Asian Journal of Social Science 52 (2024) 100–109

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Asian Journal of Social Science

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ajss

Reproduction propaganda: The state hails, citizens responds—A case study of Vietnamese governmental Facebook ☆

Gammon, Thi [a,*], Phan, Anh Ngoc Quynh [b]

[a] King's College London, Department of Culture, Media & Creative Industries, London, United Kingdom
[b] University of Kent, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, Canterbury, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Vietnam
Reproduction
Marriage
Propaganda
Facebook
Social media
Interpellation

ABSTRACT

Since the turn of the 21st century, aging populations and low fertility rates have alarmed governments across Europe and East Asia. The Communist state of Vietnam is now experiencing the same situation. The government has recently started a propaganda campaign to encourage its citizens to not postpone marriage and having children. This article explores one recent attempt—a viral post published on the government's Facebook page in November 2023 urging young citizens to marry before 30, attracting hundreds of thousands of reactions and comments. The article examines this heteronormative message and netizens' comments, which show humor, resistance, and critiques of the government's welfare system. Using the concepts of (counter-) interpellation, it reveals the nuances of the power relations between the state and its people in this case study where biopolitics and personal choice intersect, illuminating how social networks provide a discursive space for mundane political engagement.

Introduction

Since the turn of the 21st century, aging populations and low fertility rates have alarmed governments across Europe and East Asia (especially Scandinavian countries, Japan, and South Korea). Lower fertility rates often result from individualist lifestyle choices associated with growing wealth, accessible family planning measures, low child mortality rates, and the rising costs of housing and education (De Silva & Tenreyro, 2017). The fact that women are now likely to delay marriage and childbirth to pursue higher education and career advancements also contributes to the issue (Nargund, 2009). This demographic trend is fast becoming universal and has multiple implications for national social welfare and other areas of social policy, such as the financing and planning of health care services and reproductive regulation policy. Less economically developed nations across regions such as Latin America (e.g., Brazil, Chile) and Southeast Asia (e.g., Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia), have recently joined this trend, seeing their fertility rates falling below the replacement level of 2.1 births per woman (The Economist, 2023). These countries are forecast to reach fertility levels similar to those of developed countries but at much lower average income levels (Delventhal et al., 2019). They may be running out of time to prevent the labor force segment from shrinking. Measures, thus, have been taken to improve birth rates and ensure a younger population to allow social and economic progress. Media campaigns to boost desired levels of fertility are examples.

Focusing on Vietnam, a country which has registered remarkable economic growth during the past few decades but has started to experience a gradual decline in fertility rate, this article delves into a recent viral post by *Thông tin Chính phủ* (literally News of the Government), the Vietnamese government's official Facebook page, which encourages young people to marry before 30, and public reactions to the post. Published on November 9, 2023, it reads, *Vận động n˜, nam thanh niên không kết hôn muộn (khuyến khích kết hôn trước 30 tuổi)*. This message can be translated as, "We encourage young female, male people not to marry late (ideally before 30 years old)." Below the post, "the state" has triggered netizens' reactions with its five comments: one disseminating information about the decreasing fertility rates across continents and their consequences, namely aging populations and labor shortages; two specifically asking "young people" born in 1994 and 1995 to attend to the topic as they are approaching 30; and two showing images of two young heterosexual couples' wedding and marriage registration announcements. As of the end of November 2023 (three weeks after its publication and the time of this paper's submission), the post has attracted 179 thousand reactions, 130 thousand comments and 47 thousand shares, demonstrating great public interest.

☆ Conflict of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: thi.gammon@kcl.ac.uk (T. Gammon), N.Q.A.Phan@kent.ac.uk (A.N.Q. Phan).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajss.2024.05.002
Received 14 December 2023; Received in revised form 8 March 2024; Accepted 2 May 2024
Available online 8 June 2024

This Facebook message is among the government's recent attempts to promote heterosexual marriage and reproduction, manifested in how proposals in reproductive planning such as monetary rewards for couples having two children and women birthing two children before 35 found their way to mainstream media and social networks (Anh, 2021; Đông Hà, 2023; Liên Châu & Duy Tính, 2021). These followed the Prime Minister's Decision No. 588 regarding "birth rate adjustments for relevant target subjects and areas until 2030" issued in late April, 2020, which specifies the government's targets to (1) raise the birth rates of cities and provinces with that of less than 2.0 babies per woman of reproductive age by 10%; (2) reduce the birth rates of cities and provinces with that of more than 2.2 babies/woman of reproductive age by 10%; and (3) maintain the fertility rate of those which have achieved a replacement fertility rate of 2.0–2.2 babies/woman (Prime Minister's Decision No. 588, 2020). The Decision's instructions for Ministries and city/provincial authorities dictate heightened promotion for the ideal heterosexual family with two children on the Internet, including social media; community activities promoting such ideal; "innovated" education regarding population health at schools; and trial provisions of spouse-seeking clubs and pre-marriage training for young men and women with content regarding reproductive health and parenting in localities with low birth rates (Prime Minister's Decision No. 588, 2020).

This article discusses how the government's Facebook post illustrates the state's continuous endorsement of a heteronormative culture, which views heterosexual relationships and marriage as its citizens' default choices, and its concern with the quality of its population (*chất lượng dân số*). We argue later in the article that this message is exclusionary in multiple ways, disregarding non-heterosexual people, trans-people, and those older than 30. We also explore how netizens react to the government propaganda with humor, resistance, and critiques of welfare policy through direct comments on the post. We do not suggest that those reactions fully reflect the opinions of the Vietnamese public; they represent the ideas of Internet users who engaged with the government's post. However, considering the impact of the post and the fact that Facebook[1] is the most popular social media platform in Vietnam with currently over 66 million accounts (Dư Việt Anh, 2023), we contend that those reactions do represent, to some degree, the attitudes of many Vietnamese Internet users towards the government's message, including scepticism towards its effectiveness.

Based on the concept of interpellation (Althusser, 2014) and counter-interpellation (Lecercle, 2006) to be outlined in the theoretical framework section, we reveal how the News of the Government's message attempts to "hail" citizens as conforming subjects while the citizens respond to such message with humorous and resistant attitudes, asserting their agency. The article facilitates an understanding of the latest developments in family planning in Vietnam, which lacks research despite the availability of scholarships on the topic in previous periods. Existing literature about Vietnamese family planning mostly centers on either the two-child population policy in Vietnam between the 1980s and the early 2000s, its impacts on women's fertility regulation and health, use of contraceptive measures, quality of family planning services, or abortion and fertility rates (Allman et al., 1991; Gammeltoft, 1999, 2014; Johnsson et al., 1996; Nguyen et al., 1992, Nguyen & Nguyen, 2002; Nguyen, 2009; Zhang & Locke, 2002). This article, to the best of our knowledge, is the first study addressing how the Vietnamese government's reproduction propaganda is exercised in the cybersphere.

[1] Unlike China, Vietnam does not block access to Western social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The state does keep an eye on activities deemed "harmful" to society or threatening the sovereignty of the Communist party such as impactful posts exposing state leaders' corrupt acts. Influential people have been fined or even imprisoned for controversial statements in social media. For more information about the role of Facebook in facilitating social discussions and activism in Vietnam and how the state monitors such activities, see Nguyen-Thu (2019).

