. Survey findings indicate that not all Bangkok families adhere to the belief that women should occupy subordinate roles to men. Women can simultaneously serve as family leaders and providers, though maintaining a sense of appropriateness is paramount.

The implementation of such changes necessitates a multi-institutional approach, with governmental bodies, educational institutions, and organizational entities playing crucial roles in facilitating discourse and establishing protective frameworks for women's rights. While absolute gender parity may remain elusive, the advancement of social justice principles is paramount for Thailand's societal progress and the dismantling of entrenched patriarchal structures.

8. Conclusion

These restrictions are predicated on the theological premise that feminine presence potentially compromises monastic spiritual discipline, leading to the systematic demarcation of gender-specific zones within religious spaces. The survey results indicate generational differences in perspectives on the relationship between Buddhism and gender biases in Thai society:

This generational divide suggests that younger people are more attuned to how traditional patriarchal structures—rooted in religious and cultural influences—have historically disadvantaged women in Thailand. Meanwhile, older participants tend to view the issue with greater ambivalence or skepticism, likely due to their stronger adherence to established Buddhist social norms. The divergent perspectives across age cohorts suggest an evolution in societal attitudes, with younger Thais showing greater awareness of the need to address gender biases in this domain. Younger generations seem more attuned to the ways traditional patriarchal structures, rooted in religious and cultural influences, may have disadvantaged women. Meanwhile, older participants display more ambivalent or skeptical views, likely due to their stronger adherence to longstanding Buddhist social norms.

The social fabric in Thailand upholds traditional gender roles and conservative Buddhist beliefs that prioritize men over women. While gender awareness has increased, deeply rooted cultural norms sustain these inequities. Promoting more equal gender roles and sharing of domestic labor could benefit Thai society. Gender roles have become less rigidly defined in modern Thai society. Today, the focus is more on individual abilities rather than strict gender norms. As men can now excel in traditionally female-dominated fields like cooking. So while entrenched patriarchal attitudes persist to some degree, there are also signs of greater flexibility and equality emerging in how gender roles are perceived and enacted within Thai households. The shifting cultural landscape suggests a gradual, if uneven, trend towards more egalitarian domestic dynamics. The limitations of this study include the relatively small sample size of 182 survey respondents. Additionally, the cultural tendency towards "positive illusion" and "adaptive" views of relationships may impact perceptions.

Overall, the research highlights how religion and culture have influenced gender roles in Thai society. The hope is that this can promote greater understanding and challenge the mental "handcuffs" imposed by patriarchal interpretations of Buddhism. While progress has been made, continued efforts are needed to achieve more equitable gender dynamics within Thai families.

Notwithstanding the global proliferation of gender consciousness and the concomitant elevation of equality discourse to prominence in numerous jurisdictions, Thailand continues to exhibit marked asymmetries in the

allocation of domestic responsibilities. This persistent disparity merits rigorous examination, particularly given its profound implications for socioeconomic development and human rights considerations.

The disproportionate burden of household responsibilities borne by women in Thai society manifests through multifaceted mechanisms of social reproduction. This asymmetrical distribution of domestic labor operates both as a reflection and reinforcement of deeply entrenched gender hierarchies, perpetuating systemic inequalities through quotidian practices and normalized expectations.

The transformation of traditional gender roles in Thai domestic spheres represents both a moral imperative and a pragmatic necessity for sustained social development. The establishment of more equitable social norms requires coordinated intervention across multiple domains, encompassing policy reform, educational initiatives, and cultural transformation. This evolution is essential not only for addressing current inequalities but also for creating a more equitable foundation for future generations.

Perhaps most striking is the overwhelming consensus among participants regarding their aspirations for Thai society's evolution. Respondents consistently advocate for increased social progressiveness, paradigmatic shifts in collective consciousness, enhanced civic engagement, and heightened awareness regarding the detrimental impacts of patriarchal systems on societal development and women's rights. While a minority of responses acknowledge the inherent challenges in effecting societal transformation, there is widespread recognition that incremental changes, beginning with fundamental principles of "respect" and "equality", can catalyze broader social evolution.

The notion that women's adherence to traditional roles stems from autonomous choice proves fundamentally flawed, as deeply embedded gender paradigms and sociocultural conditioning significantly circumscribe their decision-making agency. The pervasive nature of these structural constraints substantially impedes women's capacity to either relinquish their prescribed roles or effectuate meaningful transformation of the social fabric. Nevertheless, it would be reductionist to posit that all Bangkok households impose strictly domestic roles upon women. Rather, domestic responsibilities are conceptualized more as familial obligations than rigidly defined gender roles, theoretically affording women the prerogative to determine their level of engagement with traditional duties without explicit familial coercion. Yet this theoretical freedom exists in tension with persistent societal expectations regarding women's caregiving responsibilities, culminating in a demonstrable asymmetry in domestic labor distribution that disproportionately affects women.

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