

# Study on the Communication of Sexual Health among Young Women under the Background of New Media—Taking the Cognition of "Premarital Sex" as an Example

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**Abstract:** *Women's sexual health is a pivotal issue in the field of health communication at present. Combined with the vigorous development of the Internet era, this paper will probe deep into women's sexual health communication under the background of new media, analyze the path of women's sexual health communication in the era of new media, and explore whether the existing path of women's sexual health communication can exert certain influence on the sexual cognition, attitude and importance of young women's sexual health.*

**Keywords:** *Health communication, new media, women's health*

## 1. Introduction

Health is bound up with the happiness of numerous households and the future of the country and nation. On November 1, 2023, the State Council Information Office held a press conference on promoting the high-quality development and health of the healthcare industry. This press conference clearly stated the important goal of building a healthy China. Simultaneously, in September 2021, the State Council issued the "Outline for the Development of Chinese Women (2021-2030)", which includes important tasks such as establishing and improving the health management model for women throughout their life cycle, preventing and treating major diseases in women, and supporting the comprehensive development of families and women, highlighting the importance of long-term development of women's health in China. Concurrently, the National Health Commission mentioned at the National Maternal and Child Health Work Conference that it is essential to adhere to the principle of putting women and children's health at the center, strengthen the construction of the maternal and child health service system, and facilitate higher quality development of the maternal and child health cause through various policies. As demonstrated by the above discussion, safeguarding national health and women's health is a critical measure for national development.

As illustrated by the 2021 statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics, the crude mortality rate (1/100000) of urinary and reproductive system diseases in urban women is 5.56, ranking 9th. The crude mortality rate (1/100000) of pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum complications in urban women is 0.04, ranking 17th; The crude mortality rate of urinary and reproductive system diseases in rural women (1/100000) is 6.32, ranking 9th. The crude mortality rate of postpartum complications during pregnancy and childbirth in rural women (1/100000) is 0.08, ranking 17th. As indicated by relevant data, the mortality rate correlated with women's sexual health is a bit high as compared. Moreover, women's sexual health issues are a crucial part of the country's health development.

As a media form that relies on new technological support systems, new media is a pivotal channel for disseminating information today. New media and their platforms can make the most of the following advantages: speedy dissemination rate, extensive coverage, strong interactivity, diverse forms, precise promotion and popularization, and easy sharing to spread popular science video content [1]. Based on the characteristics of new media mentioned above, diverse forms and precise popularization are important criteria for women to obtain sexual health information through new media. In some sense, the issue of women's sexual health is still a sensitive topic in the current social and cultural context. The diversity of new media content and sharing, as well as precise popularization notifications for women, are pivotal and fruitful ways to facilitate women's access to sexual health

information.

Sexual cognition can be traced back to Freud's "Three Theories of Sexology"[2]: Sexual Instinct Theory, Reproductive Stage Theory, and Parental Plot Theory. Freud pointed out that sexual instinct is the fundamental force for human survival and reproduction. Apart from that, the theory of reproductive stages also suggests that this period has a significant impact on cognition and gender role formation. Sexual cognition is a critical component of a person's understanding of the concept of "id"[3]. Having a correct understanding of sex can be beneficial for achieving one's own health, protecting oneself and others at the lowest level of needs. Women's sexual cognition is even more important on the basis of the previous statement.

## **2. Overview of Sexual Health Communication among Young Women**

In terms of understanding women's sexual health communication through new media, women's sexual health communication on the basis of new media is a crucial way for young women to acquire knowledge about women's sexual health today. Nonetheless, the initial source of sexual health knowledge for some research subjects still relies chiefly on traditional media. Among major new media platforms, Tiktok, Xiaohongshu and Weibo are the leading Internet sources of sexual health knowledge for today's youth audience. When it comes to dissemination content, young women concentrate more attention on the expression methods of new media female sexual health communication videos, introductions to female diseases, understanding of sexual processes, and conventional science popularization, assessment, and usage content. Moreover, female sexual health communication is relatively wide with regard to the scope of content, ranging from basic daily life knowledge to scientific disease prevention and treatment or sexual behavior related content.

