Educating traditional cultural values through belief in worshiping the ancestor in the family

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to determine the values of Belief in worshiping ancestors in the family in order to educating the traditional cultural values of Vietnam in the context of globalization and international economic integration. To this end, this article studies ancient documents and research works of some reputable researchers on Vietnamese beliefs and culture; in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus groups discussion (FGD) were conducted to obtain genuine comprehension of Vietnamese folk belief activities. The data were evaluated using content analysis. This article reported on four aspects of problems: (i) Belief in the immortality of ancestor’s souls; the blessing as well as the punishment of the ancestors’ souls to their descendants; (ii) Education about the sense of origin; (iii) Education on the ethics of gratitude; (iv) Education filial piety in daily life. This study helps understand the values of ancestor worship in the family is the basis for good relationships in the family, relatives, and clan; good behavior keeps people with people in society; thereby educating the good values of Vietnam’s traditional culture in the context of globalization; international economic integration. This study can be used for teaching in the Vietnam education system; contribute to the dissemination of traditional cultural values of Vietnam; shed more light on Vietnam’s value systems; serve as a basis for planning and formulating policies to develop an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with national identity.

Keywords: education, traditional cultural values, belief in worshiping the ancestor, Vietnamese family, globalization, international economic integration

1. Introduction

Ancestor worship has been established since ancient times and exists in many people around the world (Tylor 2000). In Vietnam, ancestor worship is a type of folk belief that, according to many conjectures, may have appeared since the time of the Hung Kings (Van 2003; Hinh 2007). Starting from the concept of “vật hữu linh” (everything has a soul), the Vietnamese as well as other ethnic groups in the world, worship ancient gods, especially natural gods, tree gods, rock gods, mountain gods, river gods, etc. (San 1998; Giau 1973 and 1983; Ngoc 2002; Van 2017). The anthropomorphization of “nhiên thần” (natural gods) has created a turning point for the formation of the “nhân thần” (human god) system (Duy 2002; Hinh 2007; Van 2019b).

To date, ancestor worship tradition has always played an important role in the spiritual life of many ethnic groups (especially in the East Asian region) (San 1998; Ngoc 2002). However, the recognition and assessment of the role and meaning of belief in worshiping the ancestor have led to many different opinions. Facing the current trend of globalization and international economic integration, activities of religion and beliefs are growing strongly. In particular, the penetration of foreign religions is a concern of many countries, including Vietnam.

Against this backdrop, many countries and peoples have taken positive actions by revitalizing national cultural beliefs and restoring traditional values that have been lost or underestimated. The issue of preserving the national cultural identity and promoting the positive values of folk beliefs, including ancestor worship, is urgent today because it contributes to increased resistance to national culture.

Research results in recent years show that most Vietnamese people acknowledge that ancestor worship plays an important role in cultivating and educating good traditional moral qualities among family members. The survey results of the author in 2021 and 2022 showed that up to 87.41% of respondents believed that maintaining the custom of ancestor worship at home contributes to the education of family moral traditions, while the number of respondents who do not believe in this value only is 2.96%.

Those surveyed believe that ancestor worship in the family has a role in educating family moral traditions. They also believe that through ancestor worship, they help themselves and their family members cultivate many good moral qualities, such as gratitude, filial piety, kindness, sacrifice, the spirit of progress, and industriousness. The biggest impact of ancestor worship on the formation of Vietnamese people’s morality is gratitude and filial piety toward generations of ancestors, grandparents, and parents.
Gratitude is a traditional moral value of the Vietnamese nation that has been preserved and promoted through customs, practices, and beliefs. Author Nguyen Hanh (2020), in the book “Vietnamese Culture and Belief”, wrote, “In Vietnamese folk beliefs, the culmination of the cosmological perspective is heaven worship, the culmination of the human perspective is human decency, in which filial piety is at the forefront, etc. The Vietnamese people’s cosmological and human perspectives begin with the word “ăn” or “om” (gratitude).

