

The Impact of China's "Me Too" Movement on Individuals and Society under News Framing Theory: An Example of the Weibo Topic #I'll Be Your Voice

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1. INTRODUCTION

The "Me Too" movement, which originated in the United States, has sparked a great deal of discussion on Chinese social media Sina Weibo. On his Weibo account, the Chinese academic Chang Jiang has hashtagged "I'll be your voice", saying he is "willing to help girls who have been sexually abused but are afraid, unable or unwilling to disclose their experiences due to various concerns to make their voices heard by coding them." He also summarized the first batch of submissions through his public microblog "Grapefruit Season". According to Chang Jiang, "It's a great way to get victims who have trouble being heard because they are in some kind of vulnerable position to participate in the great MeToo movement." Screenshot from China's social media microblog.



In 2017 American actress Alyssa Milano tweeted a call for women who have been sexually assaulted to come forward and speak out about their ordeal, saying, "If all women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted would post a 'Me too' status, then people might recognize the problem's seriousness and prevalence of the problem." After this tweet was sent out, users on various social platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc. posted messages, and since then Me Too has become an anti-sexual harassment label, and the movement related to it has gradually swept across the world.

The development of information communication technologies, especially social media, has facilitated Chinese people to express their protests, allowing them to share their experiences online in recent years. Feminist activists began staging solidarity campaigns on social media platforms, Weibo and WeChat as of January 2018 (Fincher, 2021). The case study used in this article is about a Chinese academic, Chang Jiang, who posted relevant content on his Weibo under the hashtag #I'll be your voice, where he expressed his willingness to help girls who had been sexually abused but, for various reasons, were not able to go public with their experiences to make their voices heard. He also summarized the first batch of submissions through his public microblog "Grapefruit Season". I think this is a practical new media activity in which women are actively involved, and the case study of #I'll be your voice not only helps us to understand why the MeToo movement has developed in Chinese social media but also explores the impact of this movement on individuals and society.

Sina Weibo, a social platform for sharing short, real-time information, was launched in 2009 and is not only one of the most popular social media in China but also one of the main digital spaces where the MeToo movement in China has taken shape. As women's movements and feminist issues are often discussed on Sina Weibo, I believe that the impact of the MeToo movement on Chinese social media on both individuals and society is also of great interest. Individuals and minorities have found the courage to raise their voices on social media platforms, posting content with their own hashtags, and ultimately creating a consensus, which has increased women's willingness and ability to participate in the discussion. Users with different identities and backgrounds have mobilized more and more women to participate through hashtags, unfolding their discursive practices in new media and expressing women's demands.

The main theory used in this paper is the journalistic framing theory, in which a frame is an emphasis in salience of different aspects of a topic. An influential way in which the media shapes public opinion is by framing events and issues in a particular way. Framing involves a communication source presenting and defining an issue. The notion of framing has gained momentum in the communication disciplines, giving guidance to both investigations of media content and to studies of the relationship between media and public opinion (De Vreese, 2005).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many journals refer to the fact that women constantly recall events passively or actively, and then disclose the details on the Internet to draw the attention of netizens to such events. For example, much of the coverage of the #MeToo movement describes the physical metaphors through which women express their distress, pain, and trauma when recounting incidents of sexual assault (Alrasheed and Lim, 2018). The experience of sexual violence becomes digital and women's #MeToo stories make visible the bodies, wounds, and visceral tensions from their experiences of sexual violence. Women have shared detailed stories of the violation of their bodies in various spaces (Liu, 2023).

Influenced by Confucian teachings, traditional Chinese society has been conservative about sexual issues (Lin and Yang, 2019). Also, women, who have historically been less represented than men, are expected to be submissive and independent (Lin, 2018). Hu and Chang (2018) analyzed and compared the reports of the Chinese media People's Daily, China Youth Daily, and Southern Metropolis Daily with those of the New York Times in the United States in the period from October 2017 to April 2018 by comparing the presentation of the topic of sexual harassment in the mainstream media in China and the United States. The study shows that in terms of the choice of topics, the US tends to report more on the MeToo movement, controversial views, and gender equality, while the Chinese media tends to choose regulatory mechanisms, resistance, sexual harassment phenomena, and sexual harassment cases as news topics. Behind the news frames of this kind of coverage are shown the differences between the two countries' feminist cultures and the different real-world social environments of the two countries.

