



# Research on the Impact of Weibo on the Women's Sense of Social Security in China: A Case Study of the Information at the Tangshan Violence Incident

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**Abstract.** The public's sense of social security reflects the degree of stability in people's lives. Nowadays, with the development of technology, traditional media are gradually replaced by network media, while the relevant institutional norms have not been developed in parallel. This paper takes the dissemination of the Tangshan violence incident that became a sensation on the Internet as an example, and studies the changes in the mainstream network media and young women in mainland China about the sense of social security after learning about the Tangshan violence incident spread on the Internet by means of a questionnaire survey. This paper also conducts a literature review of numerous scholars' studies, and through the previous studies, it concludes the current situation that network media lacks institutional regulation, the news is pan-politicized and presents a mirror image of false prosperity. In addition, even though women's voices in online public opinion are enhanced by the anonymized online environment, they are still subject to invisible discrimination and "male gaze", which are the reasons that affect women's sense of social security. This paper supply to and strengthens the previous viewpoints, and shows that people are aware of the commercialization of real news by network media, but they are still affected by such news. Therefore, it is crucial to enhance the system and regulations governing network media, to strengthen the professionalism and ethics of journalists, and to promote equal discourse rights and care for the weak.

**Keywords:** Tangshan violence incident · The sense of social security · Network media

## 1 Introduction

The sense of social security is a measure of the social operation mechanism and the degree of stability of people's lives, reflecting people's perception of social security or not. It is one of the important symbols to reflect the social security situation and is reflected by the sense of security of individuals in the society [1]. According to Zhang, with the rapid development of Internet technology and the vast popularity of media at the social

level, China has into an era of “media convergence” that integrates traditional media and audiences [2]. In recent years, unexpected public events are usually disseminated through social media such as Weibo, and the once single communication pattern of mainstream media has been broken. Its media credibility has encountered unprecedented challenges.

The following part will introduce the definition of violence and Weibo’s background information. Violence is an explicit or symbolic act that can result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm. Violence can be classified as school violence, domestic violence, physical violence, gender violence against oneself, interpersonal violence, and group violence [3]. Physical violence includes the deliberate use of physical force and weaponry to shanghai a victim by pushing, hitting, tying, kicking, whipping, and other means [4]. Many Chinese laws include relevant restrictions on violence from the perspective of human rights, protection of minors and vulnerable groups, integration of mental health education and awareness of safety and protection into compulsory education, and work to avoid violence.

Shifting the focus to Weibo, which was founded in 2009 and provided a superior social media platform for users who create, share, and discover online content. It also connects the approach to the user’s self-express in real-time and the powerful function of social interaction, content integration, and distribution. Weibo content, which also can be attached to multi-media and long-form content, could be created by any user. The relationship between Weibo users may be asymmetric, and any users can be followed by others and add their comments or repost the Weibo content. Weibo’s features that could be easily used, asymmetric, and distributed allow original content can evolve into the topic trend, which can quickly spread, multi-participation, and update in real-time [5]. Weibo includes many users. In 2017, Sina technology reported that the number of active users grew to 340 million, surpassing Twitter’s data in the same period [6]. These data illustrate that Weibo is the essential media platform and channel for the public to obtain information, which is the reason why this paper chose Weibo as the research object.

A piece of very controversial news that happened between these two platforms is that several girls encountered violence in a Tangshan barbecue restaurant, posted on the Weibo platform sparked the attention of many netizens. The general story is that four women were dining at a barbecue restaurant in Tangshan late at night when a man tried to accost and touch one of the women on the back but was refused; hence the man felt humiliated and gave the girl a sound trashing, and then the man’s other companions dragged the four women to the outside of the restaurant to continue the assault. During this time, a few of the other guests eating at the restaurant at the same time stopped the violence. After the surveillance video was released, the anger of many netizens was instantly ignited, and the related news soared to first place on the list. Many celebrity netizens have expressed dissatisfaction with the violence, and many discussions about the incident have appeared on Weibo.

## 2 Literature Review

The sense of social security is the eternal pursuit of human society, while the youth are the founders of a nation’s development. Scholars’ research proves that young people’s perceptions of the social environment have been influenced by external factors, and

that under these influences, the public's sense of social security in mainland China has tended to decline. Wang argued that the youth are the recipients of various types of media information dissemination. Their social attitudes can affect the harmony and stability of other groups and society. Both external factors and their characteristics may influence youth groups' perceptions of the social environment and, consequently, their views and attitudes toward society [7]. Chen's research also presents the sense of social security in China public illustrates a downward trend year by year, including several reasons. For example, frequent incidents of violence, a large transient population, and crimes. The sense of social security as a mental phenomenon is a crucial subject in psychology study. The lack of this sense is the foundation of inducing various mental diseases [1].

In the era of information and network, network media will be the trend in Journalism & Communication. However, there are some disharmony factors between media power and the public. Luo and Chen's research shows that although the problems of vulnerable groups such as financial aid, legal aid, and physical security obtained more attention, their discourse power and information power obtained less guarantee. The barrier of the social public between discourse and information will cause conflict and influence the construction of harmony society. The authors emphasized that because of the lure of the market, social responsibility has been downplayed by some media to pursue maximum profit and deliver the right to distribute information resources to the market. The imbalance of media discourse power will intensify the information divide at the different social level and cause the public information platform tilts toward a powerful position. Ultimately, this phenomenon will lead vulnerable social groups to become "spiral of silence" groups. Moreover, the distortion of news, such as pan-politicization, lead to false prosperity and stimulate the masses to generate higher mental need. In contrast, the psychological expectation of the masses cannot be satisfied [8].

Regarding news reporting methods, some media are keen to use sensationalism to report the news to gain attention and achieve instant sensation. The credibility of journalism has been eroded by the declining news profession morals [8]. This paper regards this phenomenon as one of the reasons why several unstable factors were generated, and the sense of social security declined. Zhang's quantitative analysis of media credibility also supports this view, which supposed public trust toward the media in the context of media convergence not only influence the media's social image and market operation but also participates in the expression of public opinion. Zhang found that mainstream media's credibility on China's mainland continues to decline, an indisputable fact [2].

Shifting the paper's focus to the media communication of emergencies. Through the media's new reporting, emergencies will be liable to raise public discussion and will complicate simple problems. Eventually, the credibility of the government and media will be decreased [9]. Jin and Zhou's research supplemented Ye's conclusion, which focuses more on disseminating public opinion from the perspective of feminism about the "LALAMOVE" event. They analyzed the polarization of public opinion caused by female victims in the Weibo context. Speculation of "sexual harassment" based on the female perspective and the focus on the victim's appearance were the main reasons for the rapid spread of the LALAMOVE event. Due to the high level of discussion and commercial value of the topic, many commercial media were involved in spreading the event and shifting the focus of public opinion from the individual victim to the female

population. This eventually led to a period of reversal of public opinion, with some We-media suggesting that the girls were victimized because she was in immoral sex-related occupations, triggering a heated public debate. According to the analysis, the distribution of emotions under the news showed that disgust and anger accounted for 59 percent and 19.64 percent, respectively, thus leading to a further decrease in the media's credibility and social security [10].

Although a considerable body of research has been carried out on the importance of social security and the shortcomings of current online communication, much less is known about factors affecting women's perceptions of social security. It is crucial that studying the female's thinking is conducive to improving the social trust mechanism, establishing a pluralistic and mutual social opinion platform, and an equal and mutual social environment, hence enhancing social stability. Therefore, this paper hypothesizes that women's attitudes toward social security in the context of network media in mainland China show a negative trend, and that the influencing factors are positively correlated with media effect, audience commodity theory, and the political economy theory of communication. The object of this paper is the mainstream media platform in mainland China, take Weibo as an example, and the female groups (age ranging from 18 to 40). Additionally, this paper will use a questionnaire to explore the reasons why network media influencing the feelings of social security among females.

### 3 Methodology

This paper focuses on a quantitative research method using questionnaires. Quantitative research is the scientific study that determines the quantitative prescriptiveness of an aspect of a thing and then goes on to analyze and interpret the quantities obtained in order to gain meaning and research methods and processes. This paper is dedicated to studying how the Tangshan violence has influenced women's sense of social security with the dissemination of Weibo. Moreover, in Zhang and Chen's research, which is both in content and form similar to this study, the use of questionnaires as a form of quantitative research was selected. Therefore, using quantitative research facilitates describing the relationship between social phenomena through statistics [11]. The questionnaire was titled "Survey on the current situation of women's sense of social security from the perspective of the Internet and the reasons for it," The author used the "wenjuan.com" platform to create the questionnaire and put it in the author's life circle. The inject cycle of the questionnaire is one week, and 114 questionnaires were returned. Forty of the questionnaires were considered invalid for men who answered the questionnaire and those who chose "do not know" about the Tangshan violence event because the study was about the impact of the violence on women in Tangshan. In addition, the questionnaire answers are usually designed using the Likert scale, which facilitates the measurement of multidimensional complex concepts or attitudes, makes it convenient for the respondent to answer the questions, and has higher credibility. This research methodology was highly confidential, and no privacy, such as the names of the participants, were collected. The use of the data and the informed consent of the study participants were highlighted on the cover of the questionnaire.

## 4 Results

Based on the questionnaire, many results could be discovered. The first set of questions aimed to obtain interviewees' basic information, 97 percent of the people who answered the questionnaire were female, and those who selected "male" were prohibited from answering the questions, effectively preventing confusion of the questionnaire information. Among the valid questionnaire respondents, 50 percent of the 18–30 and 30 + age groups. The third question shows the way the participants follow social news. The overwhelming majority of the participants obtain social news through the network platforms, such as Weibo. By contrast, those participants through official media, such as news broadcasts and newspapers, had accounted for a marginal proportion. The fourth question presents the extent to which the survey participants know about the Tangshan violence events. The sixth question explored participants' knowledge of the violence in Tangshan. Excluding those who did not know (one of the criteria for determining invalid questionnaires), 85 percent were generally aware of the incident, while 15 percent were very aware of it. The fifth question was a multiple-choice question that explored the factors influencing women's sense of social security. An overwhelming majority (86 percent) felt that social security affected their sense of social security, and 62 percent felt that information theft was one of the influencing factors. About 20 percent were concerned about the international situation and public health. Another 3 percent were concerned about other factors. The sixth question explored whether participants agreed with the societal discussion on Weibo that society was in a dangerous state following the violence in Tangshan. 48 percent were unsure about the situation, 31 percent agreed with the rhetoric, and even 9 percent strongly agreed with it, those who held an opposing view held a minority position, and those who disagreed and strongly disagreed, each accounted for about 5 percent. The seventh question, also a multiple-choice question, examined the impact on people after the violence in Tangshan. Those who said they would no longer engage in late-night activities and those who would no longer refuse to be accosted by strange men each accounted for 55 percent, and 51 percent said they would no longer be alone with strange men (for example, alone in the elevator and the Uber), 43 percent would no longer wear more revealing clothing, 33 percent said they would no longer help victims who were being brutalized alone, 26 percent would no longer go out without a man, by contrast, only 13 percent said Tangshan violence would not have any effect on their behavior. The eighth question asked participants if they agreed with the opinion on Weibo that the cause of the violence against the women in the Tangshan event was related to their appearance, dress, and habits. 50 percent strongly disagreed with this opinion, 19 disagreed, and 7 percent were unsure about the question. Those who agree with this view are in the minority, with 18 percent agreeing that the violence against women was related to their reasons and only 6 percent strongly agreeing. The ninth question asked participants if they thought the violence in Tangshan was related to gender. The majority agreed with this view, 34 percent strongly agreed, 28 percent generally agreed, and 23 percent said they were not sure.

In contrast, only 9 percent disagreed that violence in Tangshan was related to gender, and 6 percent strongly disagreed with this view. The tenth question explored whether participants thought network media was an effective channel for learning about the exact society. 48 percent agreed, and 15 percent strongly agreed. Therefore, those who agreed

with this view were in the majority position. 27 percent were unsure of the answer to this question, 9 percent disagreed with the view, and 1 percent strongly disagreed with the view. The final question asked participants if they thought network media complicates and exaggerates events. 43 percent agreed, 8 percent strongly agreed, and agreement dominated. 35 percent had difficulty making a judgment, 9 percent disagreed with the idea, and 4 percent strongly disagreed.

## 5 Discussion

From the survey results, it can be seen that the age groups concerned about the violence in Tangshan include students and the working age population, and both occupy the same proportion, which indicates that women of all age groups are concerned about the violence in society. In response to following social news, the overwhelming majority of people use network media platforms such as Weibo to get news. While most people agree that online media is an effective way to learn about the social situation, more than half agree that online media can complicate and exaggerate events. With the advent of the 5G era, network media and public life are becoming increasingly inseparable, and network media, a product of the development of online information technology, occupies a prominent position in communication. In the network media platform, everyone can be a news communicator and publish and disseminate information. However, the way of network media communication has both advantages and disadvantages. The number of users registered in the network media platform covers a wide range, thus significantly enhancing the influence of communication. If there is hot news, most netizens have to spread and comment to expand the scope of dissemination so that it can achieve a “detonation of the whole network” of the effect of dissemination. Network media is established on the Internet platform, which is not limited by time and space and has a speed of dissemination unmatched by traditional media. Because every Internet user can become a “reporter” in the network media, the authenticity of network news is usually doubtful and sometimes becomes exaggerated under the rendering of the Internet, thus deviating from the development of the event itself [12]. To reverse the situation of network news shaping false mirrors and improve the authenticity of online news, it is necessary to improve the legal system, enhance the quality of the media, strictly prohibit the platforms from blindly pursuing clicks and deliberately distorting facts, and maintain the healthy development of the news dissemination environment.

Since the Tangshan violence was a social security incident, the number of women who believed that “social security” affected their sense of social safety after the incident was overwhelmingly high, reaching a staggering 86%, as shown in the survey results. The vast majority even said they would no longer engage in behavior similar to that of the victims of the Tangshan violence. For example, they would no longer refuse to be accosted by strange men to prevent retaliation by miff men. Moreover, in response to the public opinion that society is in a dangerous environment on the Internet after the Tangshan violence, most people believe that the public is indeed in an unsafe social environment. Violence has always existed in society on a daily basis, but the Tangshan violence has been dramatically publicized by network media. The violence that occurs daily does not trigger fear in many people. Therefore, it can be shown that social events can indeed

impact the public's psychology after being exaggerated by the Internet. Due to the politicization of the official news media and the single positive propaganda, the public is exposed to an exalted "mirror image of prosperity," and it is difficult for the public to grasp the actual social situation and the demanding psychology inspired by the extraordinary situation in the news propaganda is getting higher and higher. However, the sudden exposure to the Tangshan violence has caused a vast psychological gap. Furthermore, in the way of network news reporting, some self-media pursued commercialization and exaggerated the details to achieve commercial demands, which is also a reason for the public's declining sense of social security [8].

While more than half disagreed with the public opinion on Weibo that the reason for the violence against the women in Tangshan was related to their appearance and behavior, most agreed that the violence was a gender-related act. From the surveillance video after the incident, the public can learn that not only the woman in the center of the public opinion suffered violence, but other women who helped them also suffered indiscriminate violence, and even another woman in the same camp with the abuser because of trying to stop people from fighting each other also suffered attacks. The scrutiny of women's appearance, the attribution of their experiences to their behavior, and the apparent violation of women's rights on Weibo are some of the main reasons for public opinion. Based on women's perspectives, the apparent "sexual harassment" of the perpetrator in the Tangshan violence incident and the narrow focus of public opinion may have further reduced women's sense of social security. In contrast, with its anonymity, the Weibo platform has weakened the "spiral of silence" phenomenon, allowing various kinds of speech to exist simultaneously and, to a certain extent, increasing the strength of women's discourse [13]. Because in the traditional Chinese power system, women are usually the second sex to be "gazed at" and are in a vulnerable position. Social norms normalize this relationship, limiting women's power positions and voices while encouraging men's power positions. Therefore, many in public opinion shift the focus away from the violence and instead focus on finding fault with the murdered women [14]. Public opinion spreads not only the content of the violence itself but also the emotions and attitudes of the subjects of public opinion. From the questionnaire results, it can be known that the participants disagree with the stigmatization of victims in public opinion and oppose gender-specific violence. Therefore, a meaningful way to enhance women's sense of social security is to improve the necessary social responsibility and media literacy of Internet users. Many network media, represented by Weibo, should build a social opinion mechanism that promotes gender equality and pluralistic mutual assistance, improve news and opinion supervision, reduce the exposure of unscrupulous media, and promote the process of building a harmonious society.

## 6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper aims to study the impact of network media on the current state of women's social security. Some preliminary results of this study were obtained through 74 valid questionnaires. Firstly, the much-publicized Tangshan violence on the Internet did have a decreasing effect on most women's sense of social security. Secondly, due to the concern about Internet public opinion and social security, most women said

that they would not do the same behavior as the victim of Tangshan violence. Thirdly, even though most said that online media is an effective way to understand the current situation in society, it was acknowledged that online news could complicate the actual situation. Social security is the cornerstone of building a harmonious and stable society. Hence, exploring ways to enhance people's sense of social security is crucial. Under the perspective of network media, the government and social groups can do the following: 1. Strengthen journalists' professional literacy and ethical spirit and avoid excessive commercialization of news. 2. Try to show the real scene of society and avoid the pan-politicization of news and the creation of false prosperity, which causes the masses' 3. Establish strict norms for speaking on network media platforms to avoid the widespread dissemination of false news and war-citing remarks, by bringing traditional media up to date and respecting the plurality of speech and the equality of discourse. Allowing the weak can have a voice and human rights can be cared for so that the public's sense of social security can be enhanced and the goal of building a fair and just society can be achieved.

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