Gratitude is especially profound through ancestor worship (Y and Huy 2011). The core value of this belief is gratitude for the birth, upbringing, love, care, and protection of grandparents, parents, and previous generations for the next generation. Descendants express their gratitude to their ancestors not only in respecting, caring for, and taking care of their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. At the same time, they are still alive but also in having to worship them when they have passed away. It is these things that have contributed to creating the unique traditional cultural values of Vietnam.

2. Literature Review

Concepts of traditional and traditional values:

Tradition, in a general sense, is understood as a sociocultural phenomenon, including thoughts, feelings, customs, habits, lifestyles, and behaviors formed in the most historical conditions determined, preserved over the years in the material and spiritual life of different social communities and transferable from generation to generation (Giau 1973). Traditions also have certain changes when historical conditions change, rather than being constant and eternal in all ages.

Moreover, tradition often has two sides to different communities according to different circumstances: “First, tradition contributes to the veneration and preservation of what is precious, essential, and fundamental for the development, for the upward movement of the nation’s community, etc. (Binh 2005; Trung and Van 2020a, 2020b). From this perspective, tradition has a positive value meaning that contributes to creating indispensable support for the nation on the way to the future. Second, tradition is also a very favorable land for the maintenance and revival of the conservative, backward, and outdated side when historical conditions and circumstances have changed (Van 2020b). This second aspect significantly affects restraining, holding back, and slowing down the development of a country or certain people.

Thus, there are traditions with positive values that promote the development of society, but there are traditions that become factors hindering the development of society, which need to be limited and eliminated. With that meaning, “traditional values are the crystallization of all the best through different historical eras of the nation to create its own identity. It is passed on to the next generations and with time, along with the progression of history will be supplemented with new values”.

Concept of beliefs:

Beliefs are issues that have been studied and explained by many scientists (Giau 1973; Van 1996, 2003; Thinh 2001; Binh 2005). In Vietnam, there are religious phenomena that, according to the criteria of religion, do not fully satisfy them. Some researchers do not accept this term but call it primitive or early religions. However, the distinction between religion and belief is only relative. In social life and language, both the terms religion and belief exist. Talking about religion is talking about the process of sanctifying a character, the phenomenon that people believe in. This process may be accompanied by the mythization and historicalization of the worshiped character (Tokarev 1994; Tylor 2000).

As Dao Duy Anh (1957) explains, belief is “admiration, superstition toward a religion or ideology”. In the work “Vietnamese Culture at the peak of Dai Viet”, Nguyen Dang Duy (2002) wrote: “Faith is people’s belief and admiration in supernatural, mystical, or because people imagine gods to the extent that they think that these forces influence and govern the life and fate of people and create a social life according to that sacred belief”; or the author Dang Nghiem Van (2003) said, “In religion, there must be a sacred element related to an invisible world, to supernatural beings, which people themselves imagine and create.

Ngo Duc Thinh (2001) gives a clearer view: “Belief is understood as a person’s belief in something sacred, sublime, supernatural, or in short, belief, aspire to the “sacred”, as opposed to the “mundane”, an existence that we can touch and observe. There are many kinds of beliefs, but here, the belief of the faith is the belief in the “sacred”. Therefore, belief in the divine belongs to human nature, it is the basic factor that creates the spiritual life of man, as well as the material life, social life, spirit, thought, emotional life, etc.”

Tokarev (1994), a famous Russian religious researcher, said, “Despite rejecting the theory of the inner development of religion, we have never denied the existence of religious origin relationships between beliefs. We have already seen how conservative those beliefs are. Any belief that is firmly origins will persist among the people for a very long time, even if the conditions that produced it have changed”. According to him, the earliest forms of religion were Spear totem, witchcraft, and dark magic; healing by sorcery, sex rituals, funerals, coming-of-age ceremonies, hunting cults, and cults of matriarchal clans, ancestor worship, Shamanism, Paganism, secret society cult, leader worship, tribal god, farming god, etc.