In regard to personal sexual cognition, the question that directly reflects sexual cognition or attitude is whether to accept premarital sex. The crucial factors influencing sexual attitudes are the level of understanding and emotional attachment to the partner, and being in a natural state. Among them, it is noteworthy that having or not accepting sexual activity is an individual's personal growth and love needs, and can even be viewed as having good sex.

The pros and cons of new media videos on women's sexual health are chiefly reflected in the two main advantages of fast dissemination speed and wide dissemination range, as well as the disadvantage of male popularization of women's sexual health knowledge. Apart from that, it is the promotion of ideology and the attention to content accuracy. In accordance with the extension of advantages and disadvantages, ideas about innovative points are correlated with personal occupation, personal identity, and job content.

The media platforms for young women aged 19-34 to obtain female sexual health knowledge are Xiaohongshu, Tiktok, and Weibo, which are short in either content or video. Moreover, the personal attitudes of young women towards sexuality are gradually becoming more open, and some of the interview content does not match the early female attitudes towards sexuality. It is in a transitional stage, which is beneficial for the overall society and not limited to the awakening of women's awareness of sexual health. This is conducive to providing ideological support for the development and research of sexual health among young women in China. In terms of innovation, young women can adequately exert their subjective initiative, combine their own advantages and ideas, and start from themselves to provide new ideas and perspectives for various aspects of the female sexual health communication path in new media.

## **3. The Influence of New Media Communication Paths on Women's Cognition and Behavior of Sexual Health**

The dissemination of women's sexual health through new media is currently one of the paramount sources for young women to acquire new knowledge. Apart from that, the internet is one of the channels with the highest proportion of women's sexual health knowledge.

In some sense, the more women watch popular science videos on gender health knowledge, the more open their attitudes towards sexual cognition become; The more women watch popular science videos on gender health knowledge, the more likely they are to engage in premarital sex; The more knowledge women acquire about both sexes through surfing on the Internet, the better they can avoid the risks in real-life relationships; The more mature women's knowledge of sexual health is, the more

likely they can develop a correct understanding of premarital sex. Meanwhile, age and education can affect the acceptance of premarital sex and individual female sexual health focus. Normally speaking, age does not affect the degree of sexual cognitive openness, while education affects the degree of sexual cognitive openness.

The dissemination of women's sexual health in the context of new media can impose a certain impact on the sexual cognition and attitudes of young women. Moreover, gender health popularization videos involve knowledge about sexual behavior, providing young women with a relatively correct knowledge base and understanding of sexual behavior, which will affect women's increasing acceptance of premarital sex. Simultaneously, the widespread popularization of women's sexual health knowledge can enrich their cognition and provides protection methods associated with sexual health. Watching videos on women's sexual health knowledge will make young women concentrate more on their own female sexual health. With a certain level of knowledge about gender health, young women will develop a certain understanding of sexual behavior, thereby getting more acceptable to premarital sex. This enables them to correctly view the correlation or impact between premarital sex and women's sexual health.

#### 4. The Communication Path of Women's Sexual Health in the New Media Era

In line with the in-depth interview results and questionnaire survey measurement results mentioned above, the dissemination of women's sexual health associated with new media is currently one of the important channels for young women to acquire knowledge about women's sexual health, and plays a certain role in women's sexual cognition and behavior. This paper predominantly uses three platforms, namely Xiaohongshu, Tiktok and Weibo, as the starting point to analyze the female sexual health communication path in the new media era.

Relying on emerging digital technology and mobile communication technology, new media has transcended the limitations of time and space in information transmission. Through the Internet platform, it transmits text, graphics, audio, video and other information content, forming a diversified media form. New media conducts an effective role in optimizing, expanding, and enhancing the dissemination of information [4]. New media is also a major carrier of mass communication and a pivotal channel for audiences and contemporary youth to obtain information.

In accordance with the 53rd Statistical Report on China's Internet Network Scratch Status (hereinafter referred to as the "Report") released by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) in Beijing, the development of digital technology has made public services more convenient and inclusive. Aside from that, the number of smart medical and Internet medical users has grown rapidly, 51.39 million more than 2022, with a growth rate of 14.2%. In the era of Internet platform and new media, the health needs of Chinese netizens are gradually increasing. Based on the overall augment in demand, the demand for women's health will increase step by step. For this reason, it is one of the key points of this study to explore the transmission path of women's sexual health in the era of new media.

In the era of new media, information dissemination presents the characteristics of effectiveness, breadth, and diversity, while health communication presents the characteristics of openness, interactivity, and personalization[5]. The role of new media in health communication in this study refers to mass communication. In accordance with the linear communication model, the information sent by the source reaches the destination through the communication channel in a one-way process, which is the early stage of communication. This study will be conducted in accordance with the "5W" model of social interaction structure and function proposed by Harold Lasswell, a representative of linear communication mode. The "5W" model consists of five elements, namely Who → Say What → In Which Channel → To Whom → With What Effects, jointly forming the theoretical framework of communication studies.

By constructing the overall transmission path of women's sexual health, this research demonstrates that diverse themes of communication content have dissimilar transmission paths, and each has its own characteristics. But simultaneously, in line with the search of Xiaohongshu, Tiktok and Weibo platforms associated with women's sexual health, this study suggests that different paths also had some interoperability. Women's sexual health in the context of new media was independent but linked with each other, and jointly completed the spread of women's sexual health in the context of new media.

Three dissimilar paths accomplish different missions. UGC serves as the main disseminator. It

shares simple health knowledge about both genders and women. Furthermore,UGC utilizes the Xiaohongshu platform to form interesting, simple, initial reserve knowledge about women's sexual health to young women. Through simple dissemination of women's sexual health, it not only enables women to have a certain foundation of understanding and interest in sexual health, but also lays solid foundation for further understanding of more professional and scientific knowledge about women's sexual health.

PGC is the main disseminator, whose function is to spread scientific and rigorous female sexual health popularization content. It spreads scientific knowledge to women aged 30-50 through the Tiktok channel, so as to achieve rigorous knowledge popularization and provide women with sexual health influence. It should be pointed out that the target audience is relatively broad, providing scientific sexual health popularization content to women.

OGC is the main disseminator, spreading long videos of popular science content, but may carry advertorial. By utilizing the vertical attributes of the Weibo platform, disseminating popular science content among young and highly educated individuals can achieve the goal of product promotion. Using OGC and Weibo as the main disseminators and communication platforms, the audience is more vertical and precise, mainly targeting highly educated young women, publicizing more professional female sexual health knowledge to the audience. Furthermore, due to its audience positioning, some profitable content will be added during the dissemination process to achieve more accurate monetization of the effect.

## 5. New Perspectives on Health Communication in the New Media Environment

The information dissemination in the new media environment predominantly presents the following three characteristics, namely timeliness, interactivity, and comprehensiveness. Concurrently, new media communication is also characterized by flatness, personalization, participation, and diversity. Based on the characteristics of new media and the analysis on the content and path of the above research, we will innovate a new perspective on health communication in the new media environment.

### 5.1 Optimization

Firstly, it is essential for us to innovate the content and new forms of health communication. In the current new media environment, there are also many forms of sudden "explosive popularity". Recent popular and plain short dramas are characteristic cases. New media can utilize multiple advantages such as dissimilar communication modes of various platforms to innovate or follow other popular cases on various platforms, which can not only effectively enhance the audience's interest in watching, but also quicken the innovation of new media and Internet content and form, thereby enhancing user stickiness.

Secondly, each health platform should lessen the review of popular science content and establish a separate review mechanism for health communication or other popular science content. In this process, sensitive words will no longer be blocked uniformly, and special analysis will be conducted for special issues. Aside from that, we need to establish a "sensitive word" green channel for popular science content, so that the audience can clearly understand key information, and at the same time, more and more professionals and professionals are not restricted by communication restrictions, making the new media environment more prosperous.

Thirdly, each platform should prioritize the production of vertical content. This not only requires the platform to vertically popularize sexual health communication to female audiences, but also to include sensitive parts that are considered by today's society. Accurate promotion of women's sexual health should be achieved, and it should be directed to a dedicated traffic pool. Referring to the partition function of Xiaohongshu, dedicated channels or sections can be set up to provide women with exclusive channels for information sharing. This not only expands the scope of dissemination, but also improves the quality of dissemination effects.

Ultimately, the platform needs to innovate health communication content and new forms. In the current new media environment, there are also many forms of sudden explosive growth in popularity and visibility. The recent popular vulgar short dramas are examples with many characteristics. New media can leverage the advantages of dissimilar communication modes on various platforms to innovate or adopt other popular cases on diverse platforms. This can effectively elevate the audience's interest in watching. Apart from that, this can greatly promote the innovation of new media and Internet

content and form, thus enhancing user stickiness.

## 5.2 Innovation

We should concentrate on the content of science popularization, which should not be taken seriously. Some forms of health communication and women's sexual health communication are single and boring to express. In accordance with the above optimization suggestions, a special activity on "Innovation in Health Communication" can be carried out to enable more and more health knowledge content to be conveyed in a fun and engaging form, enhancing the activity of the new media environment.

We can establish a persona and IP, then promote and support exclusive accounts for health communication or women's health communication using the successful path of celebrities or popular movies and TV shows. We can also cooperate with platforms to boost data flow. It's essential to create a brand effect for exclusive bloggers or platforms, corresponding to the establishment of exclusive personas for bloggers to enhance audience impressions.

Promoting brand collaboration is a crucial link in the integration of cultural industries and the development of new media. Fast moving consumer goods brands and new fashion brands that overlap with health communication user profiles can collaborate with local hospitals or mature health bloggers on new media platforms to further expand their communication scope. For instance, some milk tea brands can collaborate with well-known hospitals to launch exclusive drinks that protect women's health, create official images, and bring about official peripheral products.

It is imperative to facilitate the offline promotion. In line with the above interview data, both communities and government agencies provide free products or examination services associated with women's sexual health. But a multitude of audiences have information gaps, and new media platforms can be used to expand publicity efforts. We can establish an official account, an institution endorsed by the government, and use new media platforms to scientifically and rigorously disseminate health content, promoting health activities in various regions and communities. While conducting activities offline, we also promote them on new media platforms to further expand our influence. Meanwhile, we call for scientific health knowledge acquisition and participation in health activities for audiences of dissimilar age groups, so as to achieve effective health communication.

## 6. Conclusion

As exhibited by this study, the transmission path of female sexual health under the background of new media takes one platform as the major position, but diverse platforms are also bound up with each other. To a certain extent, dissimilar communication matrices of new media provide specific or exclusive sexual knowledge for women in diverse periods and stages, and provide a subtle and gradual influence on the behavior and ideology of young women in obtaining sexual health knowledge.

As displayed by the study, female sexual health communication in the context of new media significantly affected their sexual cognition, sexual attitude and sexual health importance. Meanwhile, it is also affected by age and education, sexual attitudes and sexual health are affected by age and education. Nevertheless, with regard to the degree of sexual cognitive openness is concerned, the degree of sexual cognitive openness is not affected by age, but educational background. Contemporary young women have their own understanding and views on women's sexual health communication in the context of new media. Meanwhile, the interviewees also actively practice in daily life to contribute their own strength to women's sexual health communication.

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