



Media Dissemination and Public Reception of Gender Discourse in 1990s Chinese Women's Literature

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine the role that media played in the construction and delivery of the post 1980s Chinese women's literature and culture as a form of feminist discourse with reference to both traditional and emergent media thus managing the constituent emergence and circulation. Based on a review of five seminal papers, this study presents an analysis that identifies the duality of the media as both enabling and constraining environments. Traditional media contributed to the perpetuation of patriarchal gender roles and ideologies, whereas social media provided possibilities for the reclamation of feminism. The study helps in shifting the understanding of how issues of gender were framed in the Chinese media during the socio-cultural change period and throws light on the changes in the role of engaged feminist media.

Keywords: Women's Discourse, Patriarchal Culture, Image Reconstruction, 1990s Chinese Women's Literature, Discourse Theory.

INTRODUCTION

The 1990s was a pivotal decade for gender discourse in Chinese literature, particularly women's literature, which gained prominence against the backdrop of rapid social, economic, and technological changes. This period saw the emergence of feminist narratives that challenged the deeply rooted patriarchal norms entrenched in both society and culture (Fong, 2022). The historical period witnessed Chinese women's literature emerge as a vital medium which enabled female consciousness and opposed traditional gender norms. The combination of media and literary elements played the most significant role in forming and receiving feminist discourses. Feminist writers received a newly developed public sphere through the growth of early digital platforms such as forums and blogs after state-controlled media shifted toward state-controlled print and television (Hoareau, 2021). The depiction and presentation of feminist principles within Chinese media suffered from state-imposed limitations, which exposed the dual battle between growth and censorship for gender discourse dissemination.

Problem Statement

Throughout the 1990s, literary exchange with media demonstrated an essential problem because media served as feminist discourse transmission channels while imposing patriarchal standards on narrative limitations.

A considerable portion of traditional media used newspapers and television to show women only as maternal figures with domestic responsibilities, which served to keep gender norms traditional (Jinsook, 2021). Feminist writers under early digital platforms achieved participatory discourse through digital space, which enabled them to dismantle patriarchal representations (Hoareau, 2021). Research remains insufficient regarding the role that various media channels have had on feminist themes in public consciousness and audience responses from individuals with different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. It remains essential to explore this knowledge gap to grasp the dual capabilities of media platforms, which act as both medium and facilitator for gender discourse in 1990s Chinese women's literature.

Objectives of the Research

This study seeks to address the following objectives:

1. To analyze the role of media in shaping public understanding and reception of feminist narratives in 1990s Chinese women's literature.
2. To explore how traditional media (print and television) and early digital platforms framed gender discourse and their respective impacts on the dissemination of feminist themes.
3. To contribute to the understanding of the interplay between media, literature, and gender discourse, using theories such as Foucault's discourse theory, framing, agenda setting, and the public sphere.

Research Questions

1. How did media platforms (traditional and early digital) shape public understanding and reception of feminist narratives in 1990s Chinese women's literature?
2. How did traditional media (print and television) and early digital platforms frame gender discourse, and what was their respective role in the dissemination of feminist themes in 1990s Chinese literature?
3. What insights can be gained from applying Foucault's discourse theory, framing theory, agenda-setting theory, and public sphere theory to analyze the interaction between media, literature, and gender discourse in 1990s China?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the growing body of research on feminist discourse in Chinese literature by situating it within the broader media landscape of the 1990s. While scholars such as Jinsook (2021) and Hoareau (2021) have examined the portrayal of women in traditional media, this research incorporates the transformative role of early digital platforms in democratizing feminist narratives. Second, it provides insights into the cultural and social dynamics that influenced audience interpretations of feminist themes, thereby expanding our understanding of the reception of feminist literature in China. Third, by using both, a literary and a communication science perspective, the present work stresses the fact that the media are not mere passive diffusers of feminist thought but active shapers of gender discourse. Finally, yet importantly, this study is timely, as it contributes to tracing the historical development of the feminist discourse in Chinese media and literature and thus may help identify trends in gender relations in contemporary media space.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As part of the literature review, the focus is on the analysis of previous research on media, gender discourse, and Chinese women's literature in the 1990s. It provides a comprehensive state of current theories and practices in key areas like gender construction, media discourse, feminist postcolonial and postmodernist narratives, audience, and gap identification. This analysis demonstrates the role played by media platforms in engaging with post-second wave feminist literature and how they influenced socio-cultural perceptions of gender in the society in the context of emerging socio-cultural shifts.

