

How Virtual Life Affects Women's Status: Taking Otome Games in China as the Entry Point

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Abstract:

The number of individuals who play otome games has increased dramatically in recent years. Therefore, the number of otome games is also large. Companies have been creating many interesting types of otome games for female or male gamers to choose from. Due to many people cannot feel of being needed or some more complicated reasons in the real world, they choose to play otome games instead of having real life social with real friends. This essay is going to explore why some people prefer to spend more time in playing otome games rather than having more time in real life is happening by using case analysis method from woman's point of view, which leads to more complex social problems. This essay is going to be divided into three parts. After introduction part, the first part is going to talk about otome game history. The second part is going to talk about why otome games popular in China and how does it relate with government policies and inequality between male and female. After that, the last part is going to talk about how this situation will be reduced.

Keywords: Otome game; China; Gender inequality; Cooling-off period before divorce.

1. Introduction

More than 100 years ago, in Qing Dynasty, Chinese society believes that a pretty women ought to have tiny feet, therefore the foot binding was popular. However, from the beginning of the Republic of China to the present, with the rise of female consciousness, there has been a change in favor of valuing uniqueness and variety in style preferences. As women's consciousness has grown, there has been a change in favor of valuing uniqueness and variety in style preferences. These days, women value their

natural bodies and have the courage to show them off with pride. A wider range of aesthetic sensibilities are now present in society, emphasizing health and self-awareness in relation to dress and body type. Women now have greater independence and self-assurance in their own sense of style and look [1]. Back to the history of the game, which is similar to the rise of women's consciousness and power. Even while female characters are less sexualized than they were in the 1990s, the majority of them are still secondary characters with more sexual traits than

main characters, based on research done between 1983 and 2014 on female characters in a sample of 571 games. Likewise, sexier female characters are more powerful than non-sexy female characters [2].

Nowadays, there are now a significant number of female players. As a result, the focus of the game industry is on female oriented games. The 2019 China game industry report from the game manufacturing committee states that there are over 300 million female users, making up over half of all domestic video fans, and that marketing profit was 52.68 billion yuan, or 22.8% of total income. With otome games being the most popular in China, a lot of games these days are developed exclusively with female gamers in mind [2].

2. Otome Games History

2.1 The Origin of Otome Game

Thanks to the efforts of female employees at the Japanese video game developer Koei, games that target women particularly were first released in 1994. One of the people who contributed to this focus on female players, Keiko Erikawa, claims that she had worked for this company for decades creating games aimed at men. As a result of this experience, she was willing to make a change, though considering the predominance of male gamers in the market at the time, it would have been viewed as uncommon [3].

2.2 Overall of Otome Game

Game titles that are conceived, developed, and run with female players as its primary target demographic are referred to as female-oriented games, or alternatively as consumption of culture that targets women. Three primary categories involve games geared towards females: simulation games, otome games, and BL (boys love) games. Boys' love narrative games, or BL games, allow players to enjoy the story either as a third party or as one of the main characters. Otome games are those that have a girl's dating system that require the player to take on the role of a female character in order to date a male character. Simulation games include a variety of activities such as dressing up, designing something, imitating a character's career, and raising a pet. Compared to the other two categories, otome games have a greater focus on love and the relationships--such as dating and gift-giving--between male and female characters [1].

2.3 Otome Game History in Mainland China

The first otome game came to mainland China was in the

year 2001, but it was not that popular. Until the year 2017, otome game became extremely popular in mainland China due to one game called Love and Producer, which is an important otome game in the history of otome game [3]. One reason why Love and Producer was a hit at the time is that this game used a novel communication mechanism that was absent from other otome games, which allowed players to text, chat, and even call male characters. Players can publish and respond to messages from male characters in an interactive chat section. The player can only respond by selecting from a pre-written list of options, and within these options, they can decide how to proceed with the plot [4].

3. Why Virtual Life is Replacing Real Life

3.1 Social Problem

Recently, female like playing otome game rather than having real life social due to some objective or subjective reasons. Playing the game with friends, getting into a love relationship, and just having fun are examples of subjective motivations, whereas objective motivations include reaching game goals and unlocking additional modules. A common need for fantasy and escape can be satiated by playing video games. Unlike in real life, players in otome game can fully immerse themselves in love relationships and feel emotionally fulfilled. The player experiences emotional attachment and fulfillment through the role-sharing and romantic choices in the game. Simultaneously, the game features a comparatively low amount of conflict and uncertainty, which allows players to become completely absorbed in the virtual environment and form an emotional connection with the male character. This source of satisfaction is one of the key reasons why the game is so beloved by female gamers. By developing feelings, relationships, and intimacy with their characters, players grow in the game. A fictitious dream romance transpires in the virtual gaming environment [4].

