

Abstract

Care, Silence, and Sacrifice: A Gendered Study of Emotional Labour in *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* and *Big World*

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The project analyses Pat Boonitipat's *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* (2024) and Yang Lina's *Big World* (2024) through the framework of Feminist Affective Criticism, examining how women's emotional labour and caregiving become invisible in modern Asian films. Drawing on Hochschild's theory of emotional labor, de Beauvoir's and Butler's theory of feminism, Noddings' and Gilligan's theory of care ethics, and Ahmed's and Sedgwick's theory on emotions, this project examines how the invisibility of women's emotional labour and caregiving responsibilities is shown across generations, and how these portrayals reveal about the dynamics in a family.

**CARE, SILENCE, AND SACRIFICE: A GENDERED STUDY OF EMOTIONAL
LABOUR IN *HOW TO MAKE MILLIONS BEFORE GRANDMA DIES* AND *BIG
WORLD***



***Project submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the degree of BACHELOR OF ARTS in English Language and
Literature***

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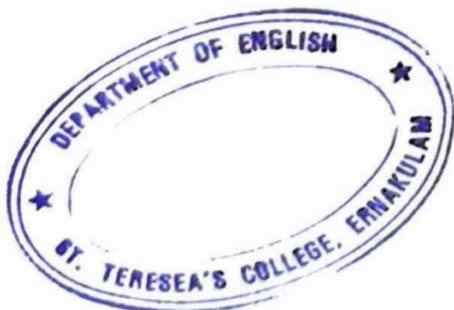
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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this project, entitled “Care, Silence, and Sacrifice: A Gendered Study of Emotional Labour in *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* and *Big World*”, is a record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr Jisha John, Assistant Professor, Department of English.

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project, entitled “Care, Silence, and Sacrifice: A Gendered Study of Emotional Labour in *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* and *Big World*” by Alice B Abraham, is a record of bona fide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

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Introduction

Feminist Affective Criticism is a method of analysing literature, and culture by focusing on emotions and feelings especially from a feminist point of view. It looks at how emotions like anger joy, and sadness reveals women's experiences, and challenges unfair rules. This project aims to undertake the feminist affective criticism analysis of Pat Boonitipat's *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* (2024) and Yang Lina's *Big World* (2024) examining how women's emotional labour, and caregiving is normalised, and made invisible in family-centred films while men's emotional vulnerability are given greater recognition and value.

How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies (2024) a Thai comedy drama starring Putthipong Assaratanakul as (M) and Usha Seamkhum as his grandmother Amah. The film follows M a young man who learns that Amah has terminal cancer and decides to move in with her after believing that whoever provide care are most likely to inherit her wealth. What begins as a calculated attempt to secure money slowly transforms as M spending more time caring for Amah by observing her daily rituals quiet resilience, and emotional isolation from her children. As relatives subtly compete for her inheritance the film exposes the transactional nature of familial care under capitalism. Through the evolving relationship between M and Amah, the narrative shifts from greed to moral awakening, ultimately emphasizing that time empathy, and genuine presence carry far greater value than material wealth.

Big World (2024) are a heartfelt Chinese coming-of-age drama directed by

Yang Lina, and starring Jackson Yee as Liu Chunhe Diana Lin as his grandmother
Chen Suqun, Jiang Qinqin as his mother Chen Lu, and Zhou Yutong as Yaya. The
film follows Liu Chunhe a young man living with cerebral palsy as he strives to break

free from both physical, and mental constraints to help his grandmother achieve her long-held dream of performing on stage while also searching for his own identity. Through the challenges of family tensions, and personal growth Chunhe learns to balance independence with love, fix strained bonds, and ultimately embark on a new chapter in life. *Big World* blends emotional depth with themes of resilience, familial duty, and self-discovery offering an inspiring story of courage and hope.

This project employs a qualitative textual analysis of both the films. It draws on the feminist affective criticism combining on the feminist, and affect theory. Affect theory is a theory on how feelings are socially constructed, and gendered making shape and reflect inequality. Feminist theory examines gendered power dynamics in the society, questioning why certain behaviours and emotions are assigned to its respective genders.