Theoretical Frameworks: Discourse, Framing, and Representation

Several theoretical frameworks explore how media and literature, as cultural texts, represent and respond to social power relations while portraying gender politics. These frameworks inform the understanding of gender discourse in 1990s Chinese women's literature. Pitsoe and Vladutescu (2024) provided the foundational discourse theory that concerns a construction of power and knowledge that is both disseminated and struggled over. According to Foucault, discourses not only represent but also construct reality, and discursive structures erase resistant knowledge. In patriarchal societies like in the 1990s China, this is evident in the erasure of women's voices and the enhancement of standard depicted by society. Some Feminist theorists have used Foucaultian ideas

in arguing about the way language continues to entrench male domination as well as how discursive practices also contain possibilities for effective change (Faysal & Rahman, 2021). Another theory that can be further used regarding selective processes in media is the framing theory (Iacob, 2022). Another media theory is Agenda-setting theory, which also describes how media decides what issues to give priority, and research shows how feminist themes are often sidelined in traditional media but given prominence on new media (Faysal & Rahman, 2021).

Rahman (2021) stated that in most patriarchal societies, women are not given much importance in any aspect of life. Rahman's coding and decoding of messages bring out the fact that different audience has different meanings that they attribute to the media messages they receive. This perspective is particularly relevant to analysing the multiple representations of feminism in the late 1990s Chinese women's writings. Lastly, Zhou's (2024) discussion on the public sphere helps to explain how different media outlets build forums for discussions. In the 1990s, China, a large proportion of traditional media was state-controlled, and so feminist conversation had to happen within a state-imposed framework. However, as indicated by the use of early digital forums including blogs and forums, notions of 'new public sphere' were inclined towards the allowance of convenient participatory discussions by both the writers and the readers with feminist inclinations. This change also made it easier to put out information that was feminist, which interrupted traditional structures, which controlled what was to be known about gender issues (Rahman, 2021).

Media's Role in Gender Discourse Construction

The media has historically played a dual role in constructing gender discourse: as a vehicle for reinforcing patriarchal norms and as a platform for contesting them. In the Chinese context, traditional media during the 1990s predominantly adhered to state-sanctioned perspectives, framing women as caregivers, mothers, and wives. For example, *Women of China* magazine subtly introduced discussions about autonomy and career development but remained constrained by the overarching need to align with patriarchal values (Li & Chen, 2021). Similarly, state-controlled outlets like *People's Daily* often highlighted stories of "model mothers" and "virtuous wives," perpetuating the idealized roles of women within the domestic sphere (Huang, 2023).

However, the 1990s also witnessed the emergence of early digital platforms such as Sina and NetEase, which provided unprecedented spaces for feminist discourse. These platforms allowed feminist writers and readers to bypass state control and engage in unfiltered, participatory dialogues (Simon, 2021). Simon describes this phenomenon as "convergence culture," where digital media blurs the lines between producers and consumers, enabling audiences to actively shape narratives. In the Chinese context, early forums and blogs became critical tools for feminist writers to disseminate alternative perspectives on gender and identity.

However, the duality of media can still be observed even in the modern context as it provides for the preservation and development of two programs at the same time. Mainstream media regarding feminism relied on putting a timeline and parameters on the movement and its goals, which would not pose a threat to the male-dominated societies (Huang, 2023). While the Internet proved to be a space for quite intense patriarchal performance and control of women's bodies, digital platforms helped diversify feminist voices and performances to disrupt the balanced patriarchy. Such an interchangeability between print and electronic media points to the fact that assigning a specific role to media in relation to gender discourse is not very easy.