In the famous work “Primitive Culture”, E.B. Tylor (2000) said, “It is important to note that different beliefs and customs have solid foundations in animism, primitive, as if they had actually sprung from it. In complex animism, they become the product of ignorance rather than the philosopher’s, and exist as remnants of the old rather than the products of the afterlife, as they pass from full vitality to a state of being ruins”.

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With the above points of view, the forms of belief are specific to each cultural space, cultural subject and different cultural time, but they are still expressions of belief in the sacred and of admiration and worship of man. Therefore, belief is a historical cultural phenomenon, a historical category.

Concept of ancestor:
According to the Vietnamese concept, ancestors are first of all people of the same bloodline, such as father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, great-grandmother, cavalry, etc., who gave birth to me. Ancestors are also those who have contributed to creating the present life, such as the “Thánh Hoàng làng” (The Lord God of a certain village) and “Tổ nghề” (the person who gave birth to a certain profession). Not only that, but ancestors were also those who had merit in protecting villages, homeland, and country from foreign invaders such as Trần Hưng Đạo, who became “Father” and was organized to worship and die in the 8th lunar month every year. The “August of the Father’s death anniversary” is in many places in the Vietnamese community. Even the “Thánh Hoàng” of many villages is not the one who has created the village, but sometimes the person with meritorious service to the country who was worshiped by the ancients as “the god”. The ancestors in Vietnamese beliefs are also mothers of “Âu Cơ” and “King Hưng”, who gave birth to all ethnic groups in the great Vietnamese family.

If considered from the perspective of family, lineage, ancestors are concepts used to refer to people with the same bloodline, such as great-grandparents, grandparents, parents, etc., had the merit of giving birth and raising the descendants but passed away.

Worshiping ancestors in the family:
In Vietnam, ancestor worship is expressed at three different levels: ancestor worship in the family, clan (family lineage), ancestor worship in the village (village god worship), and ancestor worship is the belief of worshiping Hùng Vương (ancestor worship in the whole country).

Ancestor worship in the family is all forms of rituals and worship to show respect, and morals of “uống nước nhớ nguồn”, be grateful to ancestors, grandparents, and parents who gave birth and create a life for children, who belong to the first generation of a family line, with grandparents, parents who have passed away. Vietnam’s blood relationship is quite complicated. The family is only a relatively independent unit because between families, to a certain extent, there is a binding relationship that people call kinship or clan. According to that “rule” of bloodline, many families will form a branch, and many branches form a family. Each family has a common ancestor, and ancestor worship is assigned to the patriarch.

Belief in worshiping the ancestor:
Ancestor worship (also known as grandparent’s religion) is a custom of worshiping deceased ancestors of many Asian ethnic groups, especially developed in Vietnamese culture, Chinese culture, Korean, and Southeast Asian cultures. For the Vietnamese, the custom of ancestor worship has become a kind of ancestor worship. Many Vietnamese people, in addition to their own religion, often worship their ancestors. The vast majority of families have an ancestral altar in the house, at least with a solemnly hanging photo, but it is not a religion because of the Vietnamese people’s respect for their parents and grandparents. This is a very important and almost indispensable belief in Vietnamese customs (Hau 1957; Giau 1973).

The custom of worshiping the ancestors of the Vietnamese originated from the agricultural economy in ancient patriarchal society. When Confucianism was introduced to Vietnam, filial piety was enhanced, giving ancestor worship a deep philosophical foundation. Family, clan, and the “honorable family” issue are emphasized (Thu 1997; Thuan 2004).