Background

Vietnam's socio-economic conditions, state governance, and population policy

Following the 1986 *Đổi Mới* (Reform) socio-economic policy, Vietnam has transitioned from a Soviet-style central planning scheme to a socialist-oriented market economy marked by the expansion of private sectors and integration into global trade alongside the state's control over political matters and domestic media. Vietnam has since enjoyed remarkable economic transformations while its citizens are allowed greater freedom to pursue individual ambitions insofar as they comply with the Communist party's political rule. The state's current governing approach skews towards a neoliberal rationality[2] involving a push for free trade to maximize profits and reduce welfare benefits and the celebration of the entrepreneurial self (Brown, 2006; Bui, 2015; Gammon, 2023). One example is the state's relinquishment of direct responsibility for healthcare provision through its enforcement of the health insurance system, which involves a majority of its citizens, and efforts to morph public hospitals into partially private enterprises (Nguyen, 2018).[3] Through slogans like *Dân Giàu, Nước Mạnh* (Wealthy Citizens, Strong Nation), which frames personal wealth as patriotism, the state seeks to cultivate a self-reliant, consumerist, yet politically compliant citizenry, reminiscent of China's promotion of a high *suzhi* (quality) population (Jacka, 2009; Nguyen, 2018). Such a governing approach fosters an "achievement-conscious" society in which citizens' lives become "work-at projects" driven by the overarching goals of prosperity and subject to the government's surveillance from a distance (Bayly, 2014, p. 505). The ideal citizen is thus "a self-optimizing subject who pursues their happiness as part of collective goals" (Nguyen, 2018, p. 629).

Like China, Vietnam has enforced population policies to control its population structure and enhance "population quality" (Gammeltoft, 2014). In 1993, the 7th Party Central Committee Conference issued Resolution 4 on population and family planning—the foundation for the one-to-two-child policy, which aimed at curbing overpopulation. Later during the 2001–2010 period, however, the priorities of population policy shifted from "controlling population size" to "improving population health" (Doan et al., 2022, p. 2). Such change in policy suggests that the focus has been switched from family planning to population quality. Population growth is no longer considered an obstacle but rather a driving force for the socioeconomic development of the country, especially when decreasing fertility rates are now reported in multiple areas. As Vietnam's Strategy on Population and Reproductive Health in the period 2011–2020 emphasized population health, media coverage and healthcare services have played an important role in communicating to pregnant women that, as mothers and citizens, they are expected to go through prenatal screening and take actions based on the results. With technologies, disabilities like Down syndrome, physical abnormalities, or abnormalities in the heart and nervous system can be detected early on, enabling informed decisions. The goal is to minimize the risk of giving birth to children with abnormalities who are perceived as burdens for families and society (Gammeltoft, 2014). In addition, the government's consistent promotion of "timely" reproduction in couples, especially women, signifies its concern with future children's health, considering the higher health risk for children born to older parents.

For the past three decades, the government has achieved remarkable success in its family planning policy enforcement.[4] From the 1980s

[2] For a critical examination of neoliberalism in socialist Vietnam, see Schwenkel and Leshkowich (2012).

[3] For a more comprehensive review of the Vietnamese government's welfare policy, see Nguyen (2018).

[4] For a more comprehensive summary of the history of Vietnam's family planning policy, see Sattayavinit (2023).

to the 2010s, slogans such as *D`ng lại ở hai con để nuôi dạy cho tốt* (Each family should have at most two children to raise them well) were part of the government's family planning campaigns to control the birth rate and achieve modernization. Today, with a 100-million population, Vietnam is the 16th most populated country in the world and boasts a "golden population structure," as termed by its policymakers to describe the country having twice as many people in the working age as its dependent group since 2006 (Nhan Dan, 2018). Local authorities have discussed ways to take advantage of this ideal population structure, believed to lead to economic "miracles," i.e., remarkable economic growth (Thu Quynh, 2020; Nhan Dan, 2018). While this ideal structure is forecast to last 30 years (Nhan Dan, 2018), it is being threatened by gradual decreasing fertility rates. The national birth rate was estimated at 2.05 in 2020 (Le Nga, 2023), 2.01 in 2022, and 2.03 in 2023 (Hà Linh, 2023). Recent forecasts warn that Vietnam's population may drop from an estimated 107 million in 2044 to 72 million in 2100, joining its East Asian neighbours such as China, Japan, and South Korea (Matsuda, 2020). Fertility rates now vary across regions, with some cities showing low numbers. Twenty-one provinces and cities in central and southern Vietnam, including Đà Nẵng, Quảng Ngãi, Khánh Hòa, Cần Thơ, Bình Dương and Ho Chi Minh City have reported birth rates below 2 babies per woman (Lan Anh, 2021). Ho Chi Minh City has recently recorded the lowest birth rate, with 1.27 babies per woman (Hà Linh, 2023). Issues related to an aging population such as labour shortage and the financial burden of social welfare are looming large. Local authorities, therefore, view maintaining a "good" fertility rate as a way to slow down population aging and prolong the golden structure. A draft for the Population Law with vision to 2030, following the Prime Minister's Decision 588 issued in 2020, is being discussed, while unconfirmed news about financial initiatives have been circulated in local media, showing how the state is taking steps away from its former birth control policy. The recent viral post on News of the Government, the focus of this study, is such a step.

Gender relations in Vietnam

Vietnam today remains a heteronormative culture (Warner, 1991), which takes heterosexuality as the ideal, or normal model of sexual orientation and stigmatises same-sex practices (Gammon, 2024; Horton, 2019). Society and families expect women and men of reproductive age, especially women, to get married, ideally before 30 years old (before the women pass the assumed "prime" time); those who deviate from this norm may suffer from social stigma and isolation (Bélanger, 2004; Earl, 2014; Gammeltoft, 2014; Gammon, 2022). Since the late 1980s, the government has further reinforced this heteronormative tradition by propagating the ideal of a "Happy Family," through public billboards as a family of four, with a mother, father and two children (Gammeltoft, 2014; Pettus, 2003; Phinney, 2008). This image is accompanied by a slogan like, *Dân số ổn định, xã hội phồn vinh, gia đình hạnh phúc* (Stable population, wealthy society, happy family). Research (Gammeltoft, 1999, 2014; Nguyen, 2009) indicates that the responsibility for birth control is often attributed to women rather than men. This situation is the result of prevailing notions about domestic and reproductive matters being women's domain, coupled with men's anxiety of losing their masculinity because birth control is believed to compromise men's sexual capacity and virility.

During the past thirty years, following *Đổi Mới*, Westernisation, exposure to global media and the rise of a consumer culture have led to growing individualism and the language of choice in gender relations, especially among the urban middle-class (Gammon, 2022; Nguyen & Thomas, 2004; Tran, 2015). There is a growing tendency for people of reproductive age to postpone marriage. Whereas the average marital age was 24.4 for men and 23.2 for women in 1989, it has increased to 29 for men and 24.1 for women in 2022 (Thanh Nam, 2023). The birth rate per woman has also significantly dropped from 3.8 in 1989 to roughly 2.1 during the last 2 decades (Thanh Nam, 2023). New gendered practices among urban youth, including non-committed dating relationships and the use of online dating platforms have developed (Nguyen, 2003, 2007). There is also a growing trend of women getting divorced and becoming single mothers, which is attributed to women gaining higher status and adopting more liberal attitudes in their marital decisions (Murru, 2020; Tran, 2021). Furthermore, some women, deemed beyond socially prescribed "marriageable age," have opted to remain unmarried and childless, asserting their prioritisation of personal happiness and freedom over societal pressures (Bélanger, 2004; Bélanger & Khuất, 2002). These non-conforming practices have challenged the state's promotion of the Happy Family ideal.

