Emotional Practices of Female Discourse in Anti-Verbal Violence—Take the Douban Community as an Example

Rong Panpan[1,a], Zhang Chunhua[1,b,*]

[1]Department of Journalism, Nanjing University of Finance and Economics, Nanjing, 210000, China
[a]2755230645@qq.com, [b]zhangchunhua80@126.com
*Corresponding author

Abstract: *Verbal violence, as a phenomenon that is prevalent in social life, can have a certain degree of psychological and emotional impact on the victim, and the abuser and the victim usually correspond to a power relationship. Female groups are on the weaker side of the current social structure and are more vulnerable to verbal violence such as humiliation, discrimination, and disciplining. In the campaign against verbal violence, women's discourse rebels against gender prejudices and restrictions in society, and emotion serves as a bond that unites women into a group, emphasizing common situations and common interests through emotional strategies, so that more people will join the campaign against verbal violence.*

Keywords: *verbal violence; female discourse; emotional practices*

1. Introduction

1.1 Question posed

Verbal violence is the infliction of harm through words, which is often psychological. Women are more vulnerable to verbal violence because of structural and institutional inequalities in society, and such violence is often motivated by oppression, control, and disempowerment of women. Linguistic violence targeting women or groups of women stems from unequal social structures, and thus resistance to linguistic violence is also a struggle for gender equality. This paper analyzes the interpretation of and resistance to linguistic violence in women's discourse and reveals the social and cultural factors behind the stigmatization, discrimination, and degradation of women in linguistic violence.

1.2 Synthesis of research

1.2.1 Feminism and the anti-violence agenda

Feminist research is closely related to women's protection, and in the anti-violence agenda, relevant research reveals that women may experience multiple forms of violence, such as domestic and sexual violence in reality, stereotypes, and objectification tendencies in media presentations, and sexism and misogyny in cyberspace. Some scholars point out that women's experience of victimization under the patriarchal model of gender relations is the male authority they experience in the everyday world and the power-control relationship that men achieve through their physical domination[1]. The fight against violence against women in all spheres of social life and the development of policies to protect them is, therefore, an important agenda. The General Recommendation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) introduces the topic of violence into the category of gender discrimination and formally states that violence against women is a matter of human rights and gender inequality and that the fight against domestic violence has become a mandate for the fight against gender-based violence in the policies of the United Nations[2].In domestic violence interventions, social workers may face the paradox of "perpetrator attribution" and "victim intervention" due to a lack of action on the part of the social worker about the perpetrator and the gender structure of the family[3].The more subtle forms of media violence and misogyny in cyberspace also reinforce discrimination against women in the real world. Some scholars have pointed out that behind the space of resistance provided by the Internet, the symbols of gender violence such as the

"green tea bitch" imply a huge regression of gender equality in society[4].While traditional gender concepts and norms are the root causes of online gender violence content, gender-based violence is further complicated by the emergence of new media technologies[5].

1.2.2 Feminist discursive practices and effective strategies

Part of the research on feminist discourse practice focuses on the field of artistic creation, exploring the subjectivity and image construction of women in film, television, and literature, and constructing a female discourse by enhancing the breakthrough of female narratives and gradually dissolving the dominant image of men over women in literary and artistic creation. Women in literary creation have become the "spokespersons" of women's groups, projecting their emotional factors and presenting a strong sense of femininity on the whole[6]. They pay more attention to women's voices and destinies, consciously inheriting the tradition of women's writing, and digging deeply into the relationship between women's situation and their families and society[7]. Another part of the research focuses on the real state of women's existence, which is closely related to social phenomena and personal situations. Relevant studies have found that women have struggled for women's discourse in the mass communication field by entering the media and creating women's voice columns. For example, scholars have found that during the Xin Guan epidemic, female groups spread the hashtags #Seeing Female Workers# and #They in Retrogression# on social media platforms, so that the gender blindness of female workers' physiological needs could be "seen", and the negotiation between self-media and the mainstream media in terms of gender discourse came into the public eye[8].