Everything female player needs can be realized in virtual world but not in the real world. Therefore, they chose to spend more time in otome game rather than spend more time in real life.

3.2 The Female Stereotype

In Chinese traditional social concept, hundreds of years ago in feudal society, people believed that women should obey their father's decision at home, they need to obey their husband's decision after marriage, then they need to obey their son's decision after their husband dies [5]. In

the 21st century, despite the growth of women's status, the social environment still assumes that women ought to stay at home as housewife, but man should outside the home as breadwinners. In addition, they believe that a woman should stay behind the men and cannot be better than the men. Otherwise, the woman is wrong.

On the other hand, there is a widespread belief that men should be strong and assertive, while women ought to be kind and nurturing. The prevalent power disparities between genders and traditional social roles are intimately linked to these prejudices [1].

However, because female players in the real-life society are not the dominant, but they can be the dominant and can get more emotional help in the otome game. Hence, more and more female players like otome game life more than real life.

3.3 Workplace Gender Inequality in China

Following the declaration of independence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, times are different, and men and women are equal. The Communist regime actively promoted gender equality in numerous ways because of its strong commitment to both state power and equality of women. The PRC's Constitution, a number of laws, public policies (such as the 1988 Regulations on Labor Protection of Female Employees, the 1992 Law of the PRC on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women, the 2008 Employment Promotion Law, and the Law on Land Contract in Rural Areas, which was implemented from 2002 to 2018), and other measures that promoted women's rights across the board and established public childcare facilities to relieve women of household chores all served to strengthen the country's political commitment. For instance, women have the same rights as men in all areas of life, including social, political, economic, and education as well as family life, according to Article 48 of the People's Republic of China's Constitution. The state pays men and women equally for work of equal worth, chooses and promotes female cadres, and defends the rights and welfare of women [5].

However, it is crucial to understand that China's commitment to releasing women from the shackles of feudalism is a major factor in the country's practice and promotion of gender equality. As such, progress toward gender equality may be constrained by its very nature or restricted to the political discourse of the governing party. Gender equality was advanced in the first thirty years of New China through a combination of grassroots initiatives and the equal gender concept. But during the next forty years, the market has taken the lead in the gender discussion from the government. However, in order to maximize profits,

the market has diverged from the state's objective of gender equality by altering the prevailing narratives about gender interactions. This is coupled with the traditional gendered culture that prioritizes the superiority of men [5]. The National Female Federation's third Chinese Female Social Status Survey (CFSSS) revealed that the gender wage disparity--that is, the difference in incomes between men and women in urban areas--grew from 77.5% in 1990 to 63.7% in 2010. What effect on China's gender wage disparity did the market-oriented economy reform have? Two significant variables are examined here. The first is that the gender wage gap might have been impacted by SOE restructuring. Since the 1980s, the government has been enacting SOE reform. This reform gave most SOEs some management power, enabling them to determine individual bonus structures and pay scales based on the overall labor expenditure of the company. Due to the reform's encouragement of state-owned enterprises to increase productivity, SOEs were compelled to pay more for highly productive employees. Thus, SOE reform may result in a wider gender wage gap if labor productivity is higher for men than for women. Additionally, it was discovered that the female group had lower reemployment rates and a higher likelihood of layoffs. For reemployed workers in SOEs, the average wage for the female group was lower than the average wage for the male group. The likelihood that a person would lose their job varied considerably between men and women. This could be one factor in the declining rate of female labor force participation. Second one is the government began implementing an Opening-up program in the 1980s. When China became a member of the WTO in 2001, FOEs significantly increased. Additionally, since the 1990s, the government has approved POEs and self-employment. Wages in the private sector are determined by workers' marginal labor productivity since this sector--which includes FOEs, domestic POEs, and the self-employed sector--operates in a competitive market. Prejudice against female employees should decline as a result of market competitiveness. However, because private sector companies are free to determine their own employee compensation, discrimination against female employees might be easier to commit there than in the public sector. Several empirical research have found differences in the gender wage gap across the public and private sectors; however, the results are not entirely consistent [6].

3.4 Cooling-off Period Before Divorce

Crude divorce rates (CDRs) have increased significantly during the last decade. China has always adhered to traditional marriage ideas and views divorce as a social

disgrace, however since 2002, the country's divorce rate has climbed dramatically, from 0.90 per thousand in 2002 to 3.02 per thousand in 2016 [7]. After that, the number of divorce rate is still increasing. Therefore, the cooling-off period is published.

If a Chinese couple wants to divorce because their disagreements are irreconcilable. They may choose to settle out of court and obtain a divorce amicably before 2021 if things are not terrible enough. To register a divorce, they just need to provide the Civil Affairs Bureau with a written application and a divorce agreement. The government will then accept and review the documentation. However, after 2021, in addition to the current processes, before allowing couples legal separation registration, the government will impose a 30-day cooling-off period [8].

The Civil Code's divorce cooling-off time system was enacted with the intention of lowering the divorce rate, preserving marriage and family stability, and advancing social order stability. While its foundation and goals are sound, the divorce cooling-off period's precise provisions are non-negotiable, which means that the parties' interests will unavoidably suffer certain consequences from how it is handled. Furthermore, does the cooling-off period by itself resolve marital issues? The increasing divorce rate is not just concerning for society; nor is it necessary for there to be a cooling-off time to control the high divorce rate [9]?

While, the divorce cooling-off period also ignores the difficulties women face in the family, which is not conducive to the protection of women's interests. First of all, most women in the current society propose divorce, the reason is that nowadays women have a great degree of material and spiritual independence. At the same time, in cases where the majority of divorces were initiated by women, the majority of men opposed divorce. However, economic independence and ideological changes determine that women do not have to rely on men for economic sources and choose divorce to protect their interests in other aspects when the conflict between the two parties cannot be resolved. Secondly, although women have been economically and spiritually independent to a large extent, their legitimate rights and interests are often violated under the deep-rooted influence of the traditional concept of marriage and family. It is often difficult for such women to have the opportunity to freely choose divorce, so once they have the opportunity to register for divorce on their own, they must be subject to a 30-day cooling-off period before deciding whether to file a divorce certificate, during which time women may face great threats of violence. After they fail to register for divorce, they may wish to achieve the purpose of divorce through litigation. But divorce proceedings are cumbersome and require ev-

idence of domestic violence. A series of requirements for divorce proceedings can make divorce more difficult, and the complexity of the proceedings can increase the threat of violence against women. Therefore, the establishment of divorce cooling-off period clauses, in fact, invisibly increased the danger faced by women, more conducive to safeguarding women's legitimate rights and interests [9].

4. The Possible Solution to This Problem

According to the details in part 3, the main reason why female like to spend more time in the virtual world is that women's rights are not guaranteed and inequality between male and female. They can achieve everything they want in the virtual life, such as dominant right. Therefore, if the gender inequality problem is solved, there are not many people spending more time in virtual life.

4.1 Women Need Higher Education

In order to ensure that girls have equal educational chances, minimizing gender gaps in terms of enrollment opportunities in higher education should first focus on basic education, particularly in promoting the fairness of basic education. In order to lessen the effect of family variables on gender differences in the academic performance of primary and secondary school pupils, the government should enhance funding for basic education and raise the caliber of instruction provided by primary and secondary school instructors. Simultaneously, society must aggressively promote gender equality and make every effort to eradicate the notion of "son preference" in some households [10].

Second, universities ought to raise the proportion of women admitted to susceptible disciplines. Government measures should suitably raise the enrollment rate of women in traditionally "male disciplines" like science and engineering in order to boost the enrollment proportion of women in these fields.

4.2 Giving More Chance to Female

Men currently make up 82% of the decision-makers in China's important national policies and political affairs. Women should be actively encouraged and supported by the government to engage in national policy, legal debates, and other political matters. In order to enhance the percentage of female employees and enable more women to actively pursue women's rights in everyday politics, the government should also hire more female employees.

5. Conclusion

All in all, China's society still have very old and traditional thought. The inequality between male and female still exists today, and it is getting worse. Meanwhile, there is one game only created for women and they can be the leader in this game. Therefore, they prefer costing more time in the virtual world instead the real world. Lastly, it is better that government publish more laws to protect women's right if they want to solve the divorce rate in China.

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