This project is structured into three chapters. Chapter one Theorising Gendered Emotional Labour and Care introduces the framework of this project. It provides a detailed explanation of feminist affective criticism by combining feminism, emotional labour, ethics of care, and affect theory. It focuses on how women's caregiving and emotional labour are socially constructed, and gendered. The chapter puts forth a foundation for analysing the films through gendered labour and emotional inequality.. Chapter two Women's Emotional Labour in *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* analysing women's continuous emotional labour, and how it sustains family harmony. It highlights how female care remains normalised, and unrecognised

while male emotional expression gains visibility, and value. The chapter exposes the imbalance of gendered emotional labour in the film. Chapter three

Intergenerational

Female Care and Emotional Responsibility in *Big World*, examines the film *Big World* (2024) by focusing on intergenerational female caregiving, and emotional responsibility. The chapter examines how women inherit emotional labour across generations, and the long-term emotional costs of the obligation. The chapter reveals whose emotions are prioritised and whose sacrifices remain unseen within family structures.

Analysing through the Feminist Affective Criticism the films *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* (2024) and *Big World* (2024) exposes the invisibility of women's emotional labour and caregiving. The project reveals how women sustain the family harmony. By framing care as a gendered obligation the films expose the patriarchal structures that is embedded in the society.

Chapter 1

Theorising Gendered Emotional Labour and Care

Feminist Affective Criticism is a literary analysis approach that combines the components of feminist theory, and affective criticism. Feminist Affective Criticism examines how texts mirror, and reinforce gender roles, and social norms. It also examines the representation of female characters, and the ways in which they are portrayed in comparison with the male characters. Feminist scholars argue that the concept of care, and emotional labour work is not natural inherited qualities of women, but forms of labour that was curated by the patriarchal societal systems, but still remains invisible.

Theory of Feminism are considered as the backbone of feminist affective criticism supported through the works of Simone de Beauvoir, and Judith Butler, as it exposes the conditions under which's labour gets naturally gets devalued.

In *The Second Sex* (1949) Simone de Beauvoir argues that women have always been restricted to the realm of immanence where one's lives in a routine of maintenance, and are domestically limited. Since caregiving, and domestic labour is framed as morally feminine, it therefore excludes women from gaining any sort of recognition or societal value. Simone de Beauvoir in her work discusses the connection of housework to the labour of Sisyphus, and highlights how women's labour sustains the family's emotional stability, but yet remains invisible despite of its

importance. Simone de Beauvoir's concept of Sisyphus is a concept used to showcase the vulnerability of life, and how the struggle against it becomes meaningless. She expresses that "few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition: the clean becomes soiled...over and over" (de Beauvoir 475).

In *Gender Trouble* (1990) Judith Butler in her work articulates the theory of gender performativity where she establishes the concept of gender as a separate identity. Judith Butler argues that the concept of gender is brought about through the stylized repetition of acts (Butler 179), which becomes normalized over time. Certain acts such as regulation of emotions, and caregiving are considered to part of the section that are categorized to specifically just to the femininity as a social norm by the patriarchal society. Judith Butler's argument showcases how power operates through the repetition of actions, meaning that women's caregiving appears natural due to its repetition over the year while men's short care or minute emotional expression appears more significant due to its lack of repetition.

Simone de Beauvoir's, and Butler's theories combined brings out the understanding that even though women are placed as crucial caregivers, their labour is underappreciated, and invisible due to its relation with femininity.

Theory of Emotional Labour is crucial to examine gendered caregiving. Through Arlie Hochschild's theory of emotional labour, it highlights how societal norm's expectations mould emotional expression, and experience.

Arlie Hochschild in her work *The Managed Heart* (1983) describes emotional labour as the management of feelings to execute a publicly observable facial, and bodily display (Hochschild 7) that line up with the societal expectations; which results in individuals often masking their original emotions for the wellbeing of others. In this theory, Hochschild brings out the concept of surface acting, and deep acting.

Surface acting is when it “requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (Hochschild 7); while deep acting is the process where individuals continuously attempt to showcase the emotions they are expected to display at the moment. In perspective to families women are expected to perform both surface, and deep acting in order to maintain the harmony. In the service industry, emotional labour is of monetary value, deeply appreciated, and acknowledged; unlike domestic emotional labour where it is rather framed as care than work, making it an obligation.