1.3 Research methodology

This article uses critical discourse analysis and in-depth interviews, based on the topic of "verbal violence targeting women" in the Douban community, the article selects 12 netizens who have posted or followed the article, and conducts online interviews through WeChat and QQ. All of the interviewees were female, no males and the interviews were conducted via WeChat voice or text chat. The interview questions mainly covered three parts: firstly, the basic situation of the interviewees, specifically including the family environment, living environment, scenes of verbal violence experienced in the past, and the identity of the abuser, etc.; secondly, the interviewees' attitudes towards verbal violence, specifically including how to judge that certain behavior is a verbal violence, the way of resisting when they suffer from violence, and the impact of verbal violence on the interviewees; and lastly, the understanding of the power of the women's group, specifically including whether or not to take the initiative to help the women's group. Lastly, it is about the respondents' understanding of the power of women's groups, specifically whether they have taken the initiative to help women who have suffered from verbal violence, whether they have been helped by women's groups, and what forms of resistance to verbal violence they expect to take.

Table 1: List of respondents

serial number	gender	Interview format	Time of interview	Length of interviews
S1	Female	WeChat	2023.3.2	90 minutes.
S2	Female	WeChat	2023.3.5	40 minutes.
S3	Female	WeChat	2023.3.6	45 minutes
S4	Female	WeChat	2023.3.6	35 minutes.
S5	Female	WeChat	2023.3.7	50 minutes
S6	Female	WeChat	2023.3.7	37 minutes.
S7	Female	WeChat	2023.3.8	40 minutes.
S8	Female	WeChat	2023.3.8	42 minutes.
S9	Female	WeChat	2023.3.10	55 minutes.
S10	Female	WeChat	2023.3.11	65 minutes.
S11	Female	QQ	2023.3.11	40 minutes.
S12	Female	WeChat	2023.3.11	42 minutes.

2. Recognition of "verbal violence" in female discourse

2.1 Female discourse and the anti-violence Agenda

The theoretical spectrum of feminism is vast, and its practical claims are divergent, but there is a basic consensus that women are an oppressed and discriminated group throughout the world. Feminist

discourse is also full of contradictions, specifically about verbal violence, where some people believe that a certain phrase is and others do not, where some believe that the perpetrator should be fought and others believe that guidance and persuasion should be given. ...... However, when it comes to verbal violence, there is also a consensus in the feminist discourse: it is anti-violence.

The anti-violence agenda is part of feminism, and the feminist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had as its main objective the fight for women's suffrage, as well as the call for women's equality in family and social life. In the mid-to late-twentieth century, in addition to fighting for women's political and economic rights, feminists also focused on the situation of women in their private lives, coining the slogan "the private is political." In the twenty-first century, feminists have called for respect for women's bodily rights and the elimination of gender discrimination in the workplace. Feminism in this period has been sharply critical of gender inequality in all spheres and has emphasized the link between violence and patriarchal culture. The historical and cultural lineage of feminism and the anti-violence agenda shows that their development and evolution have been one of constant change and progress and that advocates of feminism and the anti-violence agenda have fought for more and more rights and respect for women through their tireless efforts.

2.2 Typical texts on verbal violence

2.2.1 Sexual character stigmatization

In male-centered cultures, men are viewed as sexual subjects and women as sexual objects, so men shame women about their sexuality through humiliation, and women, as sexual objects, are ashamed of normal physiological phenomena, such as the negative psychology caused by "menstruation shaming."

Searching the Douban community for the term "menstrual shaming" and summarizing the posters' accounts of their encounters reveals that the phenomenon is very common, for example:

"At an all-hands meeting, the leader said, 'How shameful that sanitary napkins should be so sashaying in the trash, dripping with blood.'"