Since the early 2010s, the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and others) movement has made noticeable progress, raising the visibility and discussions of LGBTQ+ issues in the public domain (Gammon, 2024; Ives 2018). Some celebrities coming out as gay or trans have received public support, primarily from younger audiences. While same-sex marriage lacks legal recognition, it faces neither prohibition nor condemnation from state officials, with instances of same-sex weddings reported in media (Horton, 2019). In 2014, the government legalized sex-affirmation operations. Despite such progress, the local heteronormative culture, which exalts the values of the heterosexual family and reproduction, poses challenges for queer individuals in openly embracing their sexual identity. Societal expectations dictate that gay individuals "keep a low profile" and limit expressions of same-sex intimacy to private settings (Nguyen, 2019, p. 548). The government's continued endorsement of the heterosexual family model perpetuates the marginalization of non-heterosexual individuals, which we will further articulate in the discussion section. The next part of the article will outline the theoretical scaffolding of the research.

Theoretical framework

The pro-fertility policy being enforced in Vietnam, as in many other countries facing the same issue, can be first understood within Michel Foucault's framework of "biopolitics" or "biopower" (Foucault, 2003, 2008). This, as Cover (2011, p. 440-443) describes, is "a regulatory technology addressing a national 'race' as a whole' and is "deployed in the name of the nation" to "ensure the economic, cultural, and political *status quo*" (emphasis in origin). Governments monitor demographics such as the ratio of births to deaths, fertility rate, and longevity and use such knowledge to enforce corresponding mechanisms of interventions and manipulations for the ultimate goal of an overall equilibrium which protects the security of the whole (Foucault, 2003). Governments exercise their biopower through multiple institutional policies regarding immigration, health care, insurance or its promotion of discourses concerning national security or climate change (Cover, 2011).

While governments may mobilise multiple mechanisms to regulate citizens, the citizens may resist and exercise power in their own multiple ways, because as Foucault (1978, p. 93) argues, "power is everywhere" and can be "produced from one moment to the next." In this case, as the Vietnamese state seeks to reinforce its population quality enhancement campaign through social media, it turns social media, in this case Facebook, into a platform for its propaganda. Facebook then becomes a site of social discourse, or a public sphere in which netizens make sense of, discuss, negotiate, or challenge the state's authority. We call this process *chính phủ gọi, công dân trả lời* (the state hails, citizens respond). To conceptualise the process, we use the Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser's seminal concept of "interpellation," which helps understand the News of the Government's effort to engage netizens as citizens (or make netizens their subjects), and Lecercle's notion of "counter-interpellation," which extends Althusser's theory through a conceptualisation of resistance to interpellation (Lecercle, 2006).

In his discussion of how people are "recruited" to become subjects of ideology, Althusser cites an example of how a policeman hails a person on the street with "Hey you there!". The instant the person turns around to respond to the call, she becomes a subject, having recognised herself as a subject of the call. This is a literal example of interpella-

tion. Althusser (2014, p. 190) elucidates: “ideology ’acts’ or ’functions’ in such a way as to ’recruit’ subjects among individuals…or ’transforms’ individuals into subjects…through the very precise operation that we call interpellation or hailing.” Through the act of hailing, interpellation recruits individuals, making them subjects to a dominant ideology (Backer, 2017). The example given by Althusser is of course a simplified illustration; interpellation should rather be perceived as a process in which individuals learn to become subjects to dominant ideologies, or to become hailable (Backer, 2017).

Our case study illuminates how the state, through its Facebook page, interpellates young Vietnamese people broadly as citizens and more specifically, as expected conforming subjects. While “the state’s” interpellation has drawn some conforming responses, it has also attracted a large number of resistant comments exhibiting netizens’ “counter-interpellation,” indicating that these people recognize themselves as subjects to the government’s propaganda, but refuse to obey unconditionally and instead even critique the propaganda in various ways. Jean-Jacques Lecercle’s concept of “counter-interpellation,” inspired by Judith Butler’s 1997 work on hate speech, extends Althusser’s concept by asserting individuals’ power: that the interpellated may “counter-interpellates the ideology that interpellates her” (Lecercle, 2006, p. 167). To clarify the concept, Lecercle (2006, p. 182) cites the example of how a target of insults may appropriate the insulting words and redirect them to the aggressor. This concept can be applied to this case, where the citizens hailed by the state respond to the state by using similar language styles to make fun of the state’s propaganda or critique it.

Methodology

News of the Government, bearing a blue verification mark, was created in October 2015 and has attracted 4.2 million followers by December 2023. The page is self-categorized as “a government website" and its “Intro” reads, “Keep the (Vietnamese) people posted about the work of the Government, the Prime Minister; (and) other important information.” Most posts on this page draw 1,000–2,000 reactions and about a hundred comments. There are, however, some posts that garner greater attention, striking up to over 15,000 reactions and several thousands comments. These are often breaking news about major corruption cases, international drug offences, Vietnamese diplomatic relationships with other countries, economic crimes, change in petrol and electricity prices, severe weather updates, new healthcare policies, and educational reforms. Most of the time, commentary sections under posts are open for the public, although there is an implicit understanding that online behaviors are watched and monitored by page administrators to make sure politically sensitive statements and offensive comments are filtered out. In a few cases, the comment function is disabled, which can be explained by the same reasoning.

The post under investigation has broken records in terms of public interactions. As of the end of November 2023, it has attracted approximately 179,000 reactions (including 99,000 “haha” and 72,600 likes), 130,000 comments and 47,900 shares. “Haha” signals a non-serious attitude and shows either amusement (the user finds the post funny) or a sarcastic attitude (the user finds the subject in question ridiculous and laughable), whereas “like” suggests an interest without a clear attitude. These impressive reaction figures are significantly higher than the average traffic of most posts. This striking post is worth studying because of its popularity and voluminous public engagement as well as rich social and political meanings. It reveals netizens’ clear interest in the topic and their desire to engage with the state’s reproduction-related message.

The subsequent section features our analysis of both News of the Government’s post plus its five comments below the post, and the public reactions in the comment section. It should be noted that the post is shared by other verified pages administered by provincial public affairs units (e.g., Hà Tĩnh Youth Union, Hanoi Young Police Force), pages holding a high number of followers (e.g., S-Channel the information page of youth, Vietnam Law), or official pages of celebrities (e.g., singer Bảo Anh). These re-postings draw reactions to themselves. Within the scope of this paper, we only focus on direct responses to the original post on News of the Government, without dismissing the broader impact of the post beyond the confines of this page. Although the post recorded 130,000 comments by the end of November 2023, only 1,350 main comments (nested comments responding to the main comments are not included) are visible, becoming the subjects of our analysis. We cite our English translations of representative comments (originally in Vietnamese) without any commenters’ account details to protect their identity.