In society, women’s emotional labour brings out continuity while men are permitted to withdrawal. This brings out the notion that the visibility of emotional labour is related to its duration more the consistency less likely to be considered as labour. Through Hochschild’s theory of emotional labour it brings forth the argument on how emotional labour within family and society are rather structured on the basis of gender.

Theory of Ethics of Care is a theory that explain the moral compass behind women’s emotional labour. Theory of Ethics of Care is a feminist moral theory that highlights the importance, and morality of care for others.

Nel Noddings in her work *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984) imagines care as of ethical importance in relation to responsibility, and responsiveness. In her work, she brings forth concepts of “engrossment and motivational displacement” (Noddings 16). It is a type of ethical involvement where the caregiver gets deeply involved with the needs of the care receiver which may result in the caregiver reorganising their own priorities. Through Noddings’ concepts, caregiving gets moralised, and becomes an obligation. If in case of a refusal of caregiving, it will be considered as a failure upon the individual’s morality.

Carol Gilligan in her work *In a Different Voice* (1982) further examines the perspective put forth by Noddings, but by examining how moral reasoning are moulded by social interactions, and cultural values. In her work, she introduces the concept of “relational grounding” (Gilligan 19) where it is the act of morally thinking the difference between the right and wrong by how it affects the people involved in the matter.

Noddings’ and Gilligan’s theories combined brings out the understanding to how women prioritise on sustaining relationships over their own needs, and to why women continue to digest emotional strain to maintain familial bonds.

Theory of Affect is an interdisciplinary structure that inspects the role of emotions and how these emotions moulds human experience. Sara Ahmed in her work *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), states that “emotions stick to bodies” (Ahmed 11) meaning that certain emotions cling onto one’s body if the emotions isn’t exerted out through proper means; if not, the emotion will dwell deeper, making their

body carry the negativity forever. Ahmed also states that emotions “conceal violence and power” (Ahmed 12), indicating on how people exploit certain emotions such as love, care and happiness which are then used as agency to cover up their own selfish desires.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her work *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003), further analysis Ahmed’s perspective through the concept of shame. In her work, she states that “shame floods into the entire sensorium” (Sedgwick 117), meaning that shame not only overwhelm the mind but also the body.

She also states that shame “sharpens what one is” (Sedgwick 119), meaning that shame attaches to an individual and makes one realise their identity. The theory through the lens of Sedgwick illuminates that men’s emotional outburst is often considered as real emotions while women’s shame and outburst remain private, which reinforces women’s invisibility.

By combining the theory of feminism, emotional labour, ethics of care, and affect; it showcases how the invisibility of women’s labour is projected. Gender norms and cultural principles is combined together to make sure that women’s caregiving remain crucial yet remain unacknowledged. This theoretical framework helps in showing how emotional harmony in families are maintained gendered labour.

Chapter 2

Women's Emotional Labour in *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies*

Contemporary Asian family films often showcase intimacy, sacrifice, and emotional labour but aren't properly designated between both the genders. Applying theory of feminism by Simone de Beauvoir, and Judith Butler, theory of emotional labour by Arlie Hochschild, theory of ethics of care by Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings, and theory of affect by Sara Ahmed and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick onto the film *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* (2024) to examine how family harmony is maintained through women's emotional labour. The chapter examines how women's continuous affective emotional labour is normalized, undervalued and invisible while male's emotional involvement is framed as worthy of recognition. By analysing the film through the theoretical lenses, the chapter showcases the imbalance of gendered labour.

Forty-five minutes into the film, the scene takes place at the hospital chemo room where the background is filled with the nonstop beeping sound of the machines. While Amah was kept under medical supervision, her two sons who surrounded her started arguing about the financial burden of the medical bills and the division of inheritance. In that tense atmosphere, Amah looks weak in bed, waiting for the unavoidable yet painful days that are ahead of her. Sew, breaking the tension of the room, rushes beside her mother, dressed in work clothes, holds her mother's hand,

showcasing a calm assurance. Holding her mother's hand, she jumps into the existing fight between the siblings. Even though her brother's barely glance at her, she still mediates between the two brothers in a calm voice while trying to mask her physical exhaustion.