In the 15th century, Confucianism dominated society, and the Le dynasty institutionalized ancestor worship. The Hong Duc Code clearly stipulates that descendants must worship their ancestors for 5 generations (being a child themselves, counting backward for 4 generations is: Father, mother, grandparents, great-grandmother, cavalry); incense fields, incense lamp fields, economic bases to maintain ancestor worship even though poor descendants are not allowed to sell them, etc. (Quốc Triệu Hinh Luật 1991; Đại Việt Sử ký Toàn thu 2004). In the Nguyen Dynasty, the ancestor worshiping ritual was clearly recorded in the book “Thọ Mai Gia Lễ” (Kim 1919; Thu 1997; Van 2020d).

Currently, researchers do not agree on whether ancestor worship is a religion or a belief. Ancestor worship at first glance, can be considered a religion since most houses have altars and perform solemn and respectful rites of worship, that is, there are signs of religion. However, it is not a religion in the strict sense of the concept (Van 2020a). Ancestor worship does not have unified teachings and does not have a church with strict rules, as is often found in ancient and modern religions.

Origins of the Belief in Worshiping the ancestor:
Origins of socioeconomic:
Ancestor worship is a part of social consciousness, arising on the basis of socioeconomic conditions and subject to the regulation of social existence. Therefore, finding its origin is not in consciousness but in terms of social history, the history of practical human activities. From the point of view of Marxism-Leninism, man’s inability to fight with nature is one of the social origins of ancestor worship.

The history of human society is the history of the serial development of socioeconomic forms. The economic basis of primitive society was the natural economy of hunting and gathering. Therefore, life depends greatly on the natural environment. The primitive communist society was organized in the form of clans and tribes; these are communities of people
with the basic characteristics of having the same bloodline, living in a relatively stable area, cooperating and supporting each other in production, in the fight against natural disasters and wars of invasion by clans, another tribe. The relationship between members of the clan is an equal and cooperative relationship on the basis of public ownership of the means of production (Vuong and Tan 1960).

In the early period of the clan commune, the working tools were still very rudimentary, the level of labor was simple, and the labor productivity was very low (Vuong and Tan 1960). Therefore, the life of primitive people is still not far from the life of animals. Individual consciousness has not yet formed, leading to their social consciousness also being heard purely (Quynh, Lam and Han 2008). Later, when the productive forces developed, the discovery of fire and the use of bows and arrows in hunting created a radical change in the consciousness of primitive people. In this period, ancestral consciousness was an element of primitive communal consciousness, reflecting the powerlessness of man against the forces of nature. The mysterious natural world that surrounds people always threatens life by sudden disasters such as disease, rain, storms, sun, drought, and wild animals, along with the mysterious forces of nature and social forces that always dominate their daily lives (Long and Van 2020). Deadlocked in real life, people seek liberation in spiritual life (San 1998; Duy 2002).

Along with the symbol of the gods, the symbol of the stamp appeared in the matrilineal period. According to Tokarev (1994), ancestor worship in this period was only in its infancy, not a common phenomenon. Totemism is the first stage of the development of ancestor worship. During the time of the Totemism religion, people received an ancestor of an animal in the tribe to pray for them to have a peaceful and prosperous life. Therefore, there was a taboo not to insult the totem, but they broke that taboo and ate the totem meat. They see fear, fear of punishment. The limitation of man before nature and society leads to a limitation on the interpretation of human death. When dead, where does the soul go?, where does the body go or where does the soul go?, this world (the world of the living), the next world (the world of the dead), life and death like that which?, etc., they do not explain or misinterpret. Those were the premises of ancestor worship, which later developed into beliefs.

Origins of cognitive:

One of the sources leading to the formation of beliefs in general and ancestor worship, in particular, is the level of cognitive development. First, like many other peoples, the Vietnamese come from the concept of “vật hữu linh” (everything has a soul) and begin with the natural world around them. Therefore, the most ancient types of gods that people worshiped were natural gods, especially tree gods, rock gods, mountain gods, river gods, etc. By mythologizing and anthropomorphizing, the gods are given the face of humans (kind or fierce) and human psychology (happy or angry).