To scrutinise the post and comments, we adopted critical discourse analysis (e.g., Kanjere, 2019; Tolton, 2014), which was traditionally concerned with news articles but has extended to Internet forums. This approach involves identifying larger units of meaning (topics) by summing up sections of text, followed by an examination of smaller units, such as discursive strategies and linguistic structures, to comprehend the nuances of the data (Tolton, 2014; van Dijk, 1991; Wodak & Matouschek, 1993). Both authors examined the visible main comments individually to identify the most salient discursive patterns and then compared our analysis with one another. For the commentary section, we focused on commenters’ language style, dominated by sarcasm and humor.

Description and analysis

In this section, we start by describing and analyzing the content of the post under investigation and follow-up comments created by the page administrators. We then showcase the dominant themes from our analysis of 1,350 visible comments.

Government’s message

The News of the Government’s post reads, *Vận động n˜, nam thanh niên không kết hôn muộn (khuyến khích kết hôn trước 30 tuổi)* (Fig. 1). This message can be translated as, “We encourage young female, male people not to marry late (ideally before 30 years old).” The words “vận động” (promote), “khuyến khích” (encourage) are familiar propaganda lexicons. While the page’s message is serious, its use of emojis and a colorful background full of hearts and stars shows an effort to engage with audiences in a friendly manner. Below the post, “the state” triggered reactions with its five comments (see Figs. 2 and 3). The first comment, a long one (Fig. 2), disseminates information about decreasing fertility rates across continents and its consequences, namely aging populations and labor shortages. The comment cites Nguyễn Thị Liên Hương, Deputy Minister of Health, as expressing her concern over this global, regional (Asia-Pacific) and local issue. The second comment (Fig. 3) states, “(Emoji of a clock) Young people of 1994 (those born in 1994), we have fewer than 2 months left until the end of 2023.” The 3rd (Fig. 3) reads, “(Emoji of a calendar) Young people of 1995, we have 1 year, 2 months until the end of 2024.” The fourth (Fig. 3) features a photo of a celebrity young couple in their early 20s, footballer Đoàn Văn Hậu and his new bride Doãn Hải My, boasting their new marriage registration at a local people’s committee office, with “applause” emojis attached. The 5th (Fig. 3) features a mobile phone screenshot, revealing the wedding photos of an unknown couple who possibly fit the criteria of being under 30 and heterosexual, similarly “applauded” by “the state.”

The post’s direct message to “young female, male people” and its use of the emojis of a bride, an engagement ring, and a groom make its expectations of heterosexual marriage explicit. It emphasizes its targets further by reminding “young people of 1994” and “young people of 1995” of the time they have left before they reach their “deadline,” the age of 30. The imposition of a deadline here turns heterosexual marriage into a structured project (politically and socially) and a race (metaphorically) with a tangible endpoint that all citizens under 30 are expected to strive for. While the message may not come across as forceful, using the

Fig. 1. News of the Government's post, published on November 9, 2023.

language of encouragement, presented in a netizen-friendly interface, it is exclusionary in multiple ways: it disregards non-heterosexual people, trans-people, and people older than 30. It reaffirms the government's heteronormative, ageist, and essentialist binary-based approach to gender relations and marriage: an ideal marriage is between a cis-woman and a cis-man within the peak fertile age range who both aim to bear children, ideally healthy, well-educated kids who will contribute to the labor force, as the national goal is a "quality" population. For its target audiences, this message is intrusive in its aim to interfere with young individuals' dating practices and bodily autonomy.

Public reactions

Our analysis of the comments reveals three main discursive patterns: the deadline, the impossible mission, and the commodification joke. It is worth noting that responses to the post in the form of shares (users create a new post on their personal pages by sharing the News of the Government's post and commenting on it) echo similar patterns, although we do not examine those posts.

The deadline

Netizens approach the post more as a banter about a life event and human biological clock than as serious propaganda linked to national interests. Thousands of comments are empty of words, have only accounts tagged, and tend to receive "haha" interactions from the mentioned names. Other comments either detail how much time the commenters have before they reach 30 to start a family, or jokingly express their "regret" for "failing" the nation because they are over 30 and unmarried, or display their relief to have already married before the deadline. Some exemplary comments are below:

> I still have a month and 20 days, so lucky, I can meet the deadline.
> I'm so lucky, I still have 6 more years.
> Counting down!
> Haha, I'm so lucky. I was born in 1996, 2 years and 2 months to go.
> I have 7 more years, such a long time to continue playing around and having fun.
> I'm 20, I already feel the pressure.
> I'm over 30 now. Can I skip this deadline?
> (account tagged) We excellently made it. How lucky!

These light-hearted statements show how the "deadline" can, unseriously, steer people's life trajectories. Those who have considerable time before reaching the age threshold can afford to "have fun," while those with a ticking clock pretend to find themselves under duress. Commenters reveal their private information such as their age, birth year and month by sharing the remaining time they have and their partners, spouses and friends by tagging. The deadline is now a finish line that netizens share regardless of occupations, locations, gender, or age, allowing them to tease one another and seek solidarity. These commenters find "the state's" message funny rather than threatening. It facilitates an identification process whereby people regard 30 as an external marker in developing their individual identity (personal age) and also a shared collective identity (people who are/are not/need to get married).

The impossible mission

A large number of comments demonstrate strong resistance. These can be as simple as a single statement like "I can't do it," "I'm sorry I can't." Among those who claim it is impossible for them to follow the propaganda is a well-known actor in her 20s, Phạm Bảo Hân. Like myriads of others, Phạm wrote *"Cháu không làm được ạ"* (I can't do it) to indicate her inability to complete the "mission." Such comments relate to comments of those who humorously see themselves as failing the state though being a "good citizen." On the contrary, those who are

Fig. 2. News of the Government's 1st comment, featuring official information regarding the alarmingly decreasing fertility rate, was met with prominently non-serious reactions in the form of "haha" reactions.

in a marital relationship see their marriage as a token of patriotism and can take pride in being "model citizens":

> I'm a good Vietnamese citizen, but this task is way too hard for me.
> I'm sorry, government, I have to let you down.
> I can do everything (you want), just not this.
> I'm a law-abiding citizen. But for this particular matter, I can't do as told.
> (account tagged) Why don't you get married to show your patriotism?
> Fortunately, we're model citizens. We got married when my husband was 29 and I was 27.

Other comments become earnest discussions of social factors unfavorable for reproduction. Numerous netizens express scepticism about the effectiveness of the propaganda, lamenting Vietnam's inadequate social welfare, the absence of systematic support for children, the high costs of childcare and education, and the government's short-term planning. Their call for an enhanced welfare policy aligns with the aspiration for more manageable expenses when starting a family. These factors are viewed as pivotal in converting government initiatives into compelling incentives for young adults to embark on family life. Some commenters draw comparisons between social benefits in Vietnam and those of other countries. Below are some examples.

