

# On the Impact of Social Media on the Dissemination of Gender Equality Ideology

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**Abstract.** With the development of time and science and technology, social media plays an increasingly crucial role in the dissemination of gender equality ideology. However, in the past, people failed to use social media properly, which hindered the spread of gender equality ideology. At present, social media also provides favorable conditions for the dissemination of feminism, enabling more women to construct their self-identity through it. The interactive and sharing nature of social media allows gender equality ideology to spread more rapidly. Nevertheless, capitalists use social media as a tool for profit-making, and some extreme and law-breaking elements use it to promote radical anti-feminism. These issues have led the public to misunderstand the true meaning of feminism, thus generating a resistant mentality and making the dissemination of gender equality ideology more difficult. This research argues that deepening self-recognition and appreciation helps to break the public's fixed concept of gender.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Gender Equality, Feminism, Dissemination.

## 1. Introduction

Gender equality has become a hot topic attracting widespread attention from all sectors of society. With the rapid development of science and technology, social media, as an important platform for information dissemination, plays a vital role in the spread of gender equality ideology. Some scholars have already started to pay attention to the impact of social media on the dissemination of gender equality ideology, but there are still deficiencies in current research. For example, the mechanism of how different social media platforms function in the dissemination of gender equality ideology has not been deeply studied, and issues such as how social media affects the acceptance of gender equality concepts by different groups need further exploration.

This paper sets out to study how precisely social media impacts the spread of the ideology of gender equality while analyzing mechanisms that the various social media platforms help to bring this process. Through studying paths of diffusion and factors of influence regarding gender equality concepts on social media, some understanding can be gained about the degree to which social media plays a causal role in promoting the gender equality process. This, in turn, can provide theoretical support to policy initiatives and social practices aimed at fulfilling that vision. In their paper, the authors integrate relevant theoretical frameworks with empirical research methodology to determine how precisely social media influences the spread and acceptance of the ideology of gender equality by society besides preparing the way for fresh thinking and new methodologies that will eventually popularize and promote the enhancement of gender's equalization awareness.

## 2. The Impact of Social Media

### 2.1. Positive Impacts of Social Media

The concept of gender equality can spread because social media offers a place for individuals from very large audiences to discuss and share information on such topics freely for some reasons. More information regarding gender equality will reach many people through the availability of free and open communication space on social media platforms. People will therefore have the ability to share their perception and experience on gender equality through social media, luring a considerable

number to join the debate and therefore becoming a means that encourages the rapid dissemination and acceptance of such ideals.

The second reason why the interactive and sharing nature of social media accelerates the diffusion of gender equality ideology is because users post comments on gender equality topics. This forms a wider general opinion influence, with the public first seeing the dynamic content of social media. Content would eventually spread very fast across social media as well, hence attracting social attention at any moment for the promotion of informed gender issues in society and subsequent discussion.

In addition, social media platforms also provide a platform for gender equality organizations and activities to conduct publicity and organization. Through social media, gender equality organizations can more effectively promote their concepts and activities, attract more supporters to participate, and expand their influence. Meanwhile, the activities and advocacy on social media can also inspire more people to pay attention to gender equality issues, promoting society's understanding and acceptance of gender equality ideology.

Social media is also a platform that helps to break the traditional gender framework and promote gender equality. Some women, through the use of social media, not only broaden their horizons and thinking but also find more supporters who share similar views. In China, female influencers on social media are showcasing their unique qualities and extraordinary charm in an unprecedented way. They not only attract a huge amount of attention but also win the firm support of numerous followers. They are no longer confined to the traditional definition of beauty, which solely relies on physical appearance to gain attention. Instead, they skillfully utilize the interactive features of social media platforms to deeply explore and share their personal insights, rich life experiences, and profound self-identities. This transformation is undoubtedly a powerful challenge and breakthrough to the long-standing male-dominated aesthetic framework, constructing a new image of female influencers-intelligent, independent, diverse, and powerful.