It can be said that the anthropomorphization of natural gods has created a turning point for the formation of the human god system. This is also the period when people begin to discover themselves. Up to a certain point, the relationship between the visible and invisible world, especially between life and death, has caused people to be concerned. Nevertheless, with the concept of “vật hữu linh” mentioned above, they believe that in each person, there is a “soul” (including astral) and a “body”. The only difference is that men have three souls and seven astrals, and women have three souls and nine astrals.

There is no such thing as the superior sense of “sống lâu trắc về” (heaven or hell) of Christianity or the doctrine of reincarnation in Buddhism. In folk perception, the body and the soul are both attached and separate, they are attached when they are alive and separate when they die: the body has dissolved into the dust, but the soul still exists, moving to “live” in a different place, another world. That world can be called by different names, the ghost realm of the Muong people, or the underworld (the realm of the underworld) in the Vietnamese way of saying it. The realm of the underworld has all the same needs as earthly life. Archaeological documents show that the custom of burying wealth according to the dead has existed since the Son Vi culture. In the burial sites, people find tools for labor and living materials, presumably those that are provided for the dead to use in the afterlife. Thus, according to folk beliefs, death is also a new form of “life” in another environment.

Origins of psychology:

Psychological and emotional factors are subjective factors before the impact of the objective world, and ancestor worship is formed on the basis of the psychology and emotions of people and the community of people in society. One of the essential human needs is to be able to confide, send and relieve frustrations in spiritual life. Belief in worship of the ancestor was formed on the basis of belief in the immortality of ancestral spirits. That belief has helped people create a traditional cultural system of values, sanctifying the feeling of mourning and the attitude of respecting those who have contributed to creating life.

Life is a special cultural environment that is handed down from generation to generation. People live in that environment, not only in contact with the existing but also with the invisible, abstract, ambiguous, and inexplicable by reason. That is only felt by the human mind and hunch. Belief in the existence of ancestors contributes to balancing the psychological state, and sometimes even the end relieves the loneliness and unhappiness of people before death.

Death is always a terrifying obsession of people, and death means a permanent separation from the world and loved ones. However, the laws of biology make it impossible for anyone to avoid them. With ancestor worship rituals, people have contributed to explaining death and life after death, relieving fear when thinking about it. It is clear that the fear of death is alleviated through the worship of one’s grandparents and parents. In addition, gradually become the custom, tradition, the
obligation to worship every family in the form of anniversaries, graves, etc. In addition to the sense of responsibility, perhaps partly because of the fear of being punished for not fulfilling responsibilities and obligations to the deceased.

3. Materials and Methods

Studying the ancient bibliographies that are also kept in museums and research institutes of Vietnam written on beliefs and religions; beliefs and religious activities of Vietnamese people, focusing on studying documents written about belief in worshiping the ancestor and activities of belief in worshiping the ancestor.

Studying ancient documents are still preserved in village pagodas, village temples, and communal houses; in particular, documents are kept in clans in some provinces and cities.

Learn, analyze, and evaluate previously published results of famous and reputable researchers on beliefs and religions of the Vietnamese people such as Tran Van Giau; Phan Ke Binh; Dang Nghiem Van, Phan Ngoc, Phan Dang Duy, Nguyen Duy Hinh, etc. At the same time, we refer to some studies of famous scholars in the world studying folklore. Inheriting and selectively inheriting the achievements of scholars, rationally using research results to serve this research work.

To study the legal documents of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on beliefs and religions; on building and developing an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with national identity during the context of globalization and international economic integration.

The author conducted field trips in a number of provinces and cities of Vietnam, in which the author concentrated in northern Vietnam, including 3 provinces and cities: Hanoi, Thai Binh province, and Hai Phong city; in the central part of Vietnam, there are 3 provinces and cities: Nghe An province, Thua Thien Hue province, and Da Nang city; and in southern Vietnam, there are 3 provinces and cities: Ho Chi Minh city, Can Tho city and Dong Nai province. The author will directly learn and participate in some activities and rituals to worship the ancestors of some families.