Feminist Narratives in 1990s Chinese Women's Literature

Thus, the portrayal of the social realist tradition together with the creation of Chinese women's literature in the 1990s resulted in writers occupying an innovative way of analyzing patriarchal dogmatism and the process of forming the new female subject. Whereas the earlier movers for this change include Guo Jie, Tie Ning, Lin Bai and Chen Ran painted women as independent and layered individuals who suffered the injustices of the Patriarchy (Simon, 2021). Thus, their works questioned the gender roles and brought a focus on new topics like individual independence, the politics of the body, and the demystification of the myths surrounding motherhood.

The "myth of motherhood" is one of the major subjects of feminist writings of the 1990s. Historically, motherhood has been the dream of every woman, and it was viewed as altruism and the highest essence of morality for a woman (Garrett, 2021). Nevertheless, unlike many other writers of the period, for example, Yu She by Xu Xiaobin, portrayed mothers as complicated, three-dimensional characters struggling with their own sorrow and the demands of their society. These portrayals averting the nonconformist patriarchal framework of motherhood were perceived as a chaotic and sometimes a burdening role for women (Du, 2021). Likewise, Garrett (2021) stated that mother's crisis: self-identity and relationships with daughters, which is a microcosm of motherhood under conditions of patriarchy.

Another more important theme is the deconstruction of the male stereotype. Male characters in 1990s's women literature are portrayed as being selfish, cowards, or oppressive, owing to women's disillusionment with

traditional Patriarchal systems. For instance, Guo Jie's *Wu Zi* depicts all male characters as sunders, who do not think about women's freedom and independence besides sex work within a male-dominated society (Guo, 2021). This role swap of the two sexes is also contributory to the fight for a change in the cultural storyline on the issue of gender. Actualized through protagonists like Lin Duomi in Lin Bai's *Yigeren de Zhanzheng* (*A War of One*), female corporeality, and individual transformation are indeed multifaceted. For this reason, Lin Duomi's conceptualization of her body and freedom is subversive of social norms germane to women particularly the aspect of sexuality (Chen, 2018). Such experiences can be connected to a more general trend in post-feminist literature where female body is re-cooperated for political use.

Audience Reception of Feminist Narratives

The specific nature of cultural, social, and demographic impact defined audience reception of feminist narratives in 1990s Chinese women's literature. Reception theory minimally observes that audiences construe texts in different ways according to contexts of culture and history (H. Chang, 2023). The respondents from urban areas saw the foreign feminist movements more often and thus the feminist themes were better embraced in the societies. Middle class, young women recognized their gender challenging, liberal post-feminist narratives of individualism, body images and the demystification of the institution of motherhood.

In contrast, the rural and conservative audience largely rejected the narratives of feminism as they destroyed the principles of family-oriented morality. These interpretations were significantly influenced by exposure to media. Composing to the limited reach typical of traditional media, and its state-driven propaganda, African feminist sentiments never reached most rural or conservative circles. Web-based media however, enabled the feminist writers to draw a large readership by making it possible to write on aspects of feminism extensively (Simon, 2021). Thus, the above analysis of the divergent audience reception indicates that there is no doubt that media plays a central role in the regulation of how the public perceives gender discourse.

Gaps in Existing Research

Although a number of advancements have been made in the research of the feminist literature and media, some of the issues are as follows. First, although numerous studies have addressed individual themes in 1990 Women's Literature in China there is a lack of research on how and in what ways the media participated in the construction of perceptions about these literatures. Secondly, despite scholars recognising early digital platforms as significant in democratizing an extended array of discourses including feminisms, literature review continues to show limited investigation of the role of early digital platforms, especially in the Chinese context. Third, the conflicting arguments are unaware of how audience reception intersects with age, location, and socio-economic backgrounds when viewing feminist themes. Last, although Foucault's discourse theory and framing theory have been used frequently, more coordinated approaches should be taken to draw upon these theories collectively in order to study ways in which media, literature, and gender discourse intersect. That is why it is important to further investigate these gaps in order to expand the knowledge on the connection between media, literature, and gender in 1990s China. Future studies can go further and offer further elaborate results concerning how cultural and social media formed and spread the narratives of feminism.