> Work pressure + poor well-being = late marriage + low fertility rate, plus no support system and welfare.
> I was born in 1985 and I don't dare to have children because my financial capacity wouldn't allow, dear government.
> (You) ask people to marry before 30, but the monthly salary is under 5 million Vietnamese dong *(equivalent to 170 GBP)*. Married couples will just fight all day.
> Who will (provide financial support) to raise the children after they are born, that's the question the government has no answer to. Maybe they think children will just grow up by breathing oxygen.
> Children's education is costly. Parents now have to pay for many things, including the air-conditioner in the classroom, projector, shades... We'd have to pay for these expenses every school year, not to mention other unlisted payable items that the parents association requests. Maybe I won't get married until my next life.

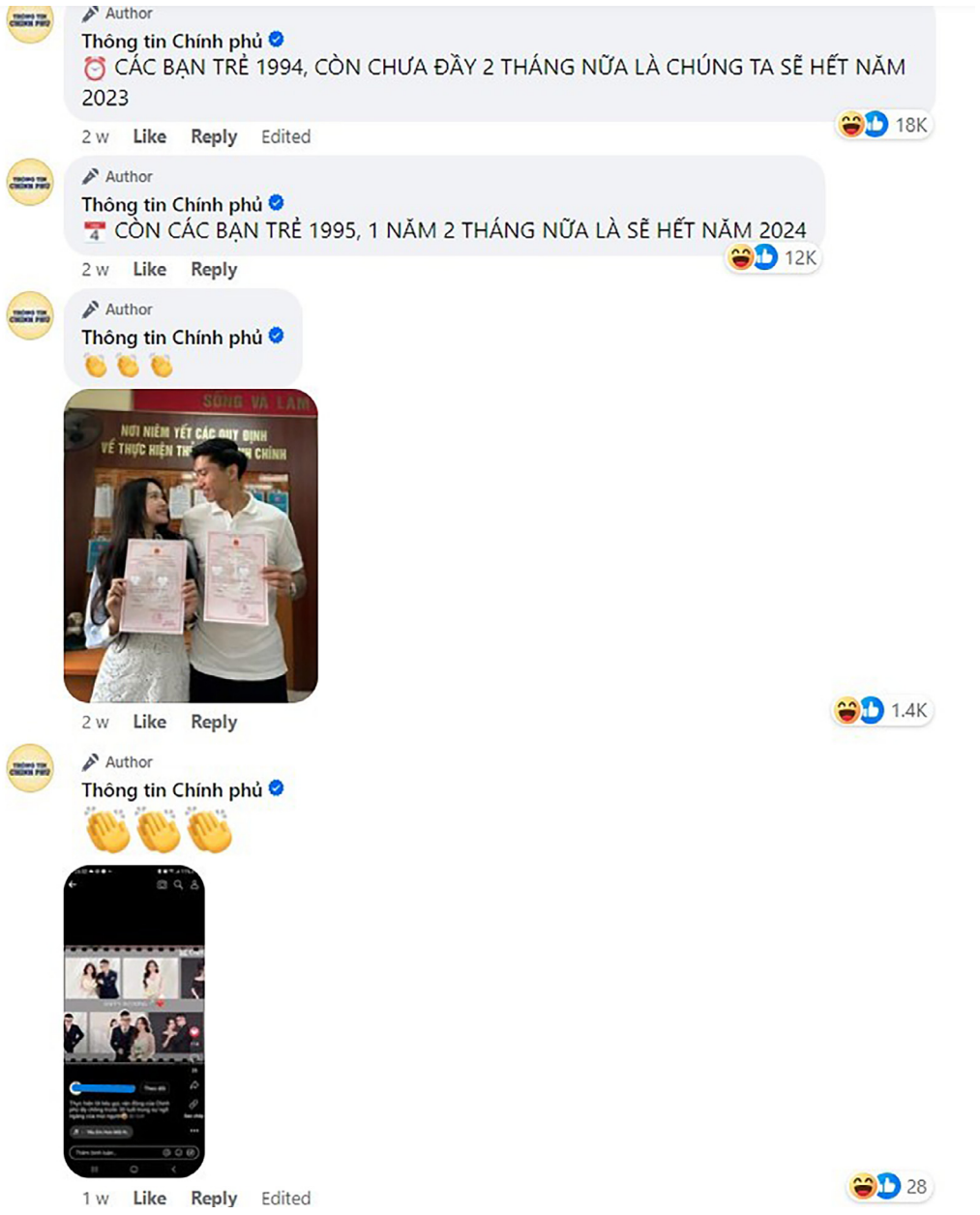

Fig. 3. The "state's" 2nd comment (first top) reads, "Young people of 1994 (those born in 1994), we have fewer than 2 months until the end of 2023." The third (second top) reads, "Young people of 1995, we have 1 year, 2 months until the end of 2024." The 4th features a photo of a celebrity young couple in their early 20s showing their new marriage registration documents. The 5th presents a phone screenshot, revealing the wedding photos of an unknown couple.

The government doesn't tell us where to get money to be married. Get married only when you earn enough to take care of yourself, age doesn't matter.

In other countries, people are motivated to have children because the government will take care of them, they go to school for free, mothers are given money to buy formula milk, all kinds of benefits… In Vietnam, children in poverty will become petit thieves, or sell lottery tickets on streets. Having more children in order to help the government pay government debts?

Then how to afford a house, raise the kids, pay for their tuition? Does the government have anything to say about that?

I won't be able to afford a married life and will be overwhelmed by household chores and child rearing responsibilities. The expenses associated with childbirth and raising a child are high nowadays. Food prices are also rising. I should keep leading this single life. Will be less stressful.

I can't even afford to buy an apartment although I work extremely hard. How can I dream of marrying somebody, let alone having kids.

Marrying before 30 is impossible, except for those from rich families.

Short maternity leave, lacking support for mothers during pregnancy and birth, many young females will have to bear the financial burden of child rearing and risk losing their job if they get pregnant. Who wants to start a family?

If education and healthcare were free for our children, we would consider having them without delay.

The government should learn from Western countries where children don't have to pay tuition fees.

As these comments reveal, financial security is the commenters' major concern. They are aware of the expenses involved in childbirth and

child-rearing and the inadequate financial and well-being aid from the government. This situation may prevent younger generations from leading fulfilling lives and becoming productive members of society. Within this reasoning, having a family becomes more of a personal burden and potential detriment rather than a contribution to the nation in the future.

Commenters also make unserious proposals of governmental monetary reward or loan schemes as an extrinsic motivation for marriage:

I urgently need a loan with a 0% interest rate to marry somebody.
If the government were to provide me with five gold bars weighing 1000g each, I'd marry immediately.
There should be a government loan programme for marriage purposes.
If only the government awarded every couple who got married by 30 with gold as dowry.
It's impossible to be married by 30, except for those from rich families. If the government wanted to provide any support, they could give people 10 billion Vietnamese dong *(equivalent to 330,000 GBP)*, and people would get married immediately.
If the government gave me 10 billion Vietnamese dong *(equivalent to 330,000 GBP)*, I'd marry somebody tomorrow, [I] wouldn't need to wait till 30.
How much will the government give us as a wedding gift?
If we don't live happily, will the government compensate?
If the government gave 2 billion Vietnamese dong *(equivalent to 65,000 GBP)* to each couple, I'm sure the Vietnamese population would far exceed that of China.

The whimsical suggestions reveal how the commenters perceive the feasibility of the population planning campaign and how important financial stability is to sustain a marriage. These people regard money as their top concern about marriage, rather than a romantic partner.