While the camera focuses on the avoidant eyes of the brothers, who are still discussing about the financial burden, Sew kneels to rub her mother's swollen feet and her compassionate work fades into the background, invisible to others. This scene is illuminates Arlie Hochschild's concept of surface acting where Sew's surface acting, masks her exhaustion for the wellbeing of the family and for her mother's peace. With this dialogue, "She'll be working on the night shift for a while so she can come to your appointments" (*How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* 00:00:45 – 00:00:46), Sew turns herself into a machine that does duty in spite all the turmoil she faces physically and mentally. This turns into a process of emotional transmutation where her inner desire to take care of her mother out powers her physical exhaustion even at a personal cost.

The concept of Sisyphean labour where "few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition: the clean becomes soiled... over and over" (de Beauvoir 475), is seen in the scene where Sew's brothers are chasing after money rather than helping her with taking care of their mother, she is seen to be trapped with the burden of taking care of her mother every day. Since Sew work during the day and takes care of her mother at night, her schedule traps her into a Sisyphean labour.

Adding onto de Beauvoir's statement, Butler's theory of feminism stating, "Gender is an identity tenuously constituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 179), Sew's act of mediating the fight between the brothers and massaging her mother's feet, are considered to be acts which are considered natural in femininity as it deals with maintain the familial harmony, while the men arguing over financial burdens and not caring for the elders are considered as exception due to their masculinity.

After the hospital scene, M takes his grandmother back to her house, where the house is filled with the smell of incense and faded photos are hung on the wall. In this scene, M is sitting lazily on the couch while Amah talks about her second son, Soei's absence in a soft Thai dialect. Meanwhile in the background, Sew walks in with a bundle of laundry that needs to be folded. Her shadow moves freely in the background but no one is paying attention to her. While Amah is sharing her memories with M, no one is paying attention to the treacherous work that is being done by Sew, making it a bittersweet moment.

As Amah is defending Soei for his absence, she states that "With Soei, it's best when he stays away... Because it means that he's okay when he doesn't come around" (*How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* 00:58:40); making his absence natural as he is a man and does not require to take part in activities that withholds emotional and physical burden of caregiving.

Simmone de Beauvoir's theory of feminism is illuminated in this scene when Sew's vicious loop of folding the laundry, keeping house clean and filling the void of absent men illuminates the concept of Sisyphus labour where "few tasks are more like

the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition: the clean becomes soiled... over and over" (de Beauvoir 475). In addition, Butler's concept of gender performativity is also highlighted in the scene since the domestic labour is only done by a female gender, Sew. According to Butler "Gender is an identity tenuously constituted... through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 179), and the act that is getting repeated is domestic labour.

The concept of "engrossment and motivational displacement" (Noddings 16), and "relational grounding" (Gilligan 19) is seen in this scene when Sew engrosses herself with the household chores and stays completely attentive to the family's needs while doing the household tasks, showcasing the act of displacement. Sew does this purely out of her own morality and thinking about the greater of the family at that moment, showcasing "relational grounding" (Gilligan 19).

Sara Ahmed in her work, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2004) states that emotions "conceal violence and power" (Ahmed 12). As Amah defends her son Soei, one can easily understand that Soei only shows positive emotions towards his mother, when he is in dire need of a financial support to support his lifestyle and clear his debts. This showcases how emotions are being used as an agency to cover up his selfish desire to borrow money from his mother with or without her knowledge. Even though, Amah is aware of her son's exploitation, she forgives him, continues to love and praise him when he shows the slightest interest in her life; but Sew's routinely and honest care for her mother becomes invisible in the contrary; showcasing how care is considered as a natural act for women.