The author’s team will conduct a survey of people in the cities where the author’s team visits. The number of people surveyed was N=270. In addition, the authors will interview many reputable people in their families and clans about the value of ancestral worship for people's spiritual life in the current period.

4. Results

Confidence in belief in ancestor worship

Confidence is expressed in the perception of ancestors’ souls:

Many documents from ancient times describe souls in stories of near-death experiences, the afterlife, and communication with the dead, reflecting people’s belief in this supernatural phenomenon. Although very popular, science has thus far not recorded any convincing evidence of the existence of the soul. During interviews for the 2016 book “Ghostly Encounters: The Hauntings of Everyday Life”, Dennis and Michele Waskul found that “many participants were uncertain about the ghostly experience, due to the lack of sight of the images. The image is said to be the “tradition” of the soul. Instead, they believe that they themselves experience the phenomenon “strange, inexplicable, and full of mystery”. Thus, these experiences are more likely to converge on unusually unexplained factors.

In research on confidence in the existence of ancestors’ souls, the authors surveyed 270 people in nine provinces and cities of Vietnam. The results are shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1](https://www.malque.pub/ojs/index.php/msj)
The survey results (shown in Figure 1) show that 62.96% of respondents answered “Belief in the existence of ancestors’ souls”; 19.26% answered “Doubts about the existence of ancestors’ souls”; and only 17.78% answered “Don’t believe in the existence of ancestors’ souls”. The results of this survey show almost similarity in the view of “the existence of ancestors’ soul” taking place today in Vietnamese society.

To learn more about “The confidence is expressed in the perception of ancestors’ souls”, the authors conducted separate surveys on 2 groups of people, namely: A group of people from 20 years old to 50 years old; a group of people from 51 years old to 80 years old. The results are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Confidence is expressed in the perception of ancestors’ souls by age. Source: compiled by the author.

The results of figure 2 show that the group of people aged 51 to 80 years old have a higher level of belief in the existence of souls than the group of people aged 20 to 50 years old; at the same time, the suspicion and distrust of the existence of the soul are also lower. This shows that the older people are, the more people tend to look to their ancestors and origins. This is also a general trend in today’s social life.

In fact, “Believe in the existence of ancestors’ souls” leads to regular ancestor worship. Ancestor worship reminds people never to forget the merits of their ancestors for themselves and their families and at the same time expresses their respect and gratitude. The respectful attitude and behavior of the adults in the family toward the ancestors are of great significance to the education of filial piety for family members, especially for children.

This author draws from in-depth interviews with 30 adults (from 20 to 80 years old) in 09 provinces and cities of Vietnam. One of them said, “If you want to educate filial piety in the family, parents must be a shining example of filial piety. Parents must show love and respect for their grandparents and ancestors and always remind them of their merits for the family when they are still alive. Children who see their parents’ actions like this will respect their parents, be obedient, and treat them well. Parents who do not treat their parents well, neglect to worship, and children will not respect their parents nor respect their parents’ worship later when their parents have returned to their ancestors”.

Thus, the survey results partly show that people are very aware that ancestor worship is a direct and effective method of educating filial piety. It can be said that with “Believe in the existence of ancestors’ souls”, through ancestor worship activities in the family, the tradition of gratitude, “uống nước nhớ nguồn”, “ăn quả nhớ kẻ trồng cây”. The Vietnamese family and the Vietnamese nation will be preserved and continue to be handed down forever even though the size, form, and structure of the Vietnamese family may change due to the impact of objective factors.

Confidence is expressed in the blessing and punishment of ancestors’ souls:

Research results show that most people are very aware of the blessings and punishments of ancestors from ancestor worship to the family and society.