The commodification joke

Many comments jokingly asks "the state" about the possibility of being provided with a partner: *có được phát vợ luôn không ạ* (can I be supplied a wife please?); *mong đảng và nhà nước phát chồng cho em* (I hope the party and the state provide me with a husband); *chính phủ có thể phát chú rể được không ạ* (can the government allot me a groom please), etc. The recurring word *phát* (distribute/allot/supply/provide), present in numerous comments, sarcastically evokes the government's pre-Reform social subsidy scheme between 1976 and 1986, during which essential goods were distributed through state vouchers. Since *phát* alludes to the distribution of goods, its use in this context carries a humorous connotation, equating a life partner to a commodity which can be easily allotted and provided by the government. The following instances attest to this point:

Can I be given a wife at the Commune office?
Remember to provide a husband for me!
I demand the government provide adults under 30 with partners.
I demand the Commune People's Committee supply girlfriends, boyfriends. Otherwise, who would we marry?
Would the state give us a partner? I've been looking for one for a long time in vain.
The government just encourages us to get married, they don't provide us with somebody to marry. Then how can we marry before 30?
Will the government distribute spouses? They should allow us to return the goods if we were not satisfied.
Distribute husbands, government!
Will we have to queue to be given a groom for free?
When will the free partner-distribution programme begin?
Tomorrow I'll bring my ID card and my house registration to the District office and take a partner home.
After 30, will the state give out husbands?
Can the government deliver a husband to my house?
Is there any shop that allows us to pay for a wife in instalments?
Where should I go to be provided with a wife?
Hey shop *(sốp)*, would I be provided with a wife if I did marriage registration at the Ward People's Committee? I'll turn 31 next year.

There are two implications here. The first is that if the government wants people to marry, they need to provide partners. In other words, the responsibility is now of the state, not individuals. A life-long partner is conceptualized as a social benefit, free of charge, similar to free tuition for children. The second implication is that finding a life partner is no easy task, so the solution is that the government equally distributes partners – this humorous suggestion emphasizes the infeasibility of the propaganda. To make fun of the propaganda, some comments even envision the government as a "shop" or a "supplier" which sells, delivers, accepts returned purchases, and compensates for faulty "goods."

While most comments fit into the three main patterns outlined, there are also other kinds of messages, expressed in fewer comments. Several acknowledge that the propaganda is necessary because of the aging population, as well as the social effects and risks of having children late. Others remark that young adults nowadays prefer dating to becoming committed to a marital relationship, or that they may want to live together without necessarily having children. A handful mention the rising divorce rate among young couples in modern society as a warning against getting married only to meet the governmental "deadline." There are also mentions of the existing large number of abandoned and neglected children, which commenters explain as the result of financially insecure couples getting together at a young age. A few comments state that they would get married if the government legalizes same-sex marriages. All of these comments, however, account for a minuscule percentage.

Discussion and conclusion

Promoting the ideal heterosexual family with children, the state's exclusionary message perpetuates the marginalization of queer people, who remain non-ideal citizens in terms of its projection of a "quality population." The message disregards the fact that queer people are capable of having and raising healthy children, whatever partnership arrangements they may have, further revealing the state's persistent heteronormative approach to marriage. It also reinforces an existing social norm which views the 20s age range as good timing for marriage, especially for women—a view that, nevertheless, has increasingly been challenged by modern life. In emphasizing marriage, it additionally neglects single parents and people adopting alternative partnership arrangements.

Describing marriage as a deadline-oriented project for heterosexual cis people, "the state" turns a private matter of the heart into a collective undertaking serving national interests. Achieving this project's goal allows young individuals to pat themselves on the back as patriotic citizens who help sustain the country's economy and contribute to its bright future. Indeed, those whose life events align with the government's agenda saw this as an outlet to congratulate themselves on their achievements, even if in a humorous way, through self-celebratory comments. While the state's family planning agenda may not necessarily contradict the desires and goals of many individuals, its depiction of marriage and childbirth as deadline-oriented projects goes against another popular societal understanding of dating and marriage as matters of chance and fate which one never has total control of, a common view also present in Chinese and Korean cultures (Schafer, 2010; Xu & Dinh, 2021). Comments indicating individuals' difficulty in finding romantic partners signal a desire to expose the irony of the message: this is not a matter everyone can achieve simply because they set their heart on it.

Netizens' humorous and sarcastic responses to News of the Government's message, including the "conforming" ones, demonstrate their awareness of being *made subjects* by the message and of the fact that their private lives have been intruded and that they are being persuaded to contribute to the nation through reproductive labor. This attitude marks netizens' agency: they may follow it if it aligns with their own plan, but they also may not, if they do not deem it a good enough "deal." In implying their awareness of being *made subjects*, they present themselves as critical subjects with a choice rather than subservient ones. The suggestions of rewards by many show an expectation of reciprocity: "I contribute to the nation, the nation ought to reward me, or at least compensate for my sacrifices." These commenters are negotiating for a good bargain to make sure they are not manipulated, considering the hefty costs of marriage and childrearing. Through playful and sarcastic responses, they perform mundane resistance to the state's "encouraging" but intrusive message; some turn the post into an outlet to express their discontent with the state's lack of social welfare policy, which have led to precarious living circumstances. Such resistance may be best understood within de Certeau (1984) theorization of everyday practice. This resistance, as de Certeau (1984, xvii) explains, involves "the tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lending a political dimension to everyday practices."

The government's post has turned into an informal political site for vibrant banal engagement with policy making where netizens can be both facetious and straightforward about their opinions over state propaganda. Many wrote their comments as part of a conversation with "the state," asking rhetorical questions, or pretending to follow the policy as if obeying an elder's advice by addressing "the government" by familial pronouns such as *bác* (uncle). The use of such pronouns demonstrates how lightly commenters regard the government's propagandist strategy. It illuminates the reconfiguration of the relationship between the government and its netizens-subjects on a digital platform, from the regulator and the regulated to "equal" discussants of a matter. Their humorous suggestion that the government could give them money as a wedding gift turns the role of the government as a governing agency into that of a family member or friend. In that sense, the government's Facebook page has become an informal political space and a discursive "playground" where netizens produce and consume interactions between themselves, make jokes about governmental agenda, present earnest concern about national social welfare, and even "tease" or "dare" the state to do something impossible. This is how citizens counter-interpellate the government's attempt to turn them into docile subjects whose lives are supposed to be "work-at projects."

As Gustafsson (2012, p. 1112) argues, "using social network sites lowers thresholds for participation by offering flexible forms of participation and more effective means of spreading information." Whether News of the Government meant to entice commenters or not, its post has succeeded in engaging netizens and drawing their attention to a salient matter within the national development agenda. The traffic this post has created aids the government in reinforcing social expectations for young adults to get married, ideally before the age of 30. Meanwhile, the interactions and comments of Facebook users on the post highlight the spillover effect that a social network platform can create, making it both an efficient government propaganda instrument reaching wide and far, and a productive space of banal political participation with varying degrees of seriousness. In this regard, the Facebook page offers a seemingly democratic political ground that both parties can benefit from.

