



Unspoken Challenges: Maternal Complexities in Three Asian Short Stories

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Abstract. This study examines the unspoken challenges experienced by Asian mothers through the lens of Asian motherhood as depicted in literature. The research aims to investigate how cultural norms and societal expectations shape the roles and experiences of mothers in Asian societies. Employing qualitative research methods, specifically thematic analysis, this study interprets and classifies the unspoken challenges portrayed in three short stories from Indonesia, China, and Japan. The findings reveal three prominent themes: developing resilience, performing silent sacrifice, and facing individual conflicts. The mothers in these stories exhibit diverse coping strategies in response to the unacknowledged challenges they encounter. This study contributes to the understanding of the enduring nature of traditional gender roles and expectations in Asian societies, highlighting the need for greater recognition and support for mothers facing these unspoken challenges. The results underscore the importance of continued research and dialogue on the experiences of Asian mothers to promote gender equality and the well-being of women in these contexts. The insights gained from this study can inform future research, policy, and practice aimed at addressing the unspoken challenges faced by mothers in Asian societies and beyond.

Keywords: *Motherhood; Asian mothers; unspoken challenges; gender roles*

Abstrak. Penelitian ini meneliti tantangan tak tersampaikan yang dialami oleh para ibu di Asia melalui lensa keibuan Asia seperti yang digambarkan dalam literatur. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki bagaimana norma-norma budaya dan ekspektasi masyarakat membentuk peran dan pengalaman para ibu di masyarakat Asia. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif, khususnya analisis tematik, penelitian ini menafsirkan dan mengklasifikasikan tantangan-tantangan tak terucapkan yang digambarkan dalam tiga cerita pendek dari Indonesia, Cina, dan Jepang. Temuan-temuannya mengungkapkan tiga tema yang menonjol: mengembangkan ketahanan, melakukan pengorbanan dalam diam, dan menghadapi konflik individu. Para ibu dalam cerita-cerita ini menunjukkan beragam strategi penanggulangan dalam menanggapi tantangan yang tidak diakui yang mereka hadapi. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman tentang sifat abadi dari peran dan ekspektasi gender tradisional di masyarakat Asia, menyoroti perlunya pengakuan dan dukungan yang lebih besar bagi para ibu yang menghadapi tantangan yang tidak terucapkan ini. Hasil penelitian ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya penelitian dan dialog yang berkelanjutan mengenai pengalaman para ibu di Asia untuk mempromosikan kesetaraan gender dan kesejahteraan perempuan dalam konteks ini. Wawasan yang diperoleh dari penelitian ini dapat menginformasikan penelitian, kebijakan, dan praktik di masa depan yang bertujuan untuk mengatasi tantangan tak terucapkan yang dihadapi oleh para ibu di masyarakat Asia dan sekitarnya.

Kata kunci: *Keibuan; ibu-ibu di Asia; tantangan tidak terucapkan; peran gender*

Introduction

The mother serves as the primary and foremost provider of affection and guidance for her children. This statement suggests that the role of a mother is crucial, encompassing both her responsibilities as a maternal responsibility and her position within the familial structure. Moreover, there exists a universally recognized commemoration referred to as Mother's Day, which serves as a means of honoring and acknowledging mothers. In an article published by History Cooperative, James Hardy (2015) mentions that the concept of Mother's Day has been underscored by diverse viewpoints, encompassing early Christian and European customs, ancient Greek and Roman traditions, as well as the influence of America. Nonetheless, the observance of Mother's Day has the potential to reinforce specific societal expectations and assumptions pertaining to women and their responsibilities within the context of motherhood. Throughout history, societal norms have consistently imposed high expectations and rigid conceptions upon women, dictating their attire and behavior. Additionally, women have been expected to fulfill the roles of nurturing mothers and devoted wives (Putri et al., 2023). This concept has the potential to impose limitations on mothers, inhibiting their ability to freely express their individual identities and personal beliefs in accordance with societal expectations of what constitutes an ideal mother or wife.