In terms of cultural research, Chinese scholar Jin Jianbin conducts an in-depth interview with scholar Chang Jiang to understand the motivation of the MeToo movement in China and briefly analyses the uniqueness and development prospects of the MeToo movement in China. He argues that the context of the MeToo movement in China is very different from that of the West and that its greatest significance lies in the elimination of stigma for victims of sexual assault and harassment, and the realization of healing through "empathy" on social media. The main way to achieve this is to amplify the voices of female victims from all walks of life so that victims who are afraid, unwilling, or unable to communicate their experiences with anyone because of shame can gain knowledge about sexual assault from other people's experiences and the strength to use this knowledge to get out of their

mental dilemmas, which is why China's Mi-Rabbit campaign is more similar to "therapy through empathy " (Chang and Jin, 2018).

From the content of the articles collected and collated, I found that with the development of media technology, the medium of scholars' research has shifted from newspapers and television at the beginning to many social media platforms, such as Weibo. The common focus is on the details of the events and psychological activities of women's assaults, describing their hurtful experiences in detail. There is not much mention of the impact of changes in the current media environment on the individual and social levels, which is the innovation of this paper.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This paper adopts the textual analysis method to extract information and data related to news framing related media research, the MeToo movement in different countries from the collected written materials for in-depth analysis and understanding. The main research object of this paper is the impact of the MeToo movement in China on the personal experience and social level, which analyses the formation of women's discursive practices on social media microblogging with a specific hashtag topic. The detailed measures are as follows. Firstly, in terms of material collection and organization, I searched for the keywords "Me Too", news frames, and feminist media studies on Weibo and China Knowledge Network (CNKI). Through collating and summarizing, I have summarized the personal opinions and views related to them. The screening criteria for the materials are, on the one hand, the heat of their content (the number of retweets, comments, likes, and reads), and on the other hand, whether the views are related to the topic of the study. Secondly, in this fragmented information, combing and summarizing the intersecting topics of people's centralized discussions to find the common and contradictory points between the viewpoints. Within the complexity of such different articles, the impact of the MeToo movement in China on personal experience and social development is sorted out.

4. REASONS FOR THE EMERGENCE OF THE METOO MOVEMENT #I'LL BE YOUR VOICE ON CHINESE SOCIAL MEDIA

Firstly, the process of media development from newspapers to radio and television, and nowadays in the Internet era, the whole media environment has become more and more open, and it has brought great convenience to users. Everyone is free to speak out, the authority of mainstream media is being challenged, users can share what they see and hear in real-time, the interaction between people has increased, and online communities have been brought together based on interest, language, philosophy, and other factors. In China, on platforms such as Weibo and WeChat, each user is free to post content, read and discuss all visible content on the platforms within the bounds of the law, and is no longer a passive recipient of news provided by the media. People can spread the news twice or even many times by liking, commenting, or retweeting on the topics, and can complete point-to-multiple diffusion by individuals. Moreover, with the development of technology and society, women's access to the Internet has increased, especially after entering the new media era, and there are more and more topics about women. Women from different countries and backgrounds can discuss the same topic, which also makes the awareness of gender equality spread gradually. At the same time, the richness and diversity of social media platforms also allow more female users to participate in the discussion. The case of #I'll be your voice#, it shows the game between women's discourse and mainstream gender discourse in the new media era.

Secondly, with the continuous development of network technology, the fourth wave of feminism started in 2008, and the most influential one globally is the MeToo movement, which generated digital feminism, where feminist activists would make use of online platforms to carry out feminist online activities, share knowledge and express their resistance. China's MeToo movement began in 2018, on Weibo, which has since become a major platform for women's discourse, and since then, female users have become more and more comfortable with Weibo hashtags, such as #SeeWomenLabourers, which were the most frequently mentioned by interviewees, and #SeeWomen'sPower, which was the most popular hashtag on Weibo. The hashtag I'll be your voice# is a group discussion on the microblogging platform where women# use the hashtag to tell their own stories on the internet or use pseudonyms to tell their own stories, with radical or moderate points of view conveying women's feelings and demands, and leading to a wide-ranging discussion that conveys disgust at sexual harassment and challenges the dominant male discourse. is a challenge to the mainstream male discourse.

It is worth noting that some posts on this topic are not only blocked, but also deleted, and such a network mechanism can discourage women's movements to a certain extent. One scholar writes about how survivors' physical and emotional experiences are frequently disregarded and muted in societal conversations (Larson, 2021).

In conclusion, with the constant updating of technology and the increasing awareness of women's participation in topic discussion, the dominance of male discourse has been eliminated to some extent and the admission of female discourse has been achieved. The use of hashtags on social media enables the appeals of some groups to be seen by the public, generating a unique media power.

5. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE METOO MOVEMENT IN CHINA AND EUROPE AND AMERICA

The biggest difference between the MeToo movement in China and those in Europe and the United States is the elimination of shame. The MeToo movement, which originated in Europe and the United States, fits particularly well with local Chinese feminism, which has gradually formed a system since the 1980s (Chang and Jin, 2018). This movement in China, #I'll be your voice, publishes content in the form of third-person paraphrases, with opinion leaders delivering their voices on social media, which reduces the psychological pressure on women and gives full play to the role of social media. The MeToo movement has made everyone realize that I can do this too.

For Western women, to a certain extent, there is no obsession with shame. After the second feminist movement in the 1960s, well-educated women generally have a modern sense of rights. However, traditional Chinese women, have been negatively influenced by traditional culture on the one hand, and have been disciplined by society and family on the other hand, and they need to overcome many obstacles, such as emotional and moral aspects. So, while the MeToo movement is often seen as a powerful form of self-empowerment in Western countries, there are relatively few such movements in China. This is because shame can put victims under tremendous psychological and social pressure, making them choose to continue to endure rather than speak out publicly after thinking about it.

6. THE IMPACT OF THE METOO MOVEMENT IN CHINA ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

6.1 Impact on the Individual Level

De Vreese (2005) points out in his article that framing as a process consists of different stages: frame construction, frame setting, and the impact of framing on the individual and social levels. Among the effects on individuals, news framing theory suggests that individuals change their attitudes toward issues after being exposed to certain frames.

In the case of #I'll be your voice#, the microblogging platform influences people's views on women's issues with a specific news media frame. Firstly, the microblogging platform is completely public, the openness of microblogging allows many people to discuss and analyze a topic, and all microbloggers have the opportunity to be able to see the tweets, for example, the hashtag has 510 million tweets read, and clicking on the hashtag reveals all the voices that have been heard, any text can be produced, disseminated and consumed. Secondly, opinion leaders have a role to play in changing people's consciousness and behavior. The #I'll be your voice campaign involved several influential bloggers whose comments reached more women and helped to amplify the campaign. Similar research in other places evidences that social media encourages densely layered interactions of different networks and helps 'girls and women to connect, share and find solidarity' (Keller et al,2018).

On the one hand, China has sparked widespread discussion about sexual harassment and gender inequality. This public discussion has helped raise awareness of these issues and has pushed more victims to come forward with their experiences. Many victims have found strength and support by sharing their stories. Not only were they psychologically comforted, but the trauma of sexual harassment was alleviated to a certain extent. On the other hand, users' participation in the dissemination of news through comments, retweets, likes, etc., also influences the construction and evolution of the news framework to some extent and promotes the development and expansion of the incident.

6.2 Impact on social development

In his article, De Vreese (2005) argues that news frames have an impact on the social dimension and help to shape the process of the social dimension. Firstly, to some extent, discussions on social media will prompt government departments to review and improve laws and policies related to sexual harassment and may increase legal penalties for sexual harassment. Second, universities and educational institutions are beginning to focus on the prevention and treatment of sexual harassment. For example, Luo Xixi's allegations against CCTV host Zhu Jun have sparked nationwide attention to the issue of sexual harassment. Universities such as Peking University and Nanjing University have said they will strengthen their investigations and responses to sexual harassment. These measures could change society's attitude towards victims from one of incomprehension and blame to one of support and sympathy. This Me Too movement has also made schools realize the importance of sex education, and relevant content has been added to textbooks, as well as courses to prevent sexual harassment and assault.

Overall, this MeToo movement that has taken place on social media has influenced many people's views on women's topics and has contributed to a broader discussion on sexual harassment and gender inequality. This discussion on social media has not only raised individuals' awareness of such incidents and triggered reflection on sexual harassment in society but has also driven policy changes and actions in educational institutions, and the resulting framing effect has had a profound impact on the attitudes and behaviors of both individuals and society.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper has described how the "Me Too" movement in China has had an impact at the individual and societal levels through the social media platform Weibo. Using news framing as a research theory, it mainly analyzed how individuals' attitudes changed after being exposed to specific narrative frames and how the frames helped to advance the process at the social level. The case of #I'll be your voice# changed most of the public perception, not only empowering women's voices but also liberation of ideas. At the same time, it has changed societal attitudes towards sexual harassment and highlighted the role of social media in amplifying marginalized voices.

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