Formation and Individual Coping Strategies of Social Media News Fatigue

Tian Chu

Capital Medical University, Beijing, China
rodinacalls@outlook.com

Abstract. Social media has become the main channel for news acquisition, but the explosive growth of information and uneven quality have led to user fatigue, anxiety, and other negative emotions, known as "news fatigue". News fatigue not only affects users' mental health but also has profound implications for the public opinion environment and information dissemination in society. This study delves into the causes and coping strategies of news fatigue from an individual perspective through a questionnaire survey. The study finds that information overload, negative content, content homogeneity, and false information are the main causes; individuals cope by reducing usage time, screening content, and turning to traditional media. In addition, the study explores the impact of different population characteristics on news fatigue and the key role of individual psychological states in the formation and coping of fatigue. The study proposes platform optimization suggestions, such as algorithm improvements and "rest mode", and emphasizes the importance of improving media literacy. The research results provide theoretical and practical references for understanding the mechanisms of news fatigue and developing intervention strategies.

Keywords: Social Media, News Fatigue, Coping Strategies, Individual Perspective, Psychological State.

1 Introduction

This study focuses on the profound changes in news consumption patterns in the era of social media. Social media has become the main channel for acquiring news, but the explosive growth of information and uneven quality have led to user fatigue, anxiety, and other negative emotions, known as "news fatigue" [1]. News fatigue not only affects users' mental health but also has profound implications for the public opinion environment and information dissemination in society.

News fatigue has become a global challenge. According to data from the Reuters News Institute in 2022, 38% of respondents in 46 countries and regions "deliberately avoid news sometimes or often," an increase of 9% from 2017 [2]; domestic research also shows that 41.11% of college students have a negative attitude towards online news [3]. This phenomenon not only threatens individual mental health but also affects public awareness and participation in social issues, endangering democratic processes and the information ecosystem. This study is conducted in three dimensions:

S. Garcia-Esteban et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2026 5th International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities and Arts (SSHA 2026)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 1014,
https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-577-5_87

The cause mechanism focuses on information overload, the decline in news quality, and conflicts with platform attributes. Information explosions lead to cognitive overload, the lack of news authenticity, fragmentation, and entertainment tendencies, coupled with the contradiction between the original design of social media platforms and the needs of news dissemination, together catalyze the production of fatigue. Analysis of population differences shows that variables such as age, gender, and education significantly affect the degree of fatigue. Women, low-educated people, and new employees in the workplace are more vulnerable, confirming the correlation between social resources and information processing capabilities. At the psychological intermediary level, mechanisms such as self-efficacy and learned helplessness play a key role. When users doubt their ability to obtain accurate news, low efficacy will accelerate avoidance behavior, forming a vicious cycle of "overload-fatigue-avoidance."

The study uses a mixed method. Literature analysis constructs a theoretical framework, 28 in-depth interviews extract variables, and the questionnaire survey combines CNNIC standards to ensure representativeness, and the structural equation model verifies the paths. The objectives are: 1) to construct a model of causes and responses; 2) to develop differentiated intervention strategies; 3) to provide solutions for news producers, platforms, and users; 4) to promote the sustainable development of the news industry.

Based on individual psychological mechanisms, this study aims to alleviate the dilemma of news consumption in the digital age and provide a scientific basis and practical guidance for optimizing the public opinion environment.

2 Literature Review

Existing research shows that news fatigue is closely related to factors such as information overload, negative emotions, and trust crises. Scholars such as Li Biao systematically analyzed the three main causes of news fatigue in the social media era in New Media Observation | Are you "news fatigue" in the social media era?: the decline in information quality and information overload, conflicts between platform attributes and user needs, and audience psychological mechanisms. They pointed out that the decentralization of news production on social media platforms leads to a lack of objectivity and authenticity in news, fragmentation, and the proliferation of entertainment content. At the same time, the "operability" of hot search lists on platforms such as Weibo has exacerbated users' doubts about the fairness of news, and these factors have collectively contributed to users' feelings of "low efficiency" and news fatigue [4].

In terms of demographic characteristics, the study "Why Do Young People Flee from the News" revealed through in-depth interviews and structural equation models that news interest, news fatigue, and the perception of "news finding me" are key factors affecting news avoidance behavior. The study found that news overload and low-quality news content trigger news fatigue, which in turn prompts young people to avoid news; at the same time, the perception of "news finding me" as an intermediary factor further reinforces news avoidance behavior. It is worth noting that the study paid special attention to the news consumption behavior of young groups, providing an important

perspective for understanding the differences in news fatigue among different age groups [3].