In various forms of expression through words, images, and videos, female influencers boldly voice their opinions. Whether it is about workplace equality, gender rights, or life philosophy and fashion trends, their words can tug on the heartstrings with distinct perspectives and deep thoughts. Such will rekindle reform for the public to rediscover the power and value of women. This attraction that emanates from behavior and opinion expression is much more enduring and deeper than just single beauty display. It motivates people to concentrate on the inner beauty and intelligence of women instead of dwelling upon superficial aesthetic judgments.

The online platform is an information accelerator and at the same time a community builder that plays a significant role in this process. It's a big magnet that attracts female groups that were originally very isolated, with weak voices, which helps them get more integrated and feel related because of some common concept or some similar voices. And, in turn, with shared values that build that linkage further, it strengthens the internal cohesion of the female group and leads to that support and understanding of feminism at previously unattainable heights from the outside world. People herald feminism not as radical, not as confronting, but as something polite regarding gender equality and due respect of a woman's choice.

Thus, female influencers on Chinese social media are gradually breaking down traditional gender biases and aesthetic limitations with their wisdom, courage, and sincerity. Injecting new vitality and hope in the development of feminism. Online platform. As a catalyst for this transformation, it is leading the unprecedented social movement where more people firmly support feminism and join the ranks promoting gender equality with confidence.

At the same time, Chinese young females would apply selfie apps for the process of creating an image of the new idealized version of themselves, which also helps them construct their self-identity. Highly individualized and immediate as a form of media, selfie proves to be one of the significant tools for modern women in the process of constructing and conveying self-identity. In the eyes of these females, selfie does not only function as a recording of life moments but also as a bridge through which their real personalities and emotions can be expressed; through the careful selection of shooting

angles, expression regulation, background setup, and post-production filters, females subtly emphasize something that may reflect self-identity in selfies while deliberately de-emphasizing details that might dilute the expression of personality or are against their values.

In selfies, women usually emphasize the following aspects to construct self-identity: First, physical features and personal style. Whether it is the fresh and refined look with natural makeup or the fashionable and avant-garde style with elaborate dressing, women show their understanding and pursuit of beauty through selfies. This is not a confident presentation of external beauty but one of personal style and taste. In other words, Second, emotional state and attitude toward life. Smiling selfies mean that perhaps someone is optimistic and positive, while a more pensive image suggests depth and introversion. Through the articulation of these emotions, it is thought that a more three-dimensional and multifaceted self is offered to the outside Third, realization of self-value and achievements. It has become an increasing part of where women used it to represent their work accomplishments and what they like doing in their self-expression. Therefore, it is another way of the media breaking the gender barriers to foster gender equality.

## 2.2. Negative Impacts of Social Media

Social media has negative impacts on the dissemination of gender equality ideology. On the one hand, the stereotypes existing in social media deepen gender biases, limit the status of women, and hinder women's empowerment. For example, in the Chinese media, "drivers" are naturally divided into two groups, "male drivers" and "female drivers" in the public's perception. Most media reports on "female drivers" deliberately highlight the negative image of "female drivers". Female drivers are described as synonymous with poor driving skills and high accident rates. However, the negative descriptions of female drivers in the media are seriously inconsistent with the facts. Such untrue reports deepen the public's stereotypes of women, stigmatize female drivers, and thus form gender biases. In addition, playful or humorous language (*xixuè xìng yǔyán*) also hinders the dissemination of gender equality on online media to a certain extent. In India, Indian college students launched a Facebook group where the posts shared contained serious gender discrimination. However, they used jokes and humor to downplay and ignore the seriousness of the problem. This contemptuous attitude not only damages the interests of the victims but also makes the issue of gender discrimination less serious in people's minds. As a result, gender biases become more deeply rooted, hindering the dissemination of gender equality ideology.

Moreover, due to the low entry threshold, strong subjectivity, and lack of objectivity of social media, anyone can express their views on it. This provides a platform for some anti-feminists to spread false information. As postfeminist subjects, Chinese women are compelled to unapologetically celebrate feminine attributes and are invited to engage in girlish practices [1], but are increasingly subjected to a mediated and commodified culture that applies heteropatriarchal standards to define feminine beauty and regulate the female body [2]. In today's world, women are generally in a disadvantaged position, and patriarchal ideology is deeply rooted. The mainstream ideology is more reflected on social media platforms. Since social media platforms can expand the scope of dissemination, and human nature tends to resist new things and follow old ones, this adds resistance to the development of feminism.

## 3. Negative Issues of Social Media

### 3.1. Radicalism Issues

Radical remarks and gender-related confrontations on social media have attracted the attention of scholars from many countries. For example, Huang pointed out that there is a systematic stigmatization of feminism on Chinese social media [3]. Anti-feminists simplify the gender equality issue into "confrontation between men and women" through the "depoliticization" strategy and use joking language to weaken its seriousness. This strategy is particularly evident on the Weibo platform. For example, in the "Yang Li's Talk Show Incident" in 2021, the actress Yang Li was attacked by a

large number of male users for joking about “men being ordinary but confident”. The reading volume of related topics exceeded 1 billion times, and some users even launched a reporting campaign to demand the ban of her remarks [3]. Such incidents indicate that the carnival-style interactions on social media often turn into a collective siege of female speakers.

In addition, the research of scholar Dey found that gender-discriminatory groups on Facebook under the guise of “humor” (such as “Boys Locker Room”) rationalize sexual harassment by sharing content that objectifies women [4]. Participants evade responsibility through group anonymity, resulting in the rapid spread of gender-based violence remarks. Such cases confirm the phenomenon of “network interactions dissolving authority” in Bakhtin's carnival theory, but at the same time, they also expose the indulgence of social media towards radical remarks [4].

### 3.2. Capital Involvement Issues

The manipulation of gender issues by capital is globally prevalent. Li and Luo analyzed the case of the “stigmatization of female drivers” in Chinese media reports and found that some car brands deliberately strengthen the stereotype of “men = professional drivers” in their advertisements [5]. For example, an SUV advertisement of a certain brand portrays female drivers as “road killers”, while men are depicted as “in control” figures. Such marketing strategies attract traffic by creating gender confrontations and ultimately serve product sales [5].

In the European and American markets, the “Pink Tax” phenomenon also reflects gender exploitation by capital. Research by the American Consumer Association shows that the average price of female-version products of similar goods (such as razors and stationery) is 7% higher than that of male-version products. Social media advertisements rationalize this price premium through the “exclusive for women” label [6]. Similar problems also exist on Chinese e-commerce platforms. For example, a certain beauty brand promotes high-priced skin-care products under the slogan of “independent women” but fails to provide substantial support for the issue of workplace inequality for women, and has been criticized as “pseudo-feminist marketing” [7].

Capital also exacerbates gender biases through algorithms. Palmen and Müller pointed out that social media platforms tend to push extreme content to increase user stay time [8]. For example, the recommendation algorithm of Douyin (TikTok) will intensively push “confrontation between men and women” topics to users who are interested in gender issues, resulting in the marginalization of moderate discussions and higher exposure of extreme views [8]. This algorithm logic instrumentalizes the gender equality issue and ultimately serves the traffic monetization goals of the platform.

## 4. Suggestions

### 4.1. Strengthen Legal Supervision

To enable social media to play a positive role in the dissemination of gender equality ideology, it is necessary to strengthen legal supervision and make good use of social media. Deviations in the public's own values, the depersonalization of individuals in the online environment, the loss of rational thinking due to group dependence, and the imperfect network supervision all give rise to problems of public network moral anomie. However, the manifestation of such network moral anomie in feminism leads to the stigmatization of feminism, causing the public to misunderstand and even reject feminism. For the public, using social media does not require costs, and individuals can hide their real information through nicknames and avatars. Therefore, the public does not need to worry about the impact of their online behavior on real-life. With the reduction of costs, their behavior becomes less scrupulous. When the law intervenes in the network, the public's behavior has consequences, and they will be more restrictive of their words and deeds, thus improving the radical remarks against feminism on the network. To promote the dissemination of gender equality ideology through social media by strengthening legal supervision, the following measures can be taken:

- Formulate Relevant Laws and Regulations: Establish a sound legal framework, clearly define the responsibilities and obligations of social media platforms in content management and freedom of

speech. Formulate relevant laws and regulations to clearly prohibit the dissemination of gender-discriminatory, violent, and other harmful information, and protect the dissemination environment of gender equality concepts on social media.

- Strengthen Supervision and Law Enforcement: Establish an effective supervision mechanism to monitor and review the content of social media platforms, promptly discover and handle illegal and irregular content. Strengthen law-enforcement efforts and severely punish illegal and irregular behaviors to maintain the normal order and good environment of social media platforms.

- Enhance the Self-Regulatory Management of Social Media Platforms: Encourage social media platforms to establish a sound self-regulatory mechanism, strengthen their own management and supervision, and standardize user behavior and content publication. Through industry self-discipline and norms, social media platforms can better disseminate gender equality ideology and avoid spreading harmful information.

- Strengthen User Education and Awareness-Raising: Conduct gender equality education and publicity activities to improve users' awareness and understanding of gender equality issues. Guide users to consciously abide by relevant laws and regulations, actively participate in the dissemination of gender equality ideology, and jointly maintain the healthy development of social media platforms.

#### **4.2. Proper Use of the Internet**

To enable social media to play a positive role in the dissemination of gender equality ideology, it is crucial to strengthen the public's awareness of properly using the Internet. To promote the dissemination of gender equality ideology through social media by encouraging the public to use it properly, the following measures can be taken:

- Advocate Positive and Healthy Social Media Use Habits: Conduct publicity and education activities to encourage the public to post positive and positive-energy content on social media, and avoid spreading gender-discriminatory, violent, and other harmful information. Guide the public to use social media properly and cultivate good network literacy and moral concepts.

- Increase the Release of Gender Equality-Related Information: Encourage the public to post information and content related to gender equality on social media, including the concepts, cases, and advocacy activities of gender equality. Through diversified information release, improve the public's awareness and attention to gender equality issues.

- Encourage the Public to Participate in Gender Equality Topic Discussions: Organize online gender equality topic discussions and interactive activities, encourage the public to actively participate, and share their views and experiences. Through interactive communication, promote the dissemination of gender equality ideology on social media and improve the dissemination effect.

- Establish a Network of Gender Equality Advocates: Cultivate a group of gender equality advocates to spread gender equality ideology through social media platforms and lead the public to pay attention to gender equality issues. Advocates can attract more people to participate in the discussion and dissemination of gender equality topics through personal experiences, professional knowledge, etc.

- Utilize the Interactive Functions of Social Media Platforms: Encourage the public to interact, share, and forward gender equality-related content on social media to expand the scope of information dissemination. Through the interactive functions of social media platforms, form a broader network for the dissemination of gender equality ideology and promote the dissemination and acceptance of gender equality concepts in society.

### **5. Conclusion**

This article aims to explore the impact of social media on the dissemination of gender equality ideology. By combining theoretical frameworks and empirical research methods, the article points out that social media plays an important role in the dissemination of gender equality, but it also has some negative impacts. The intervention of capital and the use by extreme elements lead to the

misunderstanding of feminism, deepen gender biases, and hinder the development of feminism. To strengthen the role of social media in promoting gender equality, it is crucial to strengthen legal supervision, enhance the public's awareness of properly using the network, cultivate positive and healthy social media use habits, and increase the release of gender equality-related information. The research results of this article help to deepen the understanding of the mechanism of social media in the dissemination of gender equality and provide theoretical support and practical guidance for relevant policy-making and social practice.

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