Much later into the film, it's again a hospital scene. By now, Amah's body is as fragile as ever, where she is emotionally unwell as well as a result to the medications. M and Amah are now seen to be having a much deeper developed bond as grandmother and grandson, but M still hasn't forgot his initial desire of getting the inheritance. Knowing that, his grandmother is now more close to him than her own children, he asks her whether she has decided to whom she is going to passing the inheritance or not. Eager for a positive reply, he is faced with the false truth that his grandmother passed the inheritance to her son. Amah's playful rejection breaks M which makes him fall onto the unclean floor crying and shouting, "Why won't you ever let me come first place? Where's my spot?" (*How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* 01:35:50). With a broken heart, M leaves his grandmother in the hospital who is now guilty for her actions.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her work, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003), brings out the concept of shame stating "Shame attaches... sharpens what one is" (Sedgwick 119). M breaks his assumed image of a tough guy, making him aware much more about his identity and feelings. He is seen to be having the feel of being robbed from his right to the inheritance as he worked for it by taking care of his grandmother. Through this scene, the viewer realises that more than M, his mother, Sew, deserves the inheritance as she took care for her mother for years unlike M who was just a caregiver for a brief moment. This shows once more, how woman is often pushed to the background without any acknowledgement or reward for their hard work and sacrifice.

Judith Butler in her work, *Gender Trouble* (1990) states "Gender is an identity tenuously constituted... through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 179). In the film, Sew's constant act of care giving makes it her gender, while M's sudden one big act of caregiving and breaking down emotionally as an effect of it, is considered out of the ordinary and significant as this is not men are gendered to do. Through this, M gathers empathy from his loved ones.

Hochschild in her work, *The Managed Heart* states "Emotional labour... requires one to induce or suppress feeling..." (Hochschild 7), which can be seen in the film when M gains empathy and attention for expressing his emotions while, Sew receives neither attention nor comfort for bottling her emotions for the wellbeing of the others.

Nearing the end of the film, a heart-breaking frame is shown of Amah, she is connected with tubes that are attached to machines, showcasing that she is nearing the end of her life. As she lays down resting, she turns to M, gripping his hand, she says, "I 'zoi sia' you" (*How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* 01:50:15), meaning thank you.

Sara Ahmed explains that emotions "conceal violence and power" (Ahmed 12) in her work, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), where in context to the film, it showcases emotion like love as it can mask the unequal distribution of appreciation. When Amah says thank you to M who had only spend a minimal amount of time compared to Sew, who at that moment is left unappreciated for her years of exhausting care. Therefore, that particular moment masks the injustice.

Hochschild in her work states, “suppression for others' countenance” (Hochschild 7), which in context to the film explains Sew’s thought process. During that brief moment, the negative emotions that is rushing through Sew’s head, such as, anger, grief and disappointment, are all be held back in to maintain a supportive environment for the family during her mother’s final moments. As a person who upholds the emotions of the family and preserver of her mother’s peace, she can’t question Amah or the others on why her efforts are being unnoticed. While, Amah and M express their feelings, Sew is left to suppress her. The chapter has highlighted the

fact that the emotional stability of the family, as shown in the movie, is sustained gendered emotional labour done by the women rather than a mutual care.

Chapter 3

Intergenerational Female Care and Emotional Responsibility in *Big World*

Confucian familism is an ethical system that came into action in ancient China which is still continuing in the current society. The system illuminates the importance of social harmony, familial responsibility, and morality. This system isn't taught in textbooks, but rather naturally inherited upon birth. Due to this, the society naturalizes a woman's labour towards caregiving while applauding a male's restraints.

The chapter's main focus is shifted to the consequences of that labour for women's subjectivity and emotional visibility. Applying theory of feminism by Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler, theory of emotional labour by Arlie Hochschild, theory of ethics of care by Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings, and theory of affect by Sara Ahmed and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick onto the film, *Big World* (2024), it examines how women's continuous caregiving moulds their emotional agency.

Rather than questioning the effect of gendered emotional labour on the family, the chapter deals with what was lost during the process and whose emotional needs were prioritised and whose wasn't. Through this approach, it broadens the knowledge of gendered emotional labour by focusing on the long-term effect of emotional and ethical implications within intimate relationships.

At (*Big World* 00:56:00 – 1:11:12), almost half way through the film, the scene opens up to an apartment party hosted by Liu Chunhe's grandmother, Chen Suqun.

Liu Chunhe's mother is seen to be absent from the scene, indicating that she is not currently at home. The grandmother takes advantage of her daughter's absence and invites her band members to the apartment for practise, while Chunhe invites Yaya.