About the blessing of ancestors’ souls Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oder</th>
<th>Survey content</th>
<th>Believe</th>
<th>Suspect</th>
<th>Not believe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Be blessed by the ancestors to have good health</td>
<td>60.37%</td>
<td>18.89%</td>
<td>20.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Being blessed by ancestors to do good business and trade</td>
<td>64.44%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>15.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Being blessed by the ancestors to get promoted</td>
<td>56.67%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>21.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Be blessed with a happy family by ancestors</td>
<td>65.93%</td>
<td>19.26%</td>
<td>14.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Be blessed by the ancestors for their children to study well</td>
<td>63.70%</td>
<td>20.37%</td>
<td>15.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62.22%</td>
<td>20.07%</td>
<td>17.71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: compiled by the author.

https://www.malque.pub/ojs/index.php/msj
The survey results in Table 1 show that the average number of people who answered “believe” had the blessing of ancestral spirits on average, accounting for 62.22% 20.07% answered “suspect” and 17.70% answered “not believe”. The answer that received the highest number of “believe” answers was “Be blessed with a happy family by ancestors”, accounting for 65.93%.

Thus, the majority of respondents believe that ancestor worship will be blessed ancestors in life. Therefore, in daily life, ancestor worship must be done regularly.

Regarding the punishment of ancestors’ souls Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oder</th>
<th>Survey content</th>
<th>Evaluate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Believe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Suspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not believe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Be punishment by the ancestors to have good health</td>
<td>59.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Being punishment by ancestors to do good business and trade</td>
<td>64.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Being punishment by the ancestors to get promoted</td>
<td>57.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Be punishment with a happy family by ancestors</td>
<td>64.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Be punishment of ancestors’ souls to their descendant</td>
<td>67.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>When you die without reincarnation, you can’t be liberating</td>
<td>64.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62.71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The belief in worshiping the ancestors in family education about the sense of origin:

Like other ethnic communities, the Vietnamese have a need to find refuge through their spiritual beliefs (Hinh 2007). However, what is special and different is that instead of creating gods to worship according to their imagination, the Vietnamese have sanctified history and their ancestors into a common source, into gods and symbols sacred statues for worship (Van 2019a, 2019b). From historical facts, the Vietnamese have succeeded in preserving their gratitude and sense of origin through ancestor worship (Van 2020c, 2020d).

There is a symbol of the quintessence of national culture in each Vietnamese house that is very specific, sacred, and close, which is the altar of ancestors. An ancestral altar is not only for worshiping the deceased; the altar is also a symbol of the origins (Van 2020a, 2020b). Therefore, putting an incense stick means lighting up gratitude and respect for ancestors, grandparents, and origins. The worshipping custom of the Vietnamese people started with the Vietnamese people worshipping their ancestors in their own houses. This is a custom that helps to form the house and thereby educates each Vietnamese child on patriotism and patriotism from the moment he is born.

Houses in the Vietnamese mind are built not only out of necessity to have a place to live but also to have a place to worship ancestors (Dinh 1970; Anh 2005). The Vietnamese believe that “where the children are, their grandparents are there”, so having a home means having an altar to worship ancestors and how to live properly. Every house is a family. There will be family training and creating a family name from that house. Family style is the standard of living of a family that is handed down through generations. Therefore, where does that ancestry manifest? It is at the place of worshipping ancestors in the family for people to instruct, remind and educate their children and grandchildren about the nation’s way of life that loves respect, gratitude, and the principle of “uống nước nhớ nguồn”.

The belief in worshiping the ancestors in family education on the ethics of gratitude:

Gratitude has long become a good quality of our Vietnamese people and is taught and expressed through many different folk songs, proverbs, and idioms. Gratitude is appreciating, appreciating, and reciprocating actions, good deeds, or help from others (Anh 2005; Binh 2005; Hinh 2007). Gratitude is expressed in many different aspects, such as the latter being grateful for the merits of the previous generation, children being grateful to their parents, those who are helped to be indebted to benefactors, etc. Gratitude always exists in this life and spreads very well.
Through the worship of immortals, gratitude is expressed in practical human actions. We know how to say “thank you” when others help us appreciate what others do for us to make ourselves better. In addition, the fact that we help others as soon as we can, live in harmony with everyone, and do not compare or envy anyone is also a way to spread the message of gratitude.