The "menstrual humiliation" has long historical and cultural roots. During the period when science was not widespread, feudal superstitions could not explain the physiological phenomenon of menstruation, so they regarded it as an obscenity and a taboo: menstruating women were not allowed to enter the temples in order not to offend the gods and buddhas, and men were supposed to stay away from them in order not to "damage the yang and get sick". Men should stay away from them so as not to "damage yang and get sick". Modern medicine explains it as "the physiological phenomenon of endometrial shedding", but people's understanding of menstruation is still affected by the traditional "dirty and taboo" explanation, which used to be manifested by avoidance and social restriction, but nowadays it is more manifested by verbal stigmatization. Linguistic violence, as represented by menstrual shaming, places female sexuality in the position of being stared at and pointed at, just as women in social relations are placed in the position of being organized and defined as objects. Shaming the female identity through the humiliation of sexuality also forces women to worship men and feel ashamed of their own gender.

2.2.2 Promoting marriage and childbirth

Traditionally, a man's value in society is determined by his social achievements and talents, while a woman's value is more in the family. When women refuse to be wives and mothers, some people use derogatory language to attack these unmarried women of "marriageable age".

"Told my tutor I wanted to do a PhD and she said back to me what are you doing as a girl doing a PhD? Getting married and having children early is the right thing to do." (S4)

Most of the urging for marriage and childbearing is expressed in the form of persuasion, which seems to be a kind of suggestion, but implies the devaluation of women's ability and value. In 2017, China Women's Daily published a list of banned words in the category of sexism on its official microblogging site and WeChat, which included the word "leftover woman". Previously popularized as an online term, "leftover woman" conveys the social concept that no matter how accomplished one is, if one is still single at the age when one should get married, one is a useless, leftover woman. The promotion of marriage and childbearing through the degradation of unmarried women reflects the anxiety of the perpetrators that the traditional concepts they hold are being impacted, and the anxiety that the long-standing social model is being changed. At the same time, this concept restricts women's autonomy and exacerbates the social reality that women have fewer resources.

2.2.3 Gender Dwarfing

Linguistic violence against women through gender trivialization is intended to convey that women are less capable in certain fields, both by making women in these fields questionable and demeaning and by limiting women's access to and achievement in certain fields as a group. Gender stereotyping has resulted in the creation of discriminatory languages, such as "women drivers", which stereotypes competence.

Searching for the term "female driver" in the Douban community and summarizing the posters' accounts of their experiences, one finds that prejudice against "female drivers" is widespread, for example:

"My boyfriend drives me to and from work, and sometimes when he sees the car in front of me on the road having problems or breaking down, he says, 'It must be a woman driver.'"

Under the guise of social prejudice, which tacitly recognizes that men are naturally suited to driving and that women are incapable of doing so, "women drivers" have become the main culprits in traffic accidents in public opinion. Terms such as "female driver" reflect a bias that women are less advantaged in areas that require reason and logic. Society and culture emphasize the influence of gender on people and use it to divide the social image of men and women. Such trivialization excludes women from decision-making roles based on their gender, and the few women who are in those roles are questioned about their abilities based on their gender, perpetuating male domination of discourse and social resources. Verbal violence aimed at gender trivialization is not expressed in as intense a manner as direct verbal abuse, and until pointed out, it mostly exists in a neutral image and subconsciously influences and deepens social perceptions. Women's discourse rejects targeted discrimination and stereotypes, emphasizing that they are prejudices created by a patriarchal society to limit women, and demands that society look at women with an equal eye and give them equal opportunities.

2.3 Typical scenes of verbal violence

2.3.1 Verbal violence in intimate relationships

Intimate relationships in this context are defined as family members, partners, friends, and other people who have close emotional connections in their lives, and verbal violence inflicted by them is in some ways more damaging, with the victim feeling both angry at being attacked and helpless because the target is someone close to him or her.