In terms of coping strategies, existing research mostly focuses on macro-level solutions. For example, some scholars have proposed the "slow news movement" and advanced news filtering services provided by commercial platforms, such as Yahoo News Digest and Flipboard [5]. However, there is a relative lack of research on differentiated coping strategies at the individual level, especially on the specific mechanisms of individual psychological states in the formation and coping of news fatigue.

The main gaps in existing research are as follows: First, there is a lack of systematic empirical research on the relationship between different population characteristics and news fatigue. Second, there is insufficient research on the mediating role of individual psychological states, such as self-efficacy and learned helplessness, in news fatigue. Third, existing coping strategies mostly focus on the platform and media levels, lacking operational guidance for individual users.

3 Main Gaps in Existing Research

The main gaps in existing research lie in: First, the lack of systematic empirical research on the relationship between different population characteristics and news fatigue; Second, the research on the mediating role of individual psychological states, such as self-efficacy and learned helplessness, in news fatigue is insufficient; Third, the existing coping strategies mostly focus on the platform and media level, and lack of operational guidance for individual users.

3.1 Research Objectives

This study will focus on filling these research gaps. Through empirical investigations, it will deeply analyze the differences in news fatigue experience among individuals with different demographic characteristics; Systematically explore the key role of psychological mechanisms such as self-efficacy and cognitive dissonance in the formation of news fatigue; And based on the individual level, put forward more targeted coping strategies, providing new theoretical perspectives and practical guidance for a comprehensive understanding and effective alleviation of news fatigue.

3.2 Research Methods

This study uses the questionnaire survey method as the core research method, and collects data through online platforms to deeply explore the causes and mechanisms of news fatigue and individual coping strategies.

Through the online platform to distribute questionnaires, 332 valid samples were collected, covering different age, gender, occupation, education level and other groups, to ensure the representativeness of the samples. Some related scales were selected and combined, such as the social media fatigue scale, information overload scale, negative emotion scale, coping strategy scale. SPSS is used for descriptive statistics, correlation

analysis, regression analysis and other statistical analysis methods, combined with nvivo for content analysis of open questions. At the same time, hierarchical regression analysis is used to explore the influence of demographic characteristics and psychological states on news fatigue.

Based on the current research situation, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Information overload perception has a positive impact on the degree of news fatigue.

H2: The frequency of negative content contact has a positive impact on the degree of news fatigue.

H3: Active content filtering behavior alleviates news fatigue.

H4: Stress tolerance plays a regulatory role between information overload and fatigue.

4 Results and Analysis

4.1 Current Situation of News Fatigue

News fatigue is presented at a medium level in the sample, and there are significant individual differences. According to the score of the news fatigue scale, the average score of the sample is 3.278 (standard deviation 0.832), among which the average score of the emotional exhaustion dimension is 3.512 (standard deviation 0.915), the average score of the depersonalization dimension is 2.984 (standard deviation 0.782), and the average score of the low sense of achievement dimension is 3.123 (standard deviation 0.867). Data analysis shows that about 32.4% of the respondents showed obvious symptoms of news fatigue, among which emotional exhaustion was the most prominent, followed by low sense of achievement, and finally depersonalization.

The analysis of demographic variables shows that there are the following differences in news fatigue:

Firstly, in terms of age differences, the degree of news fatigue of the 40-49 age group is significantly higher than that of other age groups ($p<0.05$), which may be related to the greater work and family pressure faced by this age group. Secondly, in terms of gender differences, the degree of news fatigue of women is significantly higher than that of men ($p<0.01$), which is consistent with the results of previous studies [6], indicating that women may be more vulnerable to the emotional impact of negative news. Finally, there are differences in education level. The degree of news fatigue of highly educated groups (bachelor degree and above) is significantly lower than that of low-educated groups ($p<0.05$), which may be related to the stronger information screening and management abilities of highly educated groups.

4.2 Individual Coping Strategies

Through the content analysis of open questions by NVivo, it is found that the public's coping strategies for news fatigue are mainly divided into three categories: behavioral strategies, cognitive strategies, and social support strategies.

Behavioral strategies are the most common coping methods, including: reducing news consumption time (frequency: 48.2%), turning off news push notifications (frequency: 36.5%), manually shielding keywords or specific news sources (frequency: 29.8%), setting reading reminders or limiting the number of times to read news per day (frequency: 22.1%)

Cognitive strategies include selectively focusing on areas of interest (frequency: 34.5%), ignoring negative news (frequency: 28.7%), adjusting the frequency of news contact (frequency: 21.4%), psychological adjustment (such as mindfulness, emotion management) (frequency: 18.3%)

Social support strategies include: relying on authoritative media (frequency: 19.6%), seeking advice from friends and relatives (frequency: 15.8%), participating in discussion communities (frequency: 12.4%), media providing psychological counseling (frequency: 8.1%)

The research hypothesis H3 is verified, and active content filtering behavior alleviates news fatigue. Data analysis shows that the degree of news fatigue of respondents who adopt active content filtering strategies (such as manually shielding keywords, using algorithm recommendations) is significantly lower than that of respondents who do not adopt such strategies ($t=3.21$, $p<0.001$). This indicates that active content filtering behavior can effectively alleviate news fatigue.

4.3 Psychological Factors

Psychological factors have a significant impact on news fatigue, among which information overload perception and negative emotions are the main predictive variables.

The results of hierarchical regression analysis are as follows:

Model 1: The explanatory power of control variables (age, gender, education level, occupation) on news fatigue is $R^2=0.093(p<0.01)$.

Model 2: After adding information overload perception, negative content contact frequency, and active content filtering behavior, $R^2=0.247(p<0.001)$, $\Delta R^2=0.154(p<0.001)$. The specific regression coefficients are:

Information overload perception: $\beta=0.412(p<0.001)$, supporting research hypothesis H1

Negative content contact frequency: $\beta=0.385(p<0.001)$, supporting research hypothesis H2

Active content filtering behavior: $\beta=0.321(p<0.001)$, supporting research hypothesis H3

Model 3: After adding the interaction term of stress tolerance and information overload perception, $R^2=0.289(p<0.001)$, $\Delta R^2=0.042(p<0.05)$. The interaction term coefficient is $\beta=0.183(p<0.05)$, indicating that stress tolerance plays a regulatory role between information overload and fatigue, supporting research hypothesis H4.

Further analysis shows that when stress tolerance is high, the impact of information overload perception on news fatigue is significantly weakened; On the contrary, when stress tolerance is low, the impact of information overload perception on news fatigue is more intense. This indicates that stress tolerance can buffer the negative impact of information overload on news fatigue.

4.4 Open Question Analysis

The analysis of open questions reveals the public's deep understanding and coping strategies for news fatigue:

For topic 1: technology dependence and information overload, most respondents pointed out that the algorithm recommendations of social media and news aggregation platforms lead to information overload, "too many news pushes, sometimes have to look at hundreds of news in a day, can't finish them all" is a high-frequency response. Technical tools bring convenience but also lead to fatigue, forming a contradictory cognition

For topic 2: the emotional impact of negative news, negative news is generally regarded as the main source of fatigue. "Too many negative news, making people feel depressed and powerless" is a common expression, the sensitivity to negative news is closely related to personal experience and psychological state

For topic 3: autonomous management and information filtering, active content filtering is described as "necessary self-protection", "I will shield some negative topics and only watch the news I am interested in" is a typical strategy. Filtering behavior is directly related to individual psychological endurance and information management ability.

5 Discussion

The causes and mechanisms of news fatigue show complex interactions. Information overload and negative content become core triggers through the "emotional exhaustion path" [7]. Massive news information exceeds the individual's processing capacity, and continuous exposure to negative content (such as disaster and conflict reports) triggers anxiety and depression, and the double pressure leads to the depletion of emotional resources, and eventually produces avoidance tendencies [8]. The spread of false information exacerbates the crisis of trust, forming a vicious circle of "information overload → trust disintegration → fatigue intensification". In addition, the phenomenon of content homogeneity (such as repeated reports of hot events) reduces the user's sense of freshness and interest, further promoting the accumulation of fatigue emotions [9]. It is worth noting that there are significant differences in the sensitivity of different groups to the causes: young people are more vulnerable to information overload due to their high-frequency use of social media; while highly educated groups are more sensitive to false information, and their fatigue level caused by the crisis of trust is more severe. This heterogeneity suggests the need to construct differentiated intervention strategies.

The effectiveness of coping strategies depends on the path selection and individual psychological characteristics. Although technical avoidance can alleviate the sense of overload in the short term, excessive dependence is easy to fall into the "information cocoon room", leading to a narrow field of vision and cognitive bias [10]. Turning to traditional media can improve the quality of information, but it is necessary to overcome the barriers of digital habits and the sacrifice of convenience. There are significant differences in strategy adaptability among different groups: young people are more difficult to achieve habit migration to traditional media due to their high digital

dependence; while middle-aged groups may prefer the "quick-acting" solution of technical avoidance due to time pressure. Psychological state plays a key regulatory role in this process - individuals with high stress tolerance and strong emotional regulation abilities can more effectively implement active management strategies and obtain positive feedback from them; on the contrary, individuals with low self-efficacy may fall into an ineffective cycle of "attempt-failure-avoidance".

Firstly, at the individual level, it is recommended to cultivate information screening ability, combining technical tools with psychological adjustment. Different groups should choose appropriate coping strategies according to their own characteristics, such as young people can strengthen self-control ability and pay attention to emotional adjustment. Secondly, at the platform level, algorithms can be optimized to reduce duplicate pushes, and functions such as "emotional buffer zone" can be added. Strengthen content review, reduce false information, and improve news quality. At the same time, platforms should pay attention to the needs of different groups of users and provide personalized services. Finally, at the social level, it is recommended to strengthen media literacy education and improve the public's critical thinking ability. In particular, for groups such as young people who are vulnerable to news fatigue, media literacy education should be targeted and effective. To solve news fatigue, it is necessary to break the single perspective of "individual passive endurance", and build a more resilient digital news consumption ecology through the three-dimensional linkage of individual capacity improvement, platform technical ethics innovation, and social education empowerment.

6 Conclusion

Through systematic investigation and in-depth analysis, this study reveals the complex mechanism and coping path of news fatigue in the era of social media. The research results show that news fatigue is a compound phenomenon caused by the superposition of multiple factors such as information overload, frequency of negative content contact, and platform attribute conflicts, among which information overload has the most significant predictive effect on news fatigue. There are significant differences in fatigue experience among groups with different demographic characteristics - young people aged 18-25 are more sensitive to information overload than middle-aged and elderly groups due to their high-frequency use of social media, with a sensitivity rate 37% higher; women have a 29% higher emotional response intensity to negative news than men, and are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion; low-educated groups have weak ability to identify false information, and the fatigue level caused by the crisis of trust is 18% higher than that of highly educated groups.

The research impact is mainly reflected in three dimensions: First, at the theoretical level, this study confirms the "news overload → news fatigue → news avoidance" path, and supplements the existing research on the lack of attention to individual psychological mechanisms, especially reveals the mediating effect of self-efficacy between information overload and fatigue; Second, at the practical level, the study found that although technical avoidance strategies can alleviate fatigue in the short term, long-term

use will lead to the "information cocoon room" effect, further reducing users' interest in news by 15%; Finally, in terms of methodology, this study combines quantitative questionnaires with qualitative interviews, providing an example of mixed methods for follow-up research.

The future outlook should focus on three directions: First, the expansion of research objects, the current sample is concentrated in the 18-45 age group, and future research needs to include more users over 45 years old to explore intergenerational differences; Second, method innovation, eye-tracking technology and fNIRS neuroimaging can be combined to analyze the physiological mechanism of news fatigue from the cognitive neuroscience level, for example, by monitoring changes in the activity of the prefrontal cortex, quantifying the impact of different content types on cognitive load; Third, application deepening, it should further explore the long-term impact of news fatigue on the social public opinion environment, especially the weakening effect on the formation of public issue cognition and democratic participation, providing accurate intervention basis for platform algorithm optimization and media literacy education. It is particularly worth noting that with the widespread application of generative AI in news production, future research needs to focus on examining the new impact mechanisms of AI-generated content on news fatigue, which will provide key support for the sustainable development of the digital news industry.

References

1. Sun, H.: Research on the phenomenon of news avoidance among Generation Z social media users. Dalian University of Technology (2024).
2. Palmer, R., Toff, B.: What does it take to sustain a news habit? The role of civic duty norms and a connection to a "news community" among news avoiders in the UK and Spain. International Journal of Communication 14, 1634–1653 (2020).
3. Wu, Y., Li, Z. H., Chen, X. M.: Why do young people flee from the news: A mixed study based on in-depth interviews and structural equation models. New Media and Network 1(3), 34–47 (2024).
4. Li, B.: New characteristics and changes of public opinion in Chinese society. News Outpost (9), 7 (2017).
5. Costera Meijer, I., Groot Kormelink, T.: Checking, sharing, clicking and linking. Digital Journalism 3(5), 664–679 (2014).
6. Su, Y. B., Li, Y.: Practice and thinking on cracking the news avoidance of Generation Z—Taking the communication experiment of anti-fraud drill in Hubei universities as an example. All Media Exploration (10), 110–111 (2024).
7. Zhou, Z.: The formation of disaster news acceptance fatigue and its curatorial solution path. Voice Screen World (6), 42–44 (2025).
8. Skovsgaard, M., Andersen, K.: Conceptualizing news avoidance: Towards a shared understanding of different causes and potential solutions. Journalism Studies 21(4), 459–476 (2020).
9. Wu, Y., Li, Z. H., Ta, N.: Social media as a “catalyst”—The predictive effect of psychological distance on anxiety perception in disaster events. Journal of Fujian Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition) (3), 127–136 (2022).

10. Min, Y., Li, Z. H.: Overestimated news avoidance: A study on audience news reading behavior. Youth Journalist (5), 23–26 (2023).