Living with gratitude brings important benefits and meanings to every human being. Receiving gratitude from others improves our lives, overcoming immediate difficulties, looking to the future, and having sustainable and long-term values. For each person who lives with gratitude, society will become better, more emotional, and more connected. In addition, gratitude helps us practice other good qualities, conveying positive messages to society.

The belief in worshipping the ancestors in family education on filial piety in daily life:

Filial piety is the foundation of ancestor worship, further worshipping the mother and the country. Vietnamese people worship their ancestors not only to show filial piety but also to wish good luck. Ancestor worship is not only limited to the family but also extends to the family line (Van 2020a, 2020e). All clans have an ancestor’s death anniversary, incense burner, estate property, ancestor church, family church, etc., is the material and spiritual basis for maintaining a sense of gratitude and ancestor worship, which is passed on from generation to generation.

Ancestor worship arouses and educates children’s filial piety toward grandparents and parents: “filial piety to parents is a spiritual value, a moral content in a traditional family, deep origins in the way of thinking, becoming a reason for living with each person, not only shows affection and gratitude but also the responsibility and obligation of being a child” (Sinh 2017). Ancestor worship beliefs mold love for the homeland and country for Vietnamese people and urge generations to fight to protect every inch of their father’s land. From here, contributing to the formation and development of patriotism and national pride is a valuable, transparent, and meaningful moral value for the life of Vietnamese people.

Filial piety is deeply expressed through the profound philosophies of ancestor worship through ancestor worship rituals in each family. Ancestor worship is a subtle way of dealing with dead ancestors, making the past, present, and future closely connected and organically related to each other (Thu 1997; Them 2000). It is the continuous and long-term expression of responsibility and morality of descendants toward their ancestors. That responsibility and ethics are expressed deeply and specifically not only in living behaviors, such as preserving honor and family reputation and the continuation of family traditions but also in specific behaviors and values that ancestors leave for future descendants (Van 2020d; Vu Hong Van 2021).

On the anniversary of the death anniversary, descendants and relatives gather together to pay tribute to the deceased, review together the merits and graces of parents and grandparents toward the family and each individual; together discuss and solve common problems of families and clans; mind, pray to the ancestors’ souls to bless and sustain their children and grandchildren, overcome all calamities and problems in life; and secretly promise the soul of the deceased to strive and cultivate to glorify the family and lineage so that the ancestors’ souls in the nine streams can rest in peace.

Those noble values of ancestor worship will always be preserved and developed in every Vietnamese person and family in the current context, creating a strong spiritual motivation for each individual to strive and rise in life.

6. Conclusion

The ancestor worship of the Vietnamese people plays a very important role in moral education, which is reflected in the morality of being a person, the manners of living, and the manners of the upper and lower. On the other hand, it is the beauty of family and national culture, meeting people’s spiritual needs, thereby creating a good tradition handed down from generation to generation. The country is reaching for civilization and modernity but still has to keep the good traditions of the nation. The family is the cell of society, and ancestor worship plays an important role in the life of each family in particular and the Vietnamese community in general.

Ancestor worship arouses and educates children’s filial piety toward grandparents and parents. Respect for parents is a spiritual value, a moral content in a traditional family, ingrained in the way of thinking, and becomes a reason for each person’s life, not only expressing affection and gratitude but also the responsibilities and obligations of the child’s religion. A father’s father and mother’s love is like a high mountain, the source of water can be told so quickly, so be filial to your parents during life; reverent, grateful, mourn when parents die, and return to ancestors. These beauties have become a part of the good cultural value of the nation, preserved by generations of Vietnamese people, and built and developed together in the face of the impacts of globalization and economic integration international.

Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Funding

This research did not receive any financial support.
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