"Every time they say something about their daughter being someone else's talk, I feel like I'm being left out of the family." (S1)

Verbal violence in an intimate relationship may touch on sensitive personal experiences, character, abilities, etc., and the victim may be caught up in negative emotions and develop frustration and anger towards the perpetrator. If verbal violence is not addressed appropriately, the relationship will change from intimate to cold in the long run. At the same time, intimate relationships play an important role in personal growth. The companionship and encouragement of family members, partners, and friends can contribute to personal growth, while on the contrary, their violence can lead to character flaws. A study found that the burden of depression attributable to intimate partner violence among Chinese women has improved over the past 30 years, but the situation remains serious[9]. If women face persistent devaluation and stigmatization in intimate relationships, they are more likely to suffer from low self-esteem in the future, lack the spirit of challenge and experimentation, and are less likely to succeed in many areas.

2.3.2 Verbal violence in demand relationships

Demand in this context refers broadly to the economy, power, knowledge, etc., and the relationship between the two may be between a leader and an employee, a teacher and a student, a doctor, and a patient, etc. Verbal violence that occurs in a demand relationship is more difficult to resist because the victim is usually on the more disadvantaged side, under pressure from power and authority.

In hierarchical relationships, employees may find it difficult to respond to insulting remarks by their leaders for fear of losing their jobs, and thus fall into a passive position of silence. In education, verbal violence between teachers and students may take the form of criticism or discrimination against students, who may find it difficult to resist because of their dependence on the teacher and their fear of being treated unfairly. During the interviews, several subjects also mentioned the scenario of "going to

the gynecologist". "When I told her to be gentle during the checkup, she said it's not like she's a virgin anymore so what are you afraid of." (S7) Victims are often powerless to respond to violence because of their dependence on the perpetrator, so it is important to provide a safe feedback channel for victims to use and to create an environment in which they feel safe.

2.3.3 Linguistic violence in cyberspace

Verbal violence that occurs on the Internet, i.e., threatening, intimidating, abusive, and other behaviors towards others through social media and other platforms, is equivalent to cyber violence expressed in the form of language. The current gender incidents, which are mainly characterized by cyber violence, touch upon at least two important sets of social issues within them: the issue of violence against the body (including the mind) and the issue of gender-based inequality[10].

Social media present personal information in the public eye, and any individual or group characteristics may be subject to unwarranted attacks and humiliation due to the identity of the viewer and differences in ideas. Personal words and deeds, emotions and feelings, topics and events are amplified in social media, and the discrimination and attacks that exist in reality are also dispersed in many forms in the network, and women's dignity is damaged and their expression is limited in these insults. The discrimination, prejudice, and targeted humiliation in the discourse show the situation of women being evaluated and judged in a patriarchal society, and at the same time, the difficult anti-verbal violence program also proves that the online regulatory mechanism and legal procedures do not provide enough protection for the victims. Strengthening anti-gender discrimination and violence awareness and establishing more effective mechanisms for defending rights will contribute to the achievement of a civilized online environment.

3. The resistance of female discourse to "verbal violence"

3.1 Direct counter-attacks in the moment

In the specific context in which verbal violence occurs, a direct retaliation, although it may exacerbate tensions, is the best way to demonstrate dissatisfaction with the aggressor by responding firmly. This can be summarized as: responding with facts; negative labelling of the perpetrator; and "reverse gender" attacks.

When an abuser's words contain obvious or invisible discrimination and stereotypes, women often ask the abuser to "not generalize" or respond with facts. For example, in the Douban community's #Who's Your Female Role Model thread, posters gathered examples of outstanding women from various industries to break down sexism and encourage more women to transcend prejudice. They usually don't argue with blunt insults and label the abuser negatively, such as "low-quality", to justify the violence by emphasizing the speaker's negativity. If the abuser demonstrates a clear attack on the female group, the women switch the subject of the attack to the abuser's group, e.g., the "complaining husband" corresponding to the "complaining woman". Attacking the abuser by reversing his or her gender not only responds to the verbal violence but also makes the abuser aware of the bias in the discourse.