METHODOLOGY

The research used a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine the role of media distribution channels on feminist discussions within Chinese female literature from the 1990s. The selection of Systematic Literature Review (SLR) occurred because it enables transparent methodology while minimizing bias and organizing diverse sources through structured replication steps (D. Cabrera & Cabrera, 2023). The review process served two purposes: first, analyzing academic discourse patterns and second, evaluating how Chinese media platforms framed feminist narratives throughout a critical socio-cultural period in the 1990s.

The study uses fundamental theoretical constructs which both designed the research methods and provided guidance for analysis. Multiple discourses from Foucault (2013) helped identify how institutional power systems in media control feminist content publication and definition. The framework by McCombs and Shaw (1972) explained how media institutions decide their emphasis on and arrange gender-related topics for public attention. The early digital platforms received evaluation for their contribution to feminist expression and reception through Habermas's (1989) public sphere concept.

Search Strategy and Data Sources

The research depended on five academic databases, which included Scopus along with Web of Science, JSTOR, CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) and Google Scholar. The search employed Boolean

operators with appropriate keywords to narrow down results. The defined keywords for the search included “Chinese feminist literature” as well as “gender discourse in media”, together with “1990s China”, “digital feminism”, “women’s narratives”, and “traditional media framing.” The research includes reviews from both English and Chinese publications to demonstrate the whole spectrum of feminist discourse within Chinese culture.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The studies were screened according to specific inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined in **Table 1**. These criteria were developed to ensure alignment with the study’s objectives and to maintain academic rigor.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Focus	Feminist discourse, media portrayal, or literary reception in the Chinese context	Studies not related to gender, media, or outside Chinese context
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed articles, academic books, and theses	Editorials, blogs, unverified grey literature
Language	English or Chinese	Other languages
Date Range	1990 to 2024	Pre-1990 works unless foundational

PRISMA Screening Process

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) model was used to structure the literature selection. A total of 27 records were initially identified. After removing five duplicates, 22 articles remained for title and abstract screening. Eleven articles were then selected for full-text review, out of which five were found to meet all the inclusion criteria. These five studies formed the basis for the thematic synthesis (**Table 2**).

Table 2. PRISMA Screening Summary

Screening Stage	Number of Records
Records identified	27
Duplicates removed	5
Titles/abstracts screened	22
Full-text articles reviewed	11
Studies included in the final set	5

Thematic Analysis

Following the final selection, a thematic analysis was conducted using Ainscough, Smith, Greenwell, and Hoare’s (2018) approach. Each study was read repeatedly to ensure familiarity with the content. Coding was then applied to extract recurring patterns and concepts. Key themes that emerged included: the reinforcement of patriarchal norms through state-controlled traditional media, the emergence of counter-discourses in digital feminist spaces, intersectional approaches to online activism (especially within the #MeToo movement), the influence of translation and adaptation on gender narratives, and the formation of gendered parenting roles in public discourse. These themes were then interpreted through the lens of the guiding theories, allowing for an integrated understanding of media influence on feminist narrative reception.

Scope and Limitations

Although the final sample included only five studies, this limitation reflects the niche and interdisciplinary nature of the research focus. The study prioritises depth over breadth, offering detailed insights into a specific socio-cultural and historical context. However, some early digital platforms, especially informal blogs or forums from the 1990s, were excluded due to access limitations or lack of peer review. The exclusion of grey literature and empirical audience data also limits the generalizability of findings. Nonetheless, the rigorous methodology enhances the validity and scholarly contribution of the review.

Ethical Considerations

This study relies solely on secondary sources that are publicly available and peer-reviewed. As no human participants were involved, ethical approval was not required. The review complies with all standards of academic integrity, including appropriate citation, transparency in method, and acknowledgement of limitations.

RESULTS

The analysis section details the findings extracted from five research papers which examine media effects on public reception of feminist ideas in Chinese women's literary works. The reviewers evaluated every study by assessing its theoretical background alongside research methods while underscoring its value to gender narrative examinations in Chinese media throughout the 1990s until current times. The analysis utilizes a systematic thematic approach, which outlines major findings throughout the works and ends with a matrix to summarize study contributions (**Table 3**).

