

# SOME CHARACTERISTICS IN THE STRUCTURE OF VIETNAMESE FAMILIES AND THAI FAMILIES - FROM A LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL PERSPECT

## CẤU TRÚC GIA ĐÌNH VIỆT VÀ GIA ĐÌNH NGƯỜI THÁI LAN - NHÌN TỪ GÓC ĐỘ VĂN HOÁ VÀ NGÔN NGỮ

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**ABSTRACT:** *The family serves as the fundamental unit of society, acting as the basic social group that forms the broader social structure. Consequently, the survival and prosperity of a nation are closely tied to the existence and development of each family. The family should be the starting point and focal consideration for all social policies. This study aims to analyze key structural characteristics of Vietnamese and Thai families, as well as the contemporary transformations within these family systems. The analysis is conducted through the lens of cultural and linguistic perspectives, providing insights into the evolving nature of family structures in both societies.*

**Key words:** *The structure, the values, Vietnamese families, Thai families*

**TÓM TẮT:** *Gia đình là tế bào của xã hội, là nhóm xã hội cơ bản tạo nên xã hội rộng lớn. Vì vậy, sự tồn vong của dân tộc phụ thuộc rất nhiều vào sự tồn tại và phát triển của mỗi gia đình. Gia đình phải là điểm khởi đầu phát triển và trở lại của mọi chính sách xã hội. Bài nghiên cứu nhằm phân tích một số đặc điểm nổi bật trong cấu trúc gia đình người Việt Nam và gia đình người Thái và một số thay đổi của gia đình Việt Nam và gia đình người Thái ngày nay dưới góc nhìn văn hoá và ngôn ngữ.*

**Từ khoá:** *Cấu trúc, giá trị, gia đình người Việt, gia đình người Thái.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The family is a cell of society, a basic social group that creates large society. Therefore, to create a developed and prospective society, each family has a very important role in the development of economics, social and cultural policies. Therefore, the longevity of the nation and nation depends very much depends on the existence and development of each family. Family must be the starting point and return of all social policies. According to Le Ngoc Van [6], "Family is considered a spiritual value extremely precious to humanity, needed be preserved and promoted." Family is a cultural phenomenon and a

price cultural treatment. All relationships and activities lifestyle of family members. Every family represents cultural characteristics of human.

The family is an independent social institution that has an interactive relationship with other social institutions and has a great impact on the development of society in general. The family plays an important role in the development, implementation and enjoyment of political, economic, social and cultural policies; is an important institution that ensures population size and quality through the function of reproduction, education, and investment in human resource

development. The family is the place to preserve and transmit national cultural values from generation to generation. Therefore, cultivating and building a family is an important condition for sustainable development. Nowadays, due to the development and modernization of the society, the concept of the family is changing day by day. Many families promote the individual freedom of their children, in order to educate their children' self - reliance and independence. However, that made the relationship between the husband and his wife, between their parents and children in the family are becoming more and looser, more distant.

There are some researches on Vietnamese and Thais culture in recent years. Dr. Tran Thi Minh Thi said in her paper [5] “Over the past decades, Vietnamese families have undergone important changes, from traditional families to families with new, more modern and freer characteristics. The process of international integration, including cultural integration and exchange, has led to more open views on Vietnamese marriage and family”.

Vu Thi Phuong Dung on her research “Comparison on the Thais and Vietnamese culture” [3] focused on comparative analysis of production culture and its influence on the lives of Thai people. So that, the paper gave some suggestions to improve the relationship between two countries: Vietnam and Thai closer and more developed.

## **2. CONTENT**

### **2.1. The concepts of the family**

The United Nations defined “*The family is central to the mission of the United Nations - which is support the kind*

*of development that guarantees the right to a life of dignity for everyone, and on that foundation, to build a lasting peace. It's crucial that families, which state support, can expand the circle of caring and solidarity to build peaceful and inclusive societies – societies that continually strive to ensure a life of dignity for all people, regardless of any differences.*”

Murdock [1] defines the family as a social group defined by a common place of residence of economic corporation and reproduction, consisting of adults of both sexes, including at least maintain a socially recognized sexual relationship and one or more children, the biological or adopted children of adults in a conjugal relationship.

According to Clause 2, Article 3 of the Law on Marriage and Family 2014 of Vietnam Nation “*Family is a collection of people bound together by marriage, blood relation or nurturing relationship, giving rise to rights and obligations between them according to the provisions of law. Provisions of the law of marriage and family*”.

In Thailand, a family is usually defined as a group that eats together. It usually consists of a nuclear family with a couple of additional members, that can include grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and children of spouses. Family - as the cornerstone of Thai society is given great value and importance. Thai families are close and several generations may live in the same house, with the oldest male being the head of the household. The power structure of the family is mirrored in the organizational environment. Advice from elders is expected to be followed

without any questions although this is becoming less true with time and modernization of the society.

Family is considered to be the foundation of social life for most Thai people. The concept of Thai family is often wide and inclusive, and whilst the nuclear family is the core of the domestic unit, it may include members of the extended family or close neighbors or friends.

## **2.2. The structure of the Vietnamese families and Thais families**

### ***2.2.1. The structure of the Vietnamese families***

In terms of size, Vietnamese families can be classified into:

a. The nuclear family (Two-generation family): is a family consisting of parents and children.

b. The extended family (Three-generation family) or (traditional family): is a family consisting of grandparents, parents and children.

The Vietnamese family today can be considered as a "transitional family" in the transition from a traditional agricultural society to a modern industrial society.

The family size today considers being smaller and smaller, and tends to be simpler in the shape of nuclearization. In the cities and countries, the nuclear family is becoming to be replaced the extended family. Thus, the dissolution of the old form and the formation of a new form is inevitable.

### ***2.2.2. The structure of the Thai families***

There are two kinds of the structure of the Thai families: the nuclear family and the extended family.

1. The nuclear family: It is considered the basic of the domestic unit, but it often

includes members of the extended family. Including unmarried siblings, widowed parents, and more distant unmarried or widowed male and female relatives. The husband is nominally the head of the household, but the wife has considerable authority. Female members of the household are responsible foremost domestic cores.

2. The extended family: In Thailand, the extended family has become popular all over the country. There are some generations live together in a family. For example, the parents' house is bequeathed to the youngest daughter, later she will care of their parents with her husband together when they are older. The oldest man of a Thai is the patriarch; the other family members have to act in accordance with his decisions.

Both parents work in most families. Respect for elders is central to the Thai family. The family hierarchy even extends to siblings of different ages. Small children are treated permissively and slowly given more responsibilities as they age. By the age of eight, girls are assigned chores in the house, and boys given work outside or in the field.

The general structure of Thai families is patriarchal, with the household deferring to the oldest living man. Often, several generations will live under the same roof, and grandparents, aunts and older siblings will help raise a child. In turn, children are expected to care for their parents in old age. This is considered an honor rather than a duty. The elderly family members are sources of wisdom and pass on traditional values to the small children.

It is common for Thai people to live in

the home of their parents until they are married, and some newlyweds live with their family until they have children of their own. Moreover, a pregnant mother often moves back to her mother's house or invites the future grandmothers to live with them.

### **2.3. The values of the Vietnamese families and Thai families**

#### ***2.3.1. The values of the Vietnamese families***

The outstanding values of the Vietnamese traditional family are reflected in the relationships within the family, between grandparents, parents and children, between brothers and sisters, and between husband and wife. The filial piety of descendants to previous generations is the leading quality in the moral value system of Vietnamese people, and also determines the entire traditional value system of the Vietnamese family. This quality is expressed in gratitude, respect, courtesy and devoted care of parents and grandparents while they are alive and worship when they are dead. Thus, ancestor worship is an expression of filial piety - the highest value in the moral value system of Vietnamese people. There are the ten most important values of Vietnamese families: respect family members; work hard; respect each other; have compassion; have meal together; responsibility; creative; goodness; humorous; volunteer.

#### ***2.3.2. The values of the Thais families***

In Thailand, it can be denied that the most important values that Thai people hold are respect, self - control, and a non - confrontational attitude. It's beyond just stoicism. Losing face by showing anger or by telling a lie is a source of great shame for Thai people. No matter how

frustrated or upset a person might feel, he or she will always strive to maintain a positive and friendly attitude, a sense of humor, and a smile.

Respect for elders and for those in higher social positions is also important. Hierarchies of social status characterize nearly every interaction. Children are expected to respect their parents and teachers. The young must show deference to the elderly. Those with highly prestigious positions in society, such as doctors, teachers, police, important public figures, and monks are always revered.

Many Thais families consist of parents and children, and often grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins will live in the same house. It is common in Thailand to have both parents work and be responsible for the family. It is very rare that mothers remain at home as a homemaker. In Thailand, most fathers tend to make decisions on major issues and mothers are responsible for household chores and taking care of family members. Thai families make every effort to eat meals together and it is an important time of the day for sharing information. Additionally, family members in Thailand expect to have time to pursue their own interests, and having individual time for this is considered normal.

### **2.4. The changes of the Vietnamese and Thais families nowadays**

Family is an integral part of human life and it plays an important role in shaping an individual's values, attitudes and habits. However, each nation and each culture has different values and regulations, so between the Vietnamese family and the Thai family, there are also some



outstanding differences. That change adjusts the original family to suit society and at the same time adjust society accordingly with specific external conditions. The result is a possible new family model better adapt to social changes to replace the old traditional family [6]

#### ***2.4.1. The role of the women in the Vietnamese and Thai families***

Vietnamese families often have many generations living together, including grandmothers, grandfathers, parents and children. With some Vietnamese families, they often raise children together until the son or daughter is economically independent.