Our work transcends the scope of a digital observation of a government's social media post to unveil the uniqueness of a case where matters of biopolitics, reproductive planning, public engagement, and individual choice intersect. The blurring of a postmodern experience with regulated modes of technological algorithm, informal spaces of banal political participation, and virtual identity and identification confounds the case. Bridging media studies and government studies, this article addresses the latest developments in Vietnam's family planning policy, which the existing literature has yet to update, and enriches such literature with its focus on social media as a platform for both state governance and public engagement. The article lays a stepping stone for future research on this fascinating and important biopolitical topic. Future research involving traditional qualitative methods such as interviews and focus group discussions with population-related policymakers and people of reproductive age, especially those under 30—the ideal targets interpellated by the government's propaganda, may offer additional insights about the enforcement of reproduction encouragement policy and young people's attitudes. Research focusing on the provinces and cities reporting particularly low birth rates such as Bình Dương and Ho Chi Minh City would be worthwhile.

Notes on contributors

Thi Gammon holds a PhD in Media Studies. She is a Research Associate of King's College London's Department of Culture, Media and Creative Industries. Her research has been published in the *Journal of Psychosocial Studies, Studies in Gender and Sexuality, Asian Studies Review, Sexuality & Culture,* and *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies*. Gammon's work discusses contemporary Vietnamese society and culture, especially the issues regarding gender relations and identity in response to global media.

Anh Ngoc Quynh Phan holds a PhD in Education. She is a Lecturer in Higher Education at Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Kent, United Kingdom. Her research areas include international education, higher education, migration and mobility, and teacher education. Her work can be found in *Studies in Continuing Education; Journal of Gender Studies; Asia Pacific Journal of Education; Globalization, Societies and Education,* and many others.

References

Allman, J., Vu, Q. N., Nguyen, M. T., Pham, B. S., & Vu, D. M. (1991). Fertility and family planning in Vietnam. *Studies in Family Planning, 22*(5), 308–317.
Althusser, L. (2014). *On the reproduction of capitalism: Ideology and ideological state apparatuses*. London and New York: Verso (translated by GM Goshgarian).
Backer, D. I. (2017). The politics of recitation: Ideology, interpellation, and hegemony. *Harvard Educational Review, 87*(3), 357–379.
Bayly, S. (2014). How to forge a creative student-citizen: Achieving the positive in today's vietnam. *Modern Asian Studies, 48*(3), 493–523.
Bélanger, D. (2004). Single and childless women of Vietnam: Contesting and negotiating female identity? In L. Drummond, & H. Rydstrøm (Eds.), *Gender practices in contemporary vietnam* Singapore: Singapore University Press.
Bélanger, D., & Khuất, T. H. (2002). Too late to marry: Failure, fate or fortune? female singlehood in rural North Vietnam. In J. Werner, & D. Bélanger (Eds.), *Gender, household, state: Đổi mới in vietnam*. London and New York: Cornell University.
Brown, W. (2006). American nightmare: Neoliberalism, neoconservatism, and de-democratization. *Political Theory, 34*(6), 690–714.
Bui, H. T. (2015). In search of a post-socialist mode of governmentality: The double movement of accommodating and resisting neo-liberalism in Vietnam. *Asian Journal of Social Science, 43*(1/2), 80–102.
Butler, J. (1997). *The psychic life of power*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
de Certeau, M. (1984). The Practice of Everyday Life. Berkeley: University of California Press.
de Silva, T., & Tenreyro, S. (2017). Population control policies and fertility convergence. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 31*(4), 205–228.
Doan, L. P., Nguyen, L. H., Do, H. N., Nguyen, T. T., Vu, G. T., Do, H. T., … Ho, C. S. H. (2022). Ensuring Population Health in the Era of Aging in Vietnam: Policy Review and Factors Associated with Intentions of Childbearing before the Age of 30 among Youths. *Healthcare (Basel), 11*(1), 102.
Delventhal, M.J., Fernández-Villaverde, J., & Guner, N. (2019). *Demographic transitions across time and space* (working paper, February 2019 version). Available at https://events.bse.eu/live/files/2687-nezihguner66802pdf.
Dư Việt Anh. (2023). Việt Nam vào top 20 nước đông người dùng Facebook nhất. Vietnam plus. (accessed 3 June 2023). https://www.vietnamplus.vn/infographics-viet-nam-vao-top-20-nuoc-dong-nguoi-dung-facebook-nhat-post866216.vnp
Đông Hà. (2023). Khen thưởng phụ nữ sinh đủ 2 con trước 35 tuổi. *Pháp luật online*, (accessed December 2 2023). https://plo.vn/tien-giang-khen-thuong-phu-nu-sinh-du-2-con-truoc-35-tuoi-post754497.html.
Earl, C. (2014). *Vietnam's new middle classes: Gender, career, city*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
Foucault, M. (1978). *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Random House.
Foucault, M. (2003). *Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976, transl. David Macey*. New York: Picador.
Foucault, M. (2008). *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979, transl.* London: Graham Burchell.