The parent's temporary absence gives Chunhe a sense of freedom that he rarely receives due to his cerebral palsy. Few minutes after Yaya's arrival, she finds Chunhe isolating in himself in his room. Seeing this, Yaya sits down next to him after Chunhe was at ease bringing tension into the scene. Studying the atmosphere and his facial expressions, she then leans close to him, Yaya playfully asks: "Chunhe, be honest...what do you get a boner?" (*Big World* 01:06:36) Chunhe while stammering answers to her question: "As you can see, I'm a normal twenty-year-old adult man" (*Big World* 01:07:02). Yaya understanding his feeling for her through her gaze, shifts in discomfort but Chunhe holds on to her and thanks her for asking that question since "some people think that we don't need anything other than eating and excreting...people like my mom" (*Big World* 01:07:42 – 01:08:04). Yaya understanding Chunhe's helpless facial expression, stays still.

Arlie Hochschild's concept of surface acting, stating that "emotional labour... management of feeling to create... publicly observable facial and bodily display" (Hochschild 7), "transmutes private emotion into public act" (Hochschild 118); was perfectly displayed by Yaya. Surface acting was seen when Yaya produces fake warmth by putting a smiling face and calm posture to create a comfortable atmosphere

for Chunhe. Her real feelings are buried under the warmth she tries to display for the wellbeing of Chunhe. This can also be seen when Yaya stays still for Chunhe after he indirectly exposes his feelings for her even though she is

uncomfortable with his answer. Knowing that, it took a lot of Chunhe's courage to display his feelings, she buries her true feeling to make sure that Chunhe doesn't feel disappointed or embarrassed.

Nel Noddings' concept of engrossment, as stated in her work *Caring, a Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984), "engrossment... moving out of one's own world into the world of the other" (Noddings 16). This can be seen when Yaya puts aside her feelings to not embarrass Chunhe.

Prior to this one scene, five minutes since the movie started, Chunhe is led by his grandmother to a restaurant where her friends had come together to celebrate Chunhe's birthday. Chunhe is seen to be enjoying his birthday, which resulted in him having a couple of drinks despite his condition. Since Chunhe's body is not used to the alcohol, he easily becomes drunk. When the grandmother and grandson duo returns back home, they are faced by Chen Lu who is astonished yet concerned about her son. As both the female characters wash the body of the boy with a wet cloth, they both start arguing about how the grandmother should be taking better care of Chunhe; the grandmother then retaliates by stating how if it wasn't for her, the boy's mother would have left him out for the dogs in the trash. Astonished by the grandmother's retaliation, the mother fights back by saying: "That's right. If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't have known newborns can be abandoned in the trash! Didn't you do the same to me?" (*Big World* 00:08:55 – 00:09:17).

"Emotions stick to bodies" (Ahmed 11) was seen when the mother showcases an emotion that has been buried inside since her childhood. According to the mother's perspective, she is seen to be a child that was once abandoned by her

mother, when in reality, her mother went to Tibet to make money for her daughter's living since her husband left her for another. But the sense of abandonment felt by the mother over years has never been a discussion topic between the mother and daughter, making the duo drift apart even more.

At (*Big World* 01:52:18 – 01:53:38), nearing the end of the film, the scene shows Chunhe and his grandmother getting ready to sleep but his grandmother tells Chunhe that a letter had arrived in his name. Upon hearing this, Chunhe gets up to check the content of the letter, and the letter appeared to be his acceptance letter for college. Seeing this, Chunhe rejoices, making his grandmother rush over to him and celebrate with him. After the celebration, Chunhe drifts off to sleep and Chen Suqun, the grandmother is seen to be listening to music and looking through Chunhe's old medical records. Realizing that his hard work has paid off, she sheds a tear as she dances quietly in the living room.