3.2 Public exposure and access to justice

Public exposure is a common way of opposing verbal violence, which can let more people know that such statements are wrong, draw public attention and discussion, and thus promote greater awareness of gender equality in society. Recourse to the law is the best way to address violence, but it is often difficult for victims to adduce evidence when the abuser engages in verbal violence only without accompanying physical injuries. Therefore, the two methods are often used together.

Public exposure and legal action require the same approach. If one of the victims and the abuser is a public figure, the choice of public accusation may cause a rapid reaction from public opinion. If both parties are ordinary people, the exposer will narrow the scope to platforms that will have an impact on the abuser, such as a circle of friends or a group of mutual friends, so that it is more damaging for people who know him to learn about his violent side than for strangers to learn about it. There are also cases where neither party has social influence but the level of verbal violence is high, and the victim needs to use the law to defend the damaged rights. Public exposure of violent behavior in social media can create a certain amount of pressure on the perpetrator, and to expand this influence, women will take the form of uniting victims, creating hashtag topics, and increasing the level of discussion to

achieve their goals through group action.

3.3 "Ragging"

"Sucking" is a cybernetic term for simply not taking steps to control things when they are no longer going in the right direction. Responding to verbal violence in a bad way usually means remaining silent or accepting it with openness and indifference.

The abuser's discourse contains perceptions and evaluative standards, and female discourse assumes that the abuser's standards should not be the universal standard by which women are measured, and therefore breaks it down by showing disinterest in the attack. For example, a slogan popularized on social media, "I can be a slut, I can be a lady, it's not what you say I am that matters, it's that you don't get to decide what I am." In some cases it is an effective way of coping with the perceptions held by the abuser. But it also has some obvious drawbacks: it can be misinterpreted as agreeing with or acquiescing to the statements, leading to further attacks by the abuser. The social context in which "slut-shaming" occurs is one in which women spend a great deal of time and energy trying to justify and clarify themselves, and even then their clarifications are not recognized, so they choose to ignore the norms and logic behind the shaming. However, the malicious and humiliating connotations of the discourse do not disappear just because the victim does not care, so it serves only as a temporary method for the individual.

3.4 Resisting Discipline

Social discipline refers to the expectations and requirements of the social and cultural environment on people's behaviors, attitudes, values and other aspects, which are accepted and observed by individuals as a code of conduct and social norms. Social norms present different standards for different groups, thus easily creating inequality of status.

Women are often confronted with norms of appearance and roles that are different from those of men, and they are expected to regulate dress, be gentle and considerate, and be good wives and mothers. These norms limit women's behavioral choices and put them at a disadvantage in the competitive race for careers and advancement. When women do not live up to the norms, they face criticism and blame. Feminist discourse is sensitive to the social precepts that are directed at the female population. "Society demands too much from girls, there is no need to listen to everything." (S8) demonstrates that women can grow into different individuals by presenting images outside of the norms, thereby countering the similar paradigms of "good mother" and "good wife" that society demands of women. The disadvantaged in social relations are more sensitive to inequality, and in cases where inequality caused by double standards and social norms is real, it is necessary to call for and achieve equality by opposing the norms.

4. Emotional practices in countering verbal violence

4.1 Empathy with "victims"

Women who are subjected to verbal violence are united by shared experiences and emotions and can resist violence more forcefully. In affective practice, the presentation of the image of the victim also affects the level of sympathy and willingness to help others, therefore, portraying the image of the victim is an important part of the affective practice of women's discourse on themselves.

When recounting the experience of being subjected to verbal violence, victims usually emphasize the expression in several ways. First, they express their feelings and experiences clearly, so that the listener/reader can feel the details of the incident in the specific narrative, and most importantly, express the harm that the violent act has caused to them. Secondly, they will emphasize the prevalence and seriousness of verbal violence, stressing that what they have experienced is not an isolated case, that it is prevalent in society as a whole, and that it has a common impact on the female population. Finally, while seeking support and advice, they will also advocate against verbal violence, i.e., they will emphasize that verbal violence points to certain characteristics of the female group, proving the importance of resistance for the group. Overall, a victim image that is angry and articulate about verbal violence, emphasizes the oneness of women, and demonstrates a willingness to unite the female community is an easier target for empathy and help.