Overview of Reviewed Studies

Table 3. Summary of Reviewed Studies

Author(s)	Year	Title	Focus Area	Method
S. Chang	2025	Little Women and Transformative Girl Narrative in China	Literary adaptation and feminist identity	Textual analysis
Yin	2022	Re-articulating Feminisms	Historical critique of Chinese feminism	Theoretical analysis
Yin and Sun	2021	Intersectional Digital Feminism and the #MeToo Movement in China	Digital activism and intersectionality	Case study analysis
Shen and Jiao	2024	“Widow-style Parenting” and Gendered Roles in Social Media	Gendered parenting and popular feminism	Discourse analysis
Zou and Liu	2024	Body Politics and IUD Discourse on Weibo	Reproductive rights and digital advocacy	Critical discourse analysis

Theme 1: Literary Adaptation and Feminist Identity

The research conducted by S. Chang (2025) about Little Women in Chinese cultural settings demonstrates the fundamental position of literary adaptations for developing feminist identities. Research examines the process of translating Little Women from its Western origins into versions that captured Chinese readers' interests through cultural adaptations in the 1990s. The social and political reforms during which China started to embrace international gender discussions allowed Little Women to become a space where feminist ideas could be introduced. The analysis explores the reinterpretation of sisterhood concepts combined with autonomy development and personality evolution by adapting them to match Chinese cultural norms and political preferences. The novel required a major change during adaptation to conform to official national policies that maintained traditional societal beliefs about gender. Media frames served as critical elements determining how the public received the feminist themes found in these adaptations. The translated feminist text enabled Chinese women to uncover feminist concepts but the adaptation focused primarily on elements that did not disrupt China's patriarchal system. The translated feminist content blended with official guidelines to present feminist messages without causing direct opposition from state authorities. According to S. Chang (2025), the literary works from 1990s China acted as essential tools for developing feminist subjectivity within the Chinese culture. This study demonstrates the use of Little Women's strategic translation to explore how literature became a tool for negotiating feminism in a changing political context.

Theme 2: Historical and Ideological Shifts in Feminist Discourse

Yin (2022) provides a thorough theoretical assessment of feminist mobilization in China along with an assessment of their transformation from socialist beginnings into neoliberalism. The study provides crucial understanding of how historical and ideological changes affected feminist discourse in China, particularly during the 1990s period. Gender activism in China changes its shape based on state control policies and global feminist movements that determine what expressions can be expressed. Historical evaluations provide researchers with a necessary foundation to understand state-led media control because they show how political controls shaped feminist expression in China. Yin explores the fundamental ideological battles between Chinese feminists during the country's market transition period under authoritarian rule in the late 1990s. The research explains how feminist works in Chinese literature functioned while adjusting between international feminist trends and national censorship requirements. The historical framework, along with the ideological context which Yin introduces, leads to a deeper understanding of the 1990s Chinese media and literary spaces which exchanged contested gender norms. An understanding of theoretical principles enables the research of feminist movements which operated between government rules and international feminist thoughts during China's crucial historical shift.

Theme 3: Digital Feminist Activism and Intersectionality

Through the MeToo movement, Yin and Sun (2021) study the various ways digital feminism operates in China from an intersectional perspective. Research on digital feminism by Yin and Sun follows the discipline's historical roots that began with early digital platforms creating spaces where women could share their experiences of gendered injustice, starting from the late 1990s. Computer spaces enabled women to merge racial, economic and gender aspects in their discourse thus developing novel proactive feminist movements that subverted traditional gender standards. The digital platforms developed in the 1990s established a public digital feminist sphere that became instrumental for MeToo's later triumph by permitting free feminist expression beyond traditional media censorship as established in this study early, digital platforms operated as distinct platforms which enabled feminist voices to manifest and fight against common gender stereotypes and suggest different meanings than official state-controlled media. Chinese feminist activism experienced a critical leap forward when women obtained the ability to fight against patriarchal gender standards because official media censorship had previously blocked them permanently. Digital activism functions in China within both authorised and unauthorised media platforms and also operates beyond their reach, according to the research. Chinese digital platforms supported feminist resistance functions and activist roles throughout state censorship measures although authorities worked to prevent such activities. Online platforms provided women the opportunity to create new feminist identities and confront gender expectations from their traditional roles. New technical capabilities of platforms elevated Chinese feminist movements by giving women from all backgrounds the opportunity to participate in gender activism beyond governmental media oversight.

