

Be You: Integrated Facets of Self - A Framework for Women's Identity, Values and Agency

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Abstract

This study explores how Chinese philosophical values shape women's self-construal at a personal level, grounded in the belief that reality is socially constructed and interpretive in nature. A comprehensive interdisciplinary literature review, spanning sociology, anthropology, philosophy and psychology, informs the formation of a micro-level framework. Drawing from social psychology and cultural psychology, the research inductively formulates the concept of a social and personal construct of self, guided by the empirical findings that elicited the drivers of women's agency. Methodologically, the study adopts an interpretive and phenomenological approach to thematically analyse the emotions, behaviour and attitudes influencing women's choices, decision and actions. The image-based data collection tool known as Zaltman Metaphoric Elicitation Technique (ZMET) is employed to uncover deeply held values and feelings. This technique aids in conceptualising the “integrated facets of self” framework, synthesizing individual, social, and relational dimensions to show how ethnicity, gender, and social roles are shaped by both personal and societal values. Academically, this research offers a novel perspective on women's self-construal, emphasizing its dynamic, relational, and emotionally driven nature. It reveals how women negotiate between personal aspirations and societal expectations, contributing to a holistic understanding of agency within gender studies. By illuminating the emotional and cultural dimensions of decision-making, the study enriches cross-cultural discourse on lived experiences. It invites future research to investigate the evolving nature of women's agency across diverse sociocultural contexts and the role of emotions in shaping choices, decisions and actions, offering a holistic view of agency.

Keywords: interpretive, identity, values, self-construal, agency, ZMET