The topic of motherhood, which encompasses women globally, is often insufficiently recognized as a legitimate professional endeavor. Although it does not suggest that every female individual is a mother, it posits that maternity has a certain influence on women in varying degrees (Henriksson, 2020, p. 4). The examination of motherhood, specifically within the field of literature, affords readers and scholars the opportunity to scrutinize the interrelationships among gender roles, identities, and lived encounters. This observation highlights the influence of societal norms and expectations on the roles assigned to women, as contemporary culture continues to need women to present a legitimate rationale for their decision to not pursue motherhood. From the minute women hold the role of motherhood, they are immediately confronted with societal challenges. Numerous individuals experience suppression due to the influence of society expectations and standards, which exhibit considerable variation across different geographical regions. This observation corresponds to the implicit difficulties encountered by contemporary mothers, wherein women are evaluated based on societal expectations of fulfilling the roles of a nurturing mother and ideal wife. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the actual experience of motherhood often deviates from the idealized portrayal of motherhood commonly depicted in the media and offered to society (Antonis, 1981, as cited in Liamputtong, 2006). Simultaneously, this phenomenon might engender ambivalent emotions among women regarding their maternal roles, so potentially imposing a substantial psychological load on certain individuals. For example, a considerable proportion of persons persist in evaluating an individual's femininity by assessing their competence in completing the responsibilities associated with motherhood.

The portrayal of mothers is well acknowledged for their ability to cultivate, demonstrate affection towards, and provide care for their children, in addition to managing household responsibilities. Moreover, it has been asserted that mothers exert the most substantial impact on children's academic performance, encompassing their overall progress, maturation, and educational attainment (Aziza, 2020). In addition to

the maternal role, the manner in which mothers fulfill their duties varies across different countries. This phenomenon arises as a result of the cultural and normative disparities that influence mothers' behavior in this regard. Furthermore, it is important to note that every society possesses a distinct array of customs, ethical principles, societal norms, and symbolic representations pertaining to the concept of motherhood (Thurer, 1994, as cited in Liamputtong, 2006). These factors significantly shape the notion of motherhood and the corresponding behaviors and practices that accompany it. The theme of motherhood encompasses multifaceted dimensions that not only encompass the feminine qualities of mothers, but also encompass the influence of cultural and societal norms and expectations. The representation of mothers in literary works, particularly within the context of Asian literature, exhibits a wide range of depictions that are influenced by the distinct geographical regions in which these narratives are situated. Furthermore, the concept of diversity among various geographical regions might give rise to distinct viewpoints and societal norms about the maternal role.

By providing Asian literature and how it specifically put its notion around the casual behavior of motherhood or women, therefore, navigating the dual role of motherhood and the simultaneous integration of two distinct cultural backgrounds presents a formidable challenge (Mitra, 1995). The aforementioned distinctions encountered by mothers enabled them to confront the implicit difficulties associated with their role as Asian mothers, especially on the note for this study which are Indonesia and China as the specific note region. When considering the concept of variety in the context of motherhood, it is noteworthy that South Asian motherhood exemplifies Asian cultural traits, such as obedience and conformity. These cultural features are employed to demonstrate compassion and fulfill the requirements of children in the initial phases of cultural assimilation (Lim, 2022). In contrast, it has been explained that Chinese mothers often display authoritarian tendencies as a strategic approach to fulfill their expectations regarding their children's achievements. Furthermore, this might also give rise to scrutiny regarding their decision-making in the field of parenting. Thus, this study utilizes Simone de Beauvoir's feminist framework to analyze the depiction of the implicit difficulties encountered by Asian mothers who are influenced by cultural diversity. The primary objective of this study is to examine the research inquiry: In what ways do the three selected short stories from different nations depict the unspoken challenges experienced by Asian mothers?

Methods

The present study utilizes a qualitative research methodology with a close reading technique and feminist theory as motherhood has always specifically close with the idea of feminism which amidst of everything, women and mother often challenged with the unspoken challenges of being both a woman and a mother through the society. Close reading is a process of understanding both surface and deeper levels of complex text: words get their meanings by working together (Wolfreys, 2016).