Theme 4: Gendered Parenting in Popular Discourse

Shen and Jiao (2024) also utilise the concept of Chinese Social Media referred to as “Widow-style Parenting” to depict that after the man gets employed for any kind of work, women are the ones left responsible for the caregiving of children at home. Numerous examples prove that gender plays a significant role in the whole history of labor mobility originating from rural China and leading to male migration. Shen and Jiao have researched the “widow-style parenting” in Chinese media literature, where although it embraces gender roles, it seems to depict strong female characters. It allows females to appreciate newer positions while simultaneously maintaining the gender roles which assign most of the house chores to females. Social media portrays a culture of feminism in which women are portrayed diversely through powerful stories, yet they are confined to a society's expectations of women as caregivers. Hence, social media exploits this narrative to give people an illusion of empowering women while failing to eradicate gender discrimination as depicted by Shen and Jiao. Media content acts as an oppressive regulator of gender but its regulating role implies the traditional or reshaped gender roles based on viewers' interpretations of a narrative. Empowerment narratives in this aspect channel and sustain pre-digital age patriarchal thinking while the digital platforms have provided better grounds for openness in the three cases analyzed above. This makes Chinese modern digital media doubly coded in that it sustains conventional gender norms even as it subverts them based on the framing techniques and contexts.

Theme 5: Reproductive Rights and Body Politics

The research by Zou and Liu (2024) analyzed the Weibo discussion about intrauterine devices (IUDs) to understand how Chinese social media users approach reproductive rights in these limited and discriminatory digital environments. The analytical research shows that governmental regulations about female body control shape how women use social networks to discuss reproductive health matters including IUD choices. Governments implement various programs to regulate reproductive health communications even though they restrict women from discussing their body issues at their discretion. Zou and Liu demonstrate in their research that Weibo together with similar digital platforms allow women to take full control of their reproductive rights. The platforms enable women to confront official state messages while expressing their personal reproductive health narratives. Digital activist platforms function as a means of feminist opposition due to their ability to enable women to bypass government-sanctioned censorship when they engage in discussions concerning their bodily freedom. The findings presented by Zou and Liu are crucial in examining how social media supports feminist discourse about reproductive rights beyond state restrictions, which previously suppressed these discussions. The study demonstrates that digital platforms serve as essential feminist activism platforms which help women take control of body-related and health-related narrative perspectives. The discourse operates within a fight for bodily autonomy, which women have maintained since the 1990s as they oppose state-imposed restraints against their reproductive choices.

Thematic Contribution Matrix

Table 4. Thematic Contributions of Reviewed Studies

Theme	S. Chang (2025)	Yin (2022)	Yin and Sun (2021)	Shen and Jiao (2024)	Zou and Liu (2024)
Literary adaptation and feminist identity	✓	✓			
Historical/ideological critique		✓	✓		
Digital feminism and intersectionality			✓		✓
Gender roles and parenting narratives				✓	
Reproductive rights and body politics					✓

Synthesis and Conclusion

Show in **Table 4**, the five reviewed studies demonstrate how media in China has both shaped and been shaped by feminist discourse over time. While the studies vary in focus and methodology, they share a common thread in showing that media—whether traditional or digital—has played a central role in disseminating, contesting, and framing feminist narratives. The studies highlight the dual nature of media as both a site of restriction (through state censorship) and empowerment (through feminist activism, especially in digital spaces). As feminist discourse continues to evolve in China, the media remains a crucial site for both negotiation and resistance, reflecting broader socio-political dynamics.

DISCUSSION

Feminist Narratives and Media Framing in 1990s China

The research shows the complex relationship between feminist narratives and Chinese media during the 1990s through a systematic literature review. The state-controlled traditional media created different adaptive channels which let mainstream gender roles confront feminist challenges during this historic period. The post-reform period led Chinese feminist dialogues to expand their activities alongside international feminist activism. Feminist ideologies fought for recognition by using adaptations of literature and media representations and digital platforms, according to the research by S. