

# ***The Impact of Dissemination of Sexual Violent Issues on Social Media on the Group of Women Living Alone***

**Haiyuan Zhang<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Altdorf International School, Uri 6460, Switzerland*

*a. haiyuan.zhang@lisa.swiss*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** This research paper seeks to examine how the spread of violence on social media affects the group of women living alone. The study used several methods to achieve this. Firstly by analysing news article headlines or other reports of sexual violence on social media, and secondly, by interviews with women living alone. The results show that different social media will report news about sexual violence in different ways; for example, TikTok presents events in a sensory stimulating way like videos, which will spread much more and evoke strong emotions in many people. On the other hand, Twitter mostly features official or traditional news agencies reporting on cases, with more emphasis on legal measures to reduce the fear of the public. Therefore, these two social media platforms can bring different feelings to women living alone through different modes of presentation. The interviews with the group of women living alone illustrate the different thoughts and emotions that most women living alone have when they share their experiences of sexual violence or talk about their experiences. It also shows the unequal status of women in this society and the pressure of public opinion.

**Keywords:** Sexual violence, Social media dissemination, Passivity, Gender equality

## **1. Introduction**

Nowadays, Violence against women is recognized as one of the most severe challenges to the health and social inclusion of women and girls worldwide. The dissemination of digital-based violent sexual issues certainly causes a severe impact on the lives of women and girls, especially for those who live alone, not only the harm to physical health but also to psychological part, community and family ties, reputation, dignity, etc. Social media here as a medium of dissemination might influence or modify how the public responds to this kind of violent event and the perceptions of these female victims. What do women in the same situation as the victim think when the media generates a certain amount of circulation? This is also one of the reasons for this research. In the meantime, another goal is to explore whether the reporting of such sexual violence is leading to an increase in similar incidents. This requires data analysis of many reported violent incidents over a period. Additionally, this research also aims to let society should pay more attention to sexual violence and the group of women living alone.

## 2. Literature Review

How are incidents of sexual violence spread on social media? This is a fundamental question in this research. After browsing through the surveys on this site, it has inspired me. I can analyse the prevalence and impact of violent sexual issues in news article headlines or on other social media, such as Weibo in China, and so on.

Here is a study done by BMC Public Health about violence against women in the mainstream news in Australia [1]. It aimed to establish a birth picture of the extent and nature of violence against women by the mainstream Australian news media. The study suggested that the content of violence against women in mainstream news media was expansive. Despite readiness among intelligencers and compendiums to engage in the news about violence against women, reporting that promotes public understanding of the issue is not always the norm. This study has the advantage of being complete, considering all the conditions. It also uses powerful data, presented through percentage calculations, simple frequencies, and bar graphs, to draw solid conclusions and inspire me. This resource can give me a brief direction of research and can be used as solid proof in my research.

What is the impact and perception of reports of sexual violence by groups of women living alone? This is one of the questions I need to consider because what I want to highlight in this study is the group of women living alone.

This organization on the 'OurWatch' website concentrates on the primary forestallment of violence against women and their children in Australia [2,3]. They had several interviews with the survivors and their family members that have experienced sexual violence. They have a first-person perspective on how it feels to have their events covered by the media. For example, one headline represented it as "murder on the dance floor", which is the name of a song. They focus on how to get others caught up in the subject and ignore the people caught up in the tragedy. Another person's sister was even worse. Some of the media's reporting was about her skin colour, cultural background, or in some way excusing the perpetrator's responsibilities for criminal actions because of culture or honour. It points out a severe problem that the world is now still facing, Gender Equality. If a case is brought to court, the victim usually ends up on trial. Did she drink or take drugs, what clothes did she wear and what was her sexual history? News coverage on social media is one of the most convenient and common ways to connect the public with actual events. It can have a significant impact if it is spread incorrectly and with unhealthy perceptions. Interviews are a compelling way to get accurate and valid information. However, one difficulty is that there is no way to simultaneously invite or meet so many interviewees in different places. In contrast, I would have found a more convenient way to get the information I wanted.

## 3. Methodology

In the following research, several findings will be included: Investigating the prevalence and impact of sexual violence issues in news article headlines or on other social media, such as Weibo in China, Twitter in the US, and so on. In more detail, words and pictures analysis can be considered. For example, when participants were free to select texts with harmless and threatening images, the reading time for these texts also increased. Here, threatening images create an emotional response in the reader that stimulates more significant and considered cognitive processing of subsequent texts without the images. The women who live alone want to follow the news because they, as people in the same situation, are more likely to empathize with the victims. Then is to investigate whether there has been an increase in sexual violence throughout propagation on social media. This can be done by looking for a starting incident of sexual violence and then observing the growth of other incidents of violence over a fixed period at a later stage. Finally, interviews were conducted with women living

alone to obtain their thoughts on reporting these incidents of sexual violence and how they were affected.

The research mentioned above (Sutherland et al.) collected media reports on incidents of womanish sexual violence in three Australian countries over a four-month period to examine the analysis and description of the content. At last, they confirmed 4615 news reports on violence against women. Results showed that most news reports were episodic (61%,  $n = 271$ ); a minority were thematic (21%,  $n = 93$ ). They also analyze the violent types. The picture below is the findings.

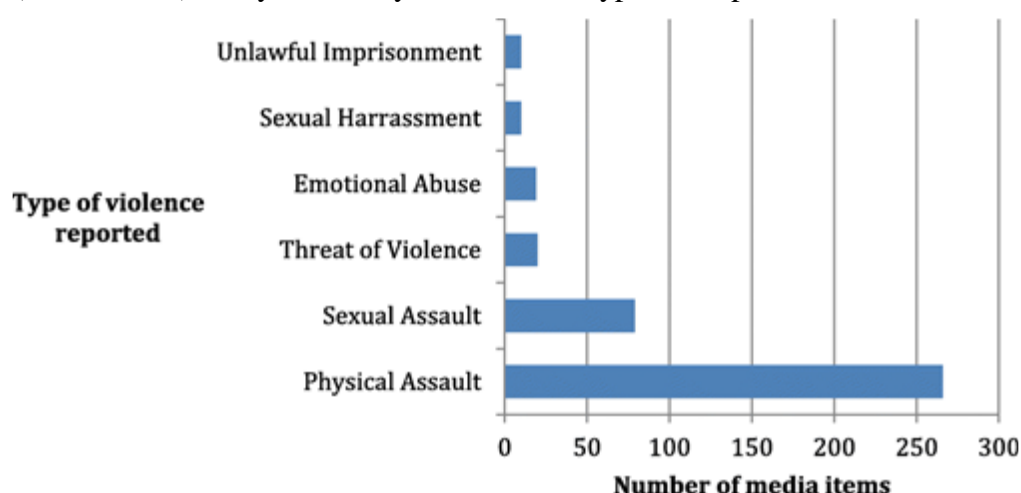


Figure1: Types of gender-based violence contained in a news report ( $n = 351$ ) (Sutherland et

It also illustrates the significance of how social media reports similar violence, which can directly impact how compendiums are concerned about the matter and how it is latterly handled.

#### 4. Founding and Discussion

My study will study sexual violence in China from June to August 2022. The social media selection is then news coverage and personal output on Weibo, TikTok, Racer and Bili Bili.

On June 10, a video of a barbecue restaurant in Tangshan, China, surfaced on the internet about several men sexually harassing a woman and then beating her up when she refused. According to the footage, a man approaches a table of three unknown women and touches one of them on the back. The woman stops him and tries to push him away, but the man then assaults her, along with several of his friends, and drags her outside the restaurant, beating and kicking her. Other women in the shop were beaten when they tried to stop him. The Tangshan beating was a case of gender violence because it involved a power relationship between a man and a woman. On TikTok, most of this news has gone viral in the form of original videos. After this event was disseminated, the barbecue owner and passers-by uploaded the full five-minute-long video from the first perspective. Videotape is an efficient way to circulate as it conveys information snappily, quickly and amusingly. Compared to traditional print media, a videotape can be fluently streamlined andre-edited to target different followership. TikTok released the 2018 TikTok Big Data Report in China, which showed that as of December 2018, the number of TikTok's domestic daily active users exceeded 250 million. The number of domestic monthly active users exceeded 500 million ("How many people do Tiktok in China\_ How many users are there in Tiktok") [4]. With such a vast population using it, the relative amount of airplay will also grow hormonally, thus making this event spread faster.

Additionally, one interview done by DW with Chinese feminist activist and gender studies scholar Lu Pin mentioned the role of social media in this event (Welle (www.dw.com)) [5]. Lu Pin said It was a social media event that could not have grown as big as it did and evoked such strong emotions from so many people without the videos that presented the event in a sensory stimulating way. The

video is not empowering; there were no women's voices. It does not provide any context. So the video itself is emotionally provocative in a very narrow way.

In contrast to the direct presentation of TikTok, Weibo is mostly official or traditional news agencies that come forward to report on cases. After describing the incident, the text is mostly objective, such as "according to the law", "censorship", and "pursuing formal responsibility". The officials have been calm and have not made any statements about violence against women but have only highlighted the legal measures and the fact that the perpetrators have been dealt with by the law to reduce the fear of the community and tell everyone that this is a matter of a few bad people doing bad things. However, some felt that a broader discussion on the systemic issues behind the incident should be raised and that only continued public unrest would cause society to address women's feelings. This creates a conflict of opinion. When resentment continues to escalate in the perception of one party, it affects the whole community. This is also why hundreds of Weibo accounts are blocked for "stirring up gender antagonism". People are indeed waking up to the fact that this is a matter of gender violence; they realise in countless social media reports that this is not just a personal issue but an institutional, social and cultural one.

Women are aware that society is very unfriendly to them and that they are in a state of deprivation. It is an awakening of consciousness ("What Is Awakened Consciousness? | Let's Get Meta") [6]. To the group of women living alone, what impact do these news reports of sexual violence on social media have? Data from the China Statistical Yearbook 2021 shows that the number of one-person households in China reached 125 million in 2020, accounting for 25% of the total number of households (National Bureau Statistics) [7]. When the size of households is decreasing, and the proportion of people living alone is increasing, there is also a growing concern about the living conditions that correspond to living alone.

In contrast to this exquisite fantasy, there have been several cases of people being killed living alone and tailgating in recent years. From the panic caused by the murder of a woman living alone in Shanghai to the widespread discussions about living alone caused by various social events, the safety of living alone has become a topic that cannot be ignored. Since this study focuses on sexual violence in China, two dozen women that lived alone across China completed a self-administered questionnaire.

The questions are as follows:

Q1: How long have you lived alone?

Q2: Where do you live while living alone?

Q3: Have you experienced any safety problems while living alone? Can you share specifics, if convenient?

Q4: Are you afraid of living on your own? If so, when to feel afraid?

Q5: Do you usually follow social news like the murder cases of sexual violence in Shanghai and Hebei?

Q6: What are your thoughts after browsing through the news?

Q7: Would you like to make a particular change after reading similar social news? Or, how has it affected you?

Q8: Do you have any advice on living alone safely/have you done anything to keep safe when living alone before?

Q9: If you were involved in such an incident, would you choose to stand up for yourself as a victim?

After analysing all the respondents' answers, most answered "Yes" in question 4, e.g. fear of the night, when someone knocks on the door when walking alone. All answered "yes, concerned" to question 5. When expressing their own feelings about the impact of these times, the responses were usually "powerless", "disappointed", "angry", and "scared ". I have selected some of the more representative responses.

A 21-year-old woman living alone responded to the question, "Do you get scared?" by saying, "When the murders of women in Shanghai and Xiamen occurred within a month of each other, many people in my circle of friends forwarded the news and I was terrified during that time." Another girl spoke of how "because of my own experience of being stalked, I can be very empathetic and feel scared when I see news of girls who live alone being murdered. It's shocking to watch. I used to think these types of cases were far from me. However, recently I would find out that they were around my age, which made me realize that this might be something that would happen to someone very close to us. Some of the descriptions in the tweets would really make me feel the fear of a girl when she lives alone." But when asked if they would come forward to speak out, many chose "no". They explained that it would damage their self-esteem and that they were more afraid of having to suffer public opinion after such a painful experience. In some cases, the internet may even accuse the victim of violently killing the perpetrator.

One of the interviewees recounted her experience of being subjected to sexual harassment, after which she initially chose to speak out, only to be met with side-eye and comments from her colleagues. This led to thoughts of guilt and shame. After stopping the accusations, she would try to control and repress herself, thus suffering from severe depression. As women, they are taught to fear strangers and to keep themselves out of dark places at night. It's a sad truth.

There was one event on a girl who had just finished her high school exams was murdered by a male trickster [8]. After the crime, it became clear that public opinion was not in the right place. Some netizens even started to "find excuses "for the demon. For example, 'the girl is innocent, but the man is also quite poor, and disabled family so poor, society does not pay attention to these disadvantaged groups caused by the evil consequences.' Even more terrible, 'that's all men and women are, what else could be the reason? The bachelor is so miserable, his life story is desperate to hear.' This kind of comment can be connected to the influence on the group of women living alone. If they see that public opinion can be biased in favour of the perpetrator of violence. How can they still stand up and speak out for their rights? This certainly puts pressure on them.

## 5. Conclusion

Living alone, as a topic that most people have to deal with when they get out of school, seems to be an attempt to connect them with society. However, when people start talking about living safely alone, it quickly becomes serious and heavy. Even in telephone interviews, through the voices of the interviewees, fear can be felt and unease they felt when talking about a particular dangerous experience. When men's and women's discourses are becoming increasingly polarized online, this interview also brings back views that are not polarized. Sometimes it is not just sexual gratification behind these incidents of sexual violence, but power and hierarchy.

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