Judith Butler in her work *Gender Trouble* (1990), states that all individuals are born dependent and injured easily but the “stylized repetition of acts” (Butler 140) of caregiving through social norms, allocates caregiver and the care receiver. The grandmother's social exposure such as the band, party hosting, and other instances over the years, shapes Chunhe's perspective towards life. Through this, all the ridicule will be absorbed by the grandmother while Chunhe can flourish without any troubles. This is considered to be part of emotional labour, where the grandmother is taking over all the disputes for the wellbeing of her grandson. It can also be understood that Chunhe received the acceptance letter not only because of his hard

work but also because of grandmother's outmost repetitive care for him over the years.

Simonne de Beauvoir's concept of "immanence confines" is illuminated in the scene when Chunhe receives the acceptance letter, only Chunhe's hard work and resilience is showed to the viewer, while the grandmother's nurturing is not appreciated. This shows how men are reaching heights in their career and personal life mainly due to the help received by a beam of support such as woman; but they are never applauded since this is what expected of them and forever will be.

Right after the previous scene at (*Big World* 01:57:40 – 02:00:23), Chunhe is seen to be delivering a speech at the town hall for bringing more awareness to the government about the need for more ramps for the accessibility of the disabled. Instead of talking about awareness, Chunhe explains to the audience that he knows that he will always be considered to be flawed due to his condition and that he is concerned in what he will do once his caregiver is no more alive. He goes on to explain that the only people who showed him a bit of kindness were his grandmother's band mates who are also considered to be flawed as they don't know their way around the current technology. He states that to the world, they will always be the short plank people who fall behind compared to the others, but it can't change the fact that this is who they are.

In the work, *Touching Feeling* (2003), by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, she states, "shame floods into... the entire sensorium" (Sedgwick 117); meaning that shame not only overwhelms the mind but the body as well. In Chunhe's short speech, he states the difficulty and shame he has felt over the years due to his condition. When one

“authentic outburst” (Butler 33) about his shame is showcased, the crowd reacts to it but Yaya’s, Suqun’s, and Lu’s shame stays private without any public acknowledgement.

Following this scene, at (*Big World* 02:01:24 -02:01:47), it shows the abode of the family after Chunhe’s mother returns with her husband and new born child. The scene sets a warm ending for the film, when the mother and son duo shares a loving gaze to each other. Earlier in the film, due to Lu’s birthing trauma and worries of the new pregnancy shatters the maternal bond she had with her son, Chunhe. Due to her guilt-driven control, her “network of responsibilities and relationships” (Gilligan 19) gets fractured. But by facing her guilt and apologizing to Chunhe, the “network of responsibilities and relationships” (Gilligan 19) gets mended, promising a better harmonious future between the mother and the son.

Through this chapter, it can be understood that societal norms create a neverending cycle of managing the emotions of the family across the generation. The particular labour becomes a gendered obligation that the women inherit and perform in spite of all the pain, as portrayed by the female characters in the film.

Conclusion

This project has now examined *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* (2024) and *Big World* (2024) through feminist affective criticism. It was used to illuminate the invisibility of a woman’s labour and responsibilities regarding care

giving. Using the feminist affective criticism, the thesis examined the films on how emotional work and care are moulded by gendered power. Both these films projects how female characters like Sew, Chen Suqun, Yaya, and Chen Lu sustains the family harmony while struggling through exhaustion, which is unacknowledged in the current patriarchal norms of the society. Through the multiple theoretical frameworks used in this thesis, it can be understood that a woman's duties are considered to be natural and part of feminine performativity, while according to the societal norms, male's little to nothing involvement is considered morally acceptable.

This project is relevant to the current society of the world since emotional labour and caregiving continues to be unevenly distributed between the genders not just in families but also in intimate relationships, workplaces, and so on. Even though, the participation of the women population in the professional places has increased over the years, but the societal expectations and norms still remain unchanged. By using the feminist affective criticism, the project illuminates on how the expectations regarding emotional labour is still the same across the world regardless of the difference in cultures. Recognising emotional labour as work rather than an

obligation, not only broadens the insights into films but also put forth the problem that the society is still facing that has to be changed.

The project topic also holds practical applications since emotional labour and care continues to shape everyday relationships. In real life households, women are often seen shouldering this invisible work, where they anticipate the needs of the others while their own personal needs are either ignored or put aside for the others. By illuminating these patterns through feminist affective criticism, the project equips individuals to question and reallocate such labour to both the genders.

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