Gammeltoft, T. (1999). *Women's bodies, women's worries: Health and family planning in a vietnamese rural community*. Surrey, England: Routledge.
Gammeltoft, T. (2014). *Haunting images: A cultural account of selective reproduction in vietnam*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
Gammon, T. (2022). I'd Have Divorced My Husband if Not for Korean Dramas' – Vietnamese Women's Consumption of Television Romance and Melancholia. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality, 23*(3), 207–223.
Gammon, T. (2023). Your Bodies are Our Future: Vietnamese Men's Engagement with Korean Television Dramas as a Technology of the Self. *Asian Studies Review, 47*(3), 481–499.
Gammon, T. (2024). Resistance to a gender threat: a case-study analysis of Vietnamese adults' unfavourable reception of soft masculinities in romantic Korean television dramas. *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies, 19*(2), 63–79.
Gustafsson, N. (2012). The subtle nature of Facebook politics: Swedish social network site users and political participation. *New Media & Society, 14*(7), 1111–1127.
Hà, Linh (2023). *Tốc độ giảm sinh ở việt nam nhanh hơn thế giới*. Kinh tế & Đô thị https://kinhtedothi.vn/toc-do-giam-sinh-o-viet-nam-nhanh-hon-the-gioi.html.
Horton, P. (2019). Recognising shadows: masculinism, resistance, and recognition in Vietnam. *NORMA, 14*(1), 66–80.
Ives, M. (2018). Gay Courtship in Vietnam's 'The Bachelor' turned heads abroad. Back home? *Meh. The New York Times*. September 2018 https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/25/world/asia/vietnam-bachelor-gay-lesbian-contestants.html.
Jacka, T. (2009). Cultivating citizens: Suzhi (quality) discourse in the PRC. *positions: east asia cultures critique, 17*(3), 523–535.
Johnsson, A., Hoa, H. T., Nham Tuyet, L. T., Bich, M. H., & Höjer, B (1996). Family planning in Vietnam-women's experiences and dilemma: A community study from the Red River Delta. *Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics & Gynecology, 17*(1), 59–67.
Kanjere, A. (2019). Defending race privilege on the Internet: how whiteness uses innocence discourse online. *Information, Communication & Society, 22*(14), 2156–2170.
Lan Anh. (2021). Sinh con có thưởng, đủ hấp dẫn. *Tuổi trẻ online*, (accessed 29 November 2023). https://tuoitre.vn/sinh-con-co-thuong-du-hap-dan-20211028081259309.htm
Le, Nga (2023). Vietnam's population may drop to 72 million by 2100. *VnExpress International*. 12 November 2023 https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/vietnam-s-population-may-drop-to-72-million-by-2100-4676058.html.
Lecercle, J. J. (2006). A Marxist philosophy of language *(vol 12)*. Leiden and Boston: Brill (translated by Gregory Elliott).
Lien, Chau, & Duy, Tính (2021). Sinh con được thưởng tiền, dân số có tăng thêm? *Thanh niên*. 29 November 2023 https://thanhnien.vn/sinh-con-duoc-thuong-tien-dan-so-co-tang-them-1851395829.htm.
Matsuda, S. (2020). *Low fertility in Japan, South Korea, and Singapore population policies and their effectiveness*. Singapore: Springer.
Murru, S. (2020). Drawing from feminist epistemologies to research resistance: The case of single moms in Hanoi. In S. Murru, & A. Polese (Eds.), *Resistances: between theories and the field*. London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
Nargund, G. (2009). Declining birth rate in developed countries: A radical policy re-think is required. *Facts, Views and Vision: Issues in Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Reproductive Health, 1*(3), 191–193.
Nhan, Dan (2018). Optimising the advantages of Vietnam's golden population structure. *Nhan Dan*. 28 November 2023 https://en.nhandan.vn/optimising-the-advantages-of-vietnams-golden-population-structure-post67074.html.
Nguyen, B. T., & Thomas, M. (2004). Young women and emergent postsocialist sensibilities in contemporary Vietnam. *Asian Studies Review, 28*(2), 133–149.
Nguyen, P. A. (2003). *Between 'Still society' and 'Moving society': Life choices and value orientations of hanoi university graduates in post-reform vietnam*. United Kingdom: University of Hull PhD Thesis.
Nguyen, P. A. (2007). 'Relationships based on love and relationships based on needs': Emerging trends in youth sex culture in contemporary urban Vietnam. *Modern Asian Studies, 41*(2), 287–313.
Nguyen, M. T., & Nguyen, D. A. (2002). Accessibility and use of contraceptives in Vietnam. *International Family Planning Perspectives, 28*(4), 214–219.
Nguyen, M. T., Swenson, I. E., Vu, D. M., & Phan, T. (1992). Contraceptive use in Vietnam: The effect of individual and community characteristics. *Contraceptive, 45*(5), 409–427.
Nguyen, M. T. N. (2018). Vietnam's "socialization" policy and the moral subject in a privatizing economy. *Economy and Society, 47*(4), 627–647.
Nguyen, T. T. H. (2009). Reproductive Paradoxes in Vietnam: Masculinity, Contraception, and Abortion in Vietnam. In M. C. Inhorn, T. Tjørnhøj-Thomsen, H. Goldberg, & M. la Cour Mosegaard (Eds.), *Reconceiving the second sex: Men, masculinity, and reproduction*. USA: Berghahn Books.
Nguyen, T. H. L. (2019). Reading the Youtube sitcom my best gay friends: What it means to be gay in Vietnam. *Continuum (Society for Social Work Administrators in Health Care), 33*(5), 540–553.
Nguyen-Thu, G. (2019). Vietnamese media going social: connectivism, collectivism and conservatism. In T. Burrett, & J. Kingston (Eds.), *Press freedom in contemporary asia*. Abingdon: Routledge.
Pettus, A. (2003). *Between sacrifice and desire: national identity and the governing of femininity in vietnam*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
Phinney, H. M. (2008). Objects of affection: Vietnamese Discourses on love and emancipation. *positions: asia critique, 16*(2), 329–358.
Prime Minister's Decision No. 588 (2020). *Quyết định số 588/QĐ-TTg ngày 28/4/2020 của Thủ tướng Chính phủ phê duyệt "Chương trình điều chỉnh m˜c sinh phù hợp các vùng, đối tượng đến năm 2030" [Decision number 588/QĐ-TTg on 28/4/2020 issued by the Prime Minister on approving "The fertility rate adjustment program with subjects and regions toward 2030]*. https://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/he-thong-van-ban/van-ban-quy-pham-phap-luat/quyet-dinh-so-588qd-ttg-ngay-2842020-cua-thu-tuong-chinh-phu-phe-duyet-chuong-trinh-dieu-chinh-muc-sinh-phu-hop-cac-vung-doi-tuong-6393.
Sattayavinit, T. (2023). Genealogy of reproduction: The governing of wombs in the nation of Vietnam. *Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Studies, 23*(2), 327–340.
Schafer, C. J. (2010). Lê Vân and Notions of Vietnamese Womanhood. *Journal of Vietnamese Studies, 5*(3), 129–191.
Schwenkel, C., & Leshkowich, A. M. (2012). Guest Editors' introduction: How is neoliberalism good to think Vietnam? How is Vietnam good to think neoliberalism? *positions: asia critique, 20*(2), 379–401. https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/478968.
Thanh, Nam (2023). Vận động kết hôn trước 30 tuổi: Hội chứng 4-2-1 có thể thành sự thật. *Thanh Niên*. https://thanhnien.vn/van-dong-ket-hon-truoc-30-tuoi-hoi-chung-4-2-1-co-the-thanh-su-that-185231115204041997.htm.
The Economist. (2023). Global fertility has collapsed, with profound economic consequences. *The Economist*. 1 June 2023 https://www.economist.com/leaders/2023/06/01/global-fertility-has-collapsed-with-profound-economic-consequences.
Thu, Quynh (2020). Experts warn Vietnam only has 19 more years of golden population. *Vietnamnet*. 29 November 2023 https://vietnamnet.vn/en/experts-warn-vietnam-only-has-18-more-years-of-golden-population-688364.html.
Tolton, L. M. (2014). A Groping Versus 'real violence' in Colombia: Contrast as a minimisation strategy. *Critical Discourse Studies, 11*(3), 322–341.
Tran, A. L. (2015). Rich sentiments and the cultural politics of emotion in postreform Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. *American Anthropologist, 117*(3), 480–492.
Tran, T. M. T. (2021). Complex transformation of divorce in Vietnam under the forces of modernization and individualism. *International Journal of Asian Studies, 18*(2), 225–245.
van Dijk, T. A. (1991). Racism and the Press. London; New York: Routledge.
Warner, M. (1991). Introduction: Fear of a queer planet. *Social Text, 29*, 3–17.
Wodak, R., & Matouschek, B. (1993). We are Dealing with People Whose Origins One can Clearly Tell Just by Looking": Critical Discourse Analysis and the Study of Neo-Racism in Contemporary Austria. *Discourse & Society, 4*(2), 225–248.
Xu, Z., & Dinh, T. N. (2021). Decoding *yuán* and *duyên* across Chinese, Vietnamese and Other Asian cultural practices. In M. Sadeghpour, & F. Sharifian (Eds.), *Cultural linguistics and world englishes. Cultural linguistics*. Singapore: Springer.
Zhang, H. X., & Locke, C. (2002). Contextualising reproductive rights challenges: The Vietnam situation. *Women's Studies International Forum, 25*(4), 443–453.