



Woman in Culture and Arts

Representation of Family and Gender Themes at the 43rd Fajr International Film Festival

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Article history: Received: 15 February 2025 Received in revised form: 5 April 2023 Accepted: 13 May 2025 Published online: 1 July 2025</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Cinema, Fajr Festival, Family, Gender, Representation.</i></p>	<p>Introduction The first and most effective medium for generating mental images among the general populace is cinema. Conversely, cinema is the sole official mass media in Iran that has failed to adhere to the norms and standards of representation policy, and in recent years has made less progress in depicting images that align with the institutionalized patterns of action in our Iranian-Islamic society than other official media has. The problem and significance of this cultural field in the country are demonstrated by the sensitivity and attention of activists and activists in the field of policy-making in the country, as well as researchers, to the themes and content of the films of the Fajr Festival each year. In recent years, the issue of women and family has been a significant and noteworthy axis in the cinematic works of Iran and the world. In the majority of cinematic works, themes concerning women, gender, and family are either explicitly depicted and evaluated, or a narrative is established in the film's primary but concealed layers and communicated to the audience. The Simorgh Longing section of the 43rd Fajr International Film Festival featured 33 films that presented their narratives of Iranian society, with a particular emphasis on the issues of women and family. The audience was given the opportunity to evaluate and comment on these films. Therefore, the objective of the current investigation was to analyze and comprehend these narratives within the field of family and gender.</p> <p>Methodology The method of conducting this research was qualitative and of thematic analysis. The present research aimed to comprehend and analyze the position and approach of the films toward the categories and indicators. Initially, an attempt was made to present all of the indicators as positive categories in accordance with the discourse of the Islamic Revolution. Subsequently, 20 researchers from the fields of social sciences, media, women's studies, and family evaluated the convergence or divergence of the films toward the indicators.</p> <p>Results In a macroscopic and concise assessment, it can be concluded that the films of the Fajr Film Festival during this period had a relatively convergent posture with the Islamic Revolution's approach to the issue of gender and family. The research results suggested that the proportion of convergent films and works was relatively higher than that of divergent films in the majority of the 14 indicators related to the subject under investigation. For instance, in indicators such as marriage culture, the condemnation of young people's single life, the respect for family members for each other, the favorable representation of extended and large families, the failure to present a distorted image of Islamic hijab, and the presentation of a true image of male jealousy, the share of films that had adopted a convergent approach was higher than that of films that had a divergent stance. However, two analyses should be conducted for the 43rd Fajr Festival, specifically regarding the representation of familial and gender themes in the films.</p> <p>The initial observation regarding the results of the current study is that the Fajr 43 event can be regarded as a positive and progressive event in terms of its representation of family-oriented values and its alignment with the Islamic Revolution's approach to family and gender, in comparison to the past or current state of domestic network films. In the past and present, the Fajr Festival has featured a variety of works that have taken a divergent approach to themes and concepts such as abortion, sugary relationships, white marriage, modern and contemporary divorces, infidelity and extra-familial relationships, LGBT people and the phenomenon of homosexuality, polygamous love, etc. These works are currently</p>

being screened on the domestic network. Nevertheless, the films from this era of the Fajr Festival are more favorable from this standpoint. The vast majority of films in this year's festival do not contain any trace of LGBTQ people, and the representation and approval of the ugly and unpleasant phenomenon of infidelity are indirectly mentioned in less than 10 percent of these works. However, over 90 percent of the films are free from any suspicion of promoting infidelity. This healthy and firm stance toward competitors of the traditional and natural family institution of Iranian society, such as white marriages, sugary relationships, etc., is also evident. From this perspective, it can be said that the 43rd Fajr Film Festival has been committed to and committed to the cultural tradition of Iranian society in the field of marriage and family.

Conclusion

The second noteworthy aspect of the Fajr Film Festival's performance during this period is the negative and divergent perspectives on the two critical and pivotal indicators of "glorifying the father's position in the family" and "respecting Islamic sanctities in relations between men and women" that are present in a significant number of films from this genre. In this year's Fajr Festival, more than 40 percent of the films adopted a negative and divergent stance towards the father's position and directly or indirectly destroyed his pivotal position in the family institution. The father is a complete reflection of valuable qualities such as prudence, sustenance, compassion, authority, adequacy, compassion, patience, zeal, and the guardianship of God, in the collective understanding of us Iranians. His mission is to advocate for the family, and the majority of Iranians have consistently and reliably associated these qualities with the image of the father. However, regrettably, the father's credibility, respect, and position have been more severely eroded than ever. This issue is influenced by a variety of cultural and social contexts and multiple factors. However, the media's portrayal of a distorted and discredited image of the father is undoubtedly one of the most significant and effective influences. Today, the demonization or erasure of "father" from all aspects of the creation of an image and narrative in the broader societal context has resulted in a fundamental shift in the credibility and respect of the father in our society. Therefore, this year's festival did not receive an acceptable score in terms of respecting and honoring the status of the father. Additionally, over 45% of the films from this festival period have taken a negative and divergent stance on the moral boundaries between a woman and a non-mahram male, which necessitates further attention and analysis.

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