Women can generate more power by joining together for emotional practice, but divisions within groups already exist, so it is easy to attack each other. There is no single approach to anti-verbal violence, so disagreements are inevitable, but it is still important to be vigilant about whether you have become a perpetrator, as secondary victimization of the victim is the opposite of helping the victim.

4.2 Crusade against "perpetrators"

The perpetrators of verbal violence have different social roles and identities, but what they have in common is that they are the holders of prejudices and discriminatory ideas. Women's discourse recognizes that eliminating verbal violence requires both breaking down stereotypes and promoting equality in the social structure and that one way to do this is to accuse and denounce the perpetrators and demand that they change.

When talking about verbal violence against women, the female discourse blames the specific perpetrator, but it also accuses the deeper social causes of the problem, namely the male-centered patriarchal culture. The emotional crusade against the perpetrators unfolds in two ways: first, the female discourse replaces the victim of verbal violence with a man, pointing out the infrequency of the discourse in the light of the gender transition, thus justifying the double standard of men and women embodied in the discourse. Secondly, the female discourse attacks the perpetrator and the group he or she belongs to with equal or greater intensity. The abuser posts discriminatory remarks about the victim, and the female discourse responds with the same generalized logic, e.g., "The male driver's car smells extraordinarily bad and is not clean."

Once violence starts, it will not end soon, and in the process, both sides will keep changing the identity of the abuser and the victim in the process of attacking each other. To criticize the abuser is a necessary part of the fight against verbal violence, but it is not the ultimate goal of the fight against verbal violence. Therefore, it is more important to pay attention to how to help the victims to get rid of the harm caused by verbal violence and how to solve the social problems reflected by verbal violence.

4.3 Resonance with the "community"

When confronted with verbal violence, women often feel isolated and helpless and therefore seek support and understanding. In such cases, the emotional element of women's discourse can make it easier for them to form a community and become more cohesive, as well as more empowered to resist verbal violence.

Although the voice of women's groups has not yet reached a state where it can compete with the long-settled patriarchal culture due to the limitations of several factors, the emotional community that continues to gather into a community has already demonstrated its strength in several specific places. Women's discourse typically employs the following affective strategies to form a community: firstly, empathy building and mutual support, where sharing personal experiences and stories in different contexts helps to build trust between group members. The second is to emphasize the common situation and common interests of the female group. Once the aim of moving the social structure in the direction of greater equality is achieved, the beneficiaries will be all women. Lastly, it is a call for social concern. Group problems are considered to be the experiences of a certain category of people rather than the general problems of the whole society, and it is difficult to arouse the general understanding and help of the whole society. The women's discourse emphasizes that the problems faced by nearly half of the sexes cannot be easily ignored, and they link the individual's experiences to larger group problems, stressing that these problems are caused by society and need to be solved by joint efforts.

5. Conclusion

The verbal violence suffered by women's groups is closely related to social culture, power relations, and ideology. Men usually have more social and economic power, while women are in a lower social position. The bias held by the male-centered patriarchal culture that women should conform to these authorities and rules is perceived by female discourse as contrary to equality, and they rebel against gender biases and restrictions, discrimination, and pressure in society. Emotion serves as a bond that unites women as a group, and emphasizing common situations and common interests through emotional strategies enables more people to join the campaign against verbal violence. Women's discourse calls on society to recognize women's situation as a social issue and encourages and invites more people to join in the process of working for equality by advocating the common value of equality

for all human beings. Of course, women's discourse also faces many challenges and obstacles. Sexism and pressure in society still exist, and women may be ignored, criticized, and attacked. However, the power of women's discourse lies in their ability to speak out for their interests to inspire more people to join the movement for gender equality, and to promote society's attention to and reflection on gender issues by expressing their voices against social injustice.

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