The data and data sources analyzed are quotations of sentences in the three short stories "The Aged Mother" by Matsuo Basho, "Two Kinds" by Amy Tan, and "Her" by Titis Basino, as the three short stories specifically showcase a relationship between a mother and their children which are the main issue this study will conduct. Utilizing feminist theory focuses on the conception of gender construction, this study aims to obtain a detailed analysis of the depiction of mothers originating from other countries

and cultures (Beauvoir, 2015). Through this conception that society holds a significance importance in reshaping individuals' behavior, the data will be classified based on the challenges encountered by mothers, in accordance with the research topic.

Moreover, in order to enhance the depth of the analysis, the subsequent stage will involve engaging in comprehensive conversation pertaining to the interpreted data. The data collection technique used is close reading, which involves the steps of reading the stories, categorizing the problems based on the proposed research questions, quoting, and interpreting the data, and finally drawing a conclusion based on the results of the interpretation. This study utilizes close reading technique to obtain the research data and supporting theory that are related.

Finding and Discussion

The conception of society that highlights the development of resilience, the performance of silent sacrifices, and the presence of individual conflicts are profound characteristics often found in women, especially within the culture they obtain from their living environment. For example, in developing resilience, literature often indicates that women adopt resilient techniques to cope with their post-displacement lives (Shishehgar et al., 2017), and feminist research frequently employs a resilience strategy to assist women in uncovering their strengths (Kulkarni et al., as cited in Denzongpa & Nichols, 2020). On the other hand, silent sacrifice is often portrayed through the lens of the Asian Mother, specifically those who raise Asian-American children. This idealism is therefore present in certain literary works and expressed by these Asian-American authors. They often aim to reconcile the maternal-filial conflict through the daughter's understanding of the mother's traumatic history, or through the rage they witness right before their eyes that serves as a psychoanalytical revelation for the racial intricacies experienced by the American-born daughter (Neelima, 2018). The intergenerational issues caused by the daughter's inability to comprehend parental history are resolved when the mother shares her narrative.

On the other hand, given the difficulty faced by a struggling child who is not achieving, as well as the issue of maintaining motivation in the face of failure, many parents strongly condemned these "Tiger Mother" techniques, believing that they would breed bitterness and sap individual drive. This is the backlash condition that mothers, specifically Asian Mothers, often endure as they experience individual conflict, mainly because they aim for their children to be safe, well, and successful simultaneously. The findings of this research can help to resolve the debate regarding the importance of parental involvement in academic attainment. According to Fu et al. (2014), pressure from mothers can motivate children, especially when that pressure indicates interdependence with their mothers, as in the case of the Tiger Mother who pressured Lulu to practice the piano while also working alongside her, fully involved in her practice. However, it may seem out of context considering that there are children who also fail to achieve what their Tiger Mother seeks for them, especially in terms of academic success.

In this sub-chapter, the study conducted based on the three stories resulted in three categories, as mentioned and seen through the outline of Asian Mothers, specifically in Indonesia and China. Through the results presented below, it can be concluded that there are specific characteristics that Asian Mothers possess and how these

characteristics are shown, mainly in relation to their own children and how they view and express their caring feelings simultaneously.

Developing Resilience

The concept of nature is frequently metaphorically associated with motherhood, as the earth is commonly personified as a feminine entity. Consequently, the land can be perceived as possessing a mystical association with femininity (Beauvoir, 2015). The nurturing role is typically linked to mothers, thereby establishing a figurative relationship between men and seeds within a woman's soil. This association further accentuates the innate fortitude and endurance exhibited by women, as evidenced by their capacity to confront adversities in both the broader societal context and the familial sphere.

The original story, titled "The Aged Mother," was authored by the esteemed Japanese poet Matsuo Basho. It portrays a maternal figure characterized by deep and selfless affection towards her children. This concept brings attention to the cultural phenomenon of motherhood in Japan, where mothers frequently prioritize their children's desires and ambitions above their own (Lim, 2022). Throughout the narrative, the mother confronts the ruler's decree to abandon her as she ages. Nevertheless, she displays her tenacity by skillfully navigating the unspoken challenge of being an older mother. Despite her advanced age, she persists in displaying her maternal instincts, further exemplifying her resilience.

“The eyes of the old mother were not so dim, and they noted the reckless hastening from one path to another, and her loving heart grew anxious.” (p.4)

The aforementioned quotation serves as empirical support for the elderly mother's cultivation of resilience through her defiance of the ruler's decree. Despite the possible ramifications, the elderly mother bestowed her trust upon her son to embark on the arduous task of scaling the mountain. Along their expedition, she wrestled with her innermost emotions, experiencing unease and apprehension, yet consistently prioritizing her son's well-being. Furthermore, her discomfort and anxieties prompted the activation of her innate maternal instinct, compelling her to shield her progeny from harm. Through her capacity to foresee and promptly respond to potential hazards, the elderly mother substantiated her aptitude for preemptive measures in ensuring their collective survival.

“Her son did not know the mountain's many paths and his return might be one of danger, so she stretched forth her hand and snapping twigs from bushes as they passed, she quietly dropped a handful every few steps of the way so that as they climbed, the narrow path behind them was dotted at frequent intervals with tiny piles of twigs.” (p.4)

Examining the aforementioned quotation, it becomes evident that the son's unfamiliarity with the mountain trails heightens the mother's cognizance of the inherent peril. The elderly mother exemplifies her resilience by stoically enduring physical adversities as she accompanies her son on their ascent of the mountain, with the objective of securing a sanctuary for her well-being.

“The trembling mother’s voice was full of unselfish love as she gave her last injunction. “Let not thine eyes be blinded, my son.” She said. “The mountain road is full of dangers. LOOK carefully and follow the path which holds the piles of twigs. They will guide you to the familiar path farther down” (p.5)

As the quotation above mentions, despite experiencing exhaustion, she persisted in her endeavors to assist and safeguard her son. Driven by her innate maternal instinct, she proactively anticipated her son's potential unfamiliarity with the return paths. To mitigate this potential challenge, she extended her hand and collected a handful of twigs, strategically dropping them at regular intervals along the way. Consequently, her familiarity with the mountain facilitated her son's safe return to their home. The mother's true maternal instinct is evident in her desire to protect her own son, despite being in an unfamiliar location whose nature she may be aware of. Her choice to guide her son to a secure location while also providing him with information about all the safe routes exemplifies the concept of motherhood.

One night, in great distress, the son whispered the news to his hidden mother. “Wait!” she said. “I will think. I will think” On the second day she told him what to do. “Make rope of twisted straw,” she said. “Then stretch it upon a row of flat stones and burn it on a windless night.” (p.7)

This quotation demonstrates that the mother remains steadfast in her determination to protect her son, even as the story reaches its conclusion. The idea of simulating her own death and deceiving the government originated with the mother herself. She allowed her son to enter and instructed him on how to create a disturbance and feign her murder, as per the government's plan. This strategy was devised to satisfy her maternal instincts and safeguard her child, while also concealing her true identity from the oppressive government.

The second story entitled “Two Kinds” by Amy Tan adeptly portrays the conventional Chinese paradigm of motherhood, wherein strictness, control, and attentive oversight are prominent features. Being an immigrant in the United States, the mother encountered the trials associated with cultural disparities and the necessity to acculturate to a novel way of existence. Yet, she became enthralled by the allure of the American dream. The notion that individuals in America possess the potential to attain any desired position or social standing emerged as a potent motivator for the mother, fueling her ambition in her parental role towards her daughter.

“Mr. Chong was a retired piano teacher and my mother had traded housecleaning services for weekly lessons and a piano for me to practice on every day, two hours a day, from four until six.” (p.30)

Despite exhibiting severe and controlling behavior, the mother strives to showcase her resilience through diligent effort and unwavering determination. Her primary objective is to ensure her daughter's success. The mother possesses a profound desire to achieve optimal outcomes for her daughter and demonstrates an unwavering commitment to fostering her innate abilities. At one point, she even made the sacrificial

decision to forgo her salary as a housecleaner in order to afford piano lessons for her daughter.

“Every night after dinner, my mother and I would sit at the Formica kitchen table. She would present new tests, taking her examples from the stories of amazing children she had read in Ripley’s Believe It or Not, or Good Housekeeping, Reader’s Digest, and a dozen other magazines from people whose houses she cleaned.” (p.13)

In addition, in her role as a housecleaner, she acquires a total of twelve magazines from the residences where she is employed. Subsequently, she engages in a brief examination session with her daughter following their joint reading endeavor during dinner. While her approach to discussing resilience may be perceived as stern, her unwavering commitment to ensuring a brighter future for her daughter is evident. It is apparent that this individual has encountered numerous obstacles and willingly made sacrifices in order to enhance their standard of living. Consequently, it can be deduced that their resolve to shield their daughter from comparable hardships is resolute.

The third narrative, entitled “Her,” penned by Titis Basino, delves into the intricate nuances of fulfilling the societal demands of a nurturing mother and an exemplary wife. Within the story’s narrative arc, the protagonist is confronted with the formidable challenge of tending to the needs of ten children, all the while grappling with the inescapable actuality of her husband embarking on a new matrimonial union.

“I had a lot of time after my husband took his second wife, so I joined a woman’s club in our city. I was soon appointed to the office of vice-chairperson.” (p.3)

Therefore, the depiction of the protagonist as a tenacious matriarch and spouse is effectively exemplified through her adept concealment of personal anguish. In order to evade revealing her vulnerability to her offspring, she actively engaged in various pursuits within a women’s association to occupy her time. Furthermore, she recognized the significance of projecting an image of proficiency and intellect as a woman. Consequently, she skillfully harnesses her own attributes to foster her husband’s contentment, all the while endeavoring to shield her children from the weight of her personal challenges.

Performing Silent Sacrifices

The maternal figure has consistently assumed the role as the primary caregiver for her children, as well as the individual responsible for their overall welfare, the management of the family, and the support of her husband (Schmidt, 2022). Simultaneously, it is posited that mothers are anticipated to allocate time and effort towards their children, to make personal sacrifices, and to fulfill the needs and desires of their children. Hence, when assuming the caretaker position within the familial context, mothers frequently engage in unvoiced sacrifices, thereby encountering unspoken challenges.

The story of “The Aged Mother” portrays the act of engaging in silent sacrifices as symbolic of the mother and son’s journey towards reaching the summit. In an effort to evade the governor’s decision, the mother remains apprehensive over her son’s well-being.

“The mountain road is full of dangers. Look carefully and follow the path which holds the piles of twigs. They will guide you to the familiar path farther down.” (p.5)

The silent act of sacrifice was observed in her selfless affection as she requested her son to independently navigate his way back home amidst the scattered twigs she just dropped. The mother made a selfless deed by acknowledging her advanced age and ultimately resulting to mortality. Consequently, she prioritized her personal well-being by remaining alone at the summit, while simultaneously guaranteeing the safety of her son by instructing him to return home.

“The governor was pleased at the wit of the youth and praised greatly, but he demanded to know where he had obtained his wisdom.” (p.8)

The silent sacrifice that was conducted by the mother can also be seen in this particular quotation. After prioritizing her son to continue his path, though she was annually brought back then, she also had the marvellous idea to make it as if she had died killed by her own son. This silence sacrifice may indicate a different approach, but to have such a brilliant idea and the need for it to be buried down or used by her own son indicate that she decided to let the thing she could do for her only son.

The story of “Her” depicts the silent sacrifices of a mother as she confronts the reality of her husband's impending marriage to another woman, so underscoring her selfless commitment to prioritizing the well-being of others over her own personal contentment. The mother has the belief that she has effectively fulfilled her maternal and wife responsibilities through the diligent care provided to her ten children and the efficient management of the family. Nevertheless, she must leave any preconceived notions of fulfilling the roles of a contented mother and wife.

“Do you accept the fact that I go to her?”

“Why not, if it gives you pleasure? I stared intently as his bowed head.

“Do as you please, and I will remain an ideal wife.” (p.2)

In Indonesia, the prevailing ideology of patriarchy upholds the notion of motherhood as a role that is intrinsically gendered. This perspective confines women to the realm of biological reproduction, so limiting their ability to explore and develop their identities and selfhood outside this prescribed role (Dewi, 2011, p. 209). Furthermore, in accordance with the beliefs of the Muslim religion, it is permissible for a male adherent to enter into matrimonial relationships with up to four women concurrently, on the condition that he ensures equitable provision for each of his wives.

“On the nights when my husband was with me and talked about “her,” I listened to him with an odd mixture of patience and dejection. Deep down I begged that he would become tired of “her,” but he never did.” (p.3)

Given the wife's reliance on her husband, the prospect of divorcing him poses significant challenges. Hence, her silent act of sacrifice was enacted by her ability to endure and suppress the anguish she experienced, all in the pursuit of maintaining familial unity and embodying the archetype of an exemplary wife.

The third narrative highlights the manifestation of a mother's silent sacrifice through her interactions with her daughter. The experience of being a Chinese immigrant in America engenders an emotional burden for her. The individual in question, assuming the role of a maternal figure, demonstrates a profound level of concern for her daughter's forthcoming prospects and diligently endeavors to optimize her daughter's outcomes.

“Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance and... that’s all I remember, Ma,” I said. After seeing my mother’s disappointed face once again, something inside me began to die.” (p.17)

From the context which was brought in here, the mother constantly indicate a disappointed feeling which expressed through her face. Although deep down it is indeed something that is far from what she desire, she only wish for her daughter to be capable of something, especially the things that she taught her so that she can live a happy life.

“My mother slapped me. “Who ask you be genius?” she shouted.
“Only ask you be your best. For sake. You think I want you be genius? Hnnh! What for! Who ask you!” (p.33)

In this context, it is possible that the daughter lacks awareness regarding her mother's motivation for strongly encouraging her to pursue beauty training school, ballerina classes, and piano lessons, which were intended to provide a prosperous future for her. Furthermore, the numerous challenges she encountered in her efforts to support her daughter appear inconsequential. Ultimately, the mother sacrifices her emotional connection in the form of the maternal relationship between herself and her daughter due to various misinterpretations and external pressures.

Having an Individual Conflict

According to Beauvoir (2015), women exhibit greater psychological qualities compared to men due to their heightened attentiveness towards their personal needs, resulting in a greater degree of subtlety and diversity in their behavior. Within the concept of motherhood, mothers frequently encounter personal dilemmas on various levels. These predicaments encompass the delicate task of harmonizing their own desires with the requirements of their children and family, navigating cultural expectations, and exploring their own set of principles. Consequently, the aforementioned personal conflicts encountered by mothers can give rise to unspoken challenges.

In “The Aged Mother” story, the mother encountered the challenges of the governor’s decree mandating the forsaking of old parents and potentially even the execution of all individuals of advanced age.

“Those were barbarous days, and the custom of abandoning old people to die was not uncommon. The poor farmer loved his aged mother with tender reverence, and the order filled his heart with sorrow..” (p.2)

This scenario led to an internal struggle for the individual, as she grappled with the conflicting demands of fulfilling her maternal responsibilities and adhering to societal norms, which required her to comply with the ruler's decree. Furthermore, this

situation gives rise to a moral quandary that encompasses a wider societal tension beyond her individual duty as a mother and the regulatory constraints imposed upon her. Hence, this implicit challenge symbolizes her undisclosed sorrow in her role as a selfless mother. The act of requesting her son's return home can be interpreted as indicative of her need to establish a separation from her own son.

Furthermore, given the widely acknowledged role of mothers as primary caregivers and nurturers within the family unit, societal and familial expectations can have significant influence, perhaps leading them to sacrifice their personal agency. The second narrative highlights an internal conflict wherein the mother's inability to restrain her emotions manifests through her fervent expressions of affection for her daughter, driven by her desire for a more prosperous life.

“Wait!” she said. “I will think. I will think” On the second day she told him what to do. “Make rope of twisted straw,” she said. “Then stretch it upon a row of flat stones and burn it on a windless night.”
(p.7)

Throughout the narrative, the maternal figure exhibits a persistent inclination to exert excessive pressure upon her daughter, hence resulting in a perceptible erosion of her ability to perceive her daughter's authentic essence. Furthermore, she found herself in a circumstance when she engaged in a comparative analysis between her daughter and other youngsters who were perceived to possess superior talents. Due to the influence of cultural expectations, the mother-initiated efforts to mold her daughter's behavior and appearance to conform with those of other children.

The prevalence of patriarchal standards within Indonesian culture has posed challenges for mothers in acknowledging their husbands' engagement in polygamous relationships. Inside the context of the third narrative, the mother portrays her emotional anguish as she strives to fulfill societal expectations of an exemplary mother and wife inside the familial unit, particularly in the presence of her children. Thus according to Vincent, *et al.*, (2004) an example from a mother indicate to reconcile a newly-acquired identity as ‘mother’ with other existing identities as ‘worker’ (which are well established), they have to work for it because of the different demands of the roles they have.

“Of course, you’re right, but do I have to thank you for all these things? I don’t expect you to understand because you can’t look beyond the tremendous effort you’ve put into this marriage, which nevertheless has failed. (p.2)

The act of caring for ten children contributes to her sense of betrayal in light of her husband's decision to get into a marriage with another woman. Nevertheless, the maternal aspect of her character proved to be more dominant than the daily burden she endures. The internal turmoil experienced by the individual contributes to her heightened sense of protectiveness towards all of her children. The individual effectively provides compelling instances of exemplary motherhood, consistently refraining from displaying any signs of sorrow or vulnerability in the presence of her children. She engages in various activities to alleviate her profound sense of loneliness during her husband's absence, particularly while he is away to meet his second wife.

Conclusion

This study provides evidence supporting the notion that the concepts of womanhood and motherhood remain steadfast even in the face of unspoken challenges. Contemporary societal expectations of fulfilling the roles of a good mother and wife present enduring challenges in the present era. It is important to note that the perception of the ideal mother and wife may vary across different geographical regions. Consequently, the difficulties faced by women in fulfilling these roles can differ significantly, encompassing both internal and external factors, as well as cultural norms and expectations.

The idea of motherhood is constructed and shaped by societal and cultural practices. These challenges include developing resilience, making silent sacrifices, and experiencing internal conflicts. The role of a mother extends beyond merely fulfilling familial responsibilities; it entails the ethical transformation of a woman to fulfill her maternal role. Mothers face increasingly significant challenges as they bear the responsibility of fostering their children's development into morally upright individuals who contribute positively to society. Throughout various difficulties, mothers consistently prioritize preserving their children's cherished childhood memories involving their maternal figure.

The maternal journey does not readily conclude upon the children's attainment of adulthood. Our findings indicate that women or mothers often express harsh realities to their children due to past traumas or current situations. The three stories examined in this study reveal conflicts and demonstrate how implicit problems cause mothers to act in specific ways. In this context, it is possible that mothers may not fully fulfill their maternal role. Nevertheless, as the primary entity responsible for nurturing and fostering their children's development, their maternal instinct to secure the optimal well-being of their children persists indefinitely. Future research should aim to clearly distinguish the reality of Asian motherhood, as cultural factors and notions influence maternal perspectives. Such research may illuminate how these perspectives affect children's futures and explore ways to shift or improve the notion of motherhood for a better understanding in the future.

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