In Vietnam, women are still under the control of men in the family. In a traditional family, women often have to take care of housework, take care of children and the elderly in the family. They are unappreciated and have less power than men. However, with the development of society, Vietnamese women are also having more and more opportunities to participate in their favorite jobs. The values and attitudes are also important factors in the changes of the Vietnamese families. In Vietnam, families often emphasis the value of solidarity, sacrifice for the family and the happiness of the family more than the value of independence and self-control. Preserving and cultivating the Vietnamese family value system is of particular importance, contributing to the formation of new people to successfully build socialism in our country today.

Meanwhile, in Thai households today, men are typically the main source of income in a married couple. Major decisions of allocating resources thus

remain in the hands of the men, whereas the women often manage the finance on a day - to - day basic. In general, women are often more organized and economical than their husbands. Many women spend much energy trying to keep their husbands 'vices in check with varying degrees of success. Thai women also engage in small homegrown businesses, such as vegetable gardening, market - vendor trading, and fabric weaving, if the family earning from the men is not adequate. Thai women take their “nurturer” role seriously and few things can deter them from their mission.

#### ***2.4.2. The changes of the population of the Vietnamese and Thai families***

In Vietnam, the size of the Vietnamese family tends to get smaller and smaller, meeting the needs and conditions of the new era. The equality of men and women is enhanced, the private life of people are more respected, avoid conflicts in traditional family life. The change of family size shows itself to be doing a positive function, changing the family itself and this is changing the social system, making society more adaptive, more suitable to the new situation, the new area. The results of population censuses over the years show that Vietnam's family size has continuously decreased over the past 20 years, from 5.22 people/household in 1979 to 4.88 people/household in 1989 and 4.6 persons/household in 1999.

The reason for the reduction in family size is due to a decrease in fertility, a change in the pattern of intergenerational coexistence and other causes such as divorce, separation, singleness, etc.

*While in Thailand, “Thailand is facing a drastic demographic shift. We are*

*transitioning into an ageing society, with a steady decline in the number of children and the working-age population, and an increase in the number of elderly people. This will contribute to a decrease in the national growth potential.”* Said Dr. Parameter Vimolsiri, Secretary General of the National Economic and Social Development Board of Thailand.

Thai society is organized hierarchically. This is also reflected in family life. Grandparents and parents are at the top of the hierarchy and should always be treated with respect. This hierarchical structure is also practical and prevents conflicts.

Especially, in rural Thailand, families are large and people live under one roof,

sometimes with their grandparents. A clear structure is advisable. The Thais love and spoil children, but they are also quite strict with them. Children must know their place, behave politely and show respect. Parents expect them to continue displaying this behavior into adulthood.

In other words, each nation has its own valuable values. To form a happy and united family, it is important that family members understand and respect each other's values and concepts, make appropriate decisions together, and develop independently.

## **2.5. Compare some similarities and differences between Vietnamese and Thais families**

### **2.5.1. Similarities**

	<b>Vietnamese</b>	<b>Thais</b>
1. The structure of the families	- Can be classified into 2 sizes: nuclear families and extended families.	- Can be classified into 2 sizes: nuclear families and extended families.
2. The values of the families	- Are reflected in the relationships within the family, between grandparents, parents and children, between brothers and sisters, and between husband and wife.	- Most fathers tend to make decisions on major issues and mothers are responsible for household chores and taking care of family members.

### **2.5.2. Differences**

	<b>Vietnamese</b>	<b>Thais</b>
1. The role of women	- Under the control of men; taking care of housework, taking care of children;	- The women often manage the finance on a day - to - day basis;
	- Sacrificing for the families than their husbands;	- Trying to keep their husbands vices in check with varying degrees of success;

	- Having more and more opportunities to participate in their favorite jobs	- Taking their “nurturer” role seriously and few things can deter them from their mission.
2. The changes of the population	- Tends to get smaller and smaller, meeting the needs and conditions of the new era;	- Transitioning into an ageing society, with a steady decline in the number of children and the working-age population, and an increase in the number of elderly people;
	- Making society more adaptive, more suitable to the new situation, the new area.	- In rural Thailand, families are large and people live under one roof.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Family is an inevitable spiritual point for each member in the family, the first environment to form and develop human personality and also the place where national culture arises and is preserved. Currently, under the strong impact of innovation and international integration, the value system of the Vietnamese family and Thai family in general has been changing, but the family is always preserved, transmitted and spread, creating a solid foundation for building a modern family.

In short, Vietnam and Thailand are

two countries in Southeast Asia. In the trend of integration and development today, the both countries need to have mutual understanding to come close together, to cooperate for mutual development together thereby promoting positivity and limiting shortcomings to integrate and develop together in today's period. From this research, the writer hopes that the readers can get some more useful information to enrich their knowledge about the culture of all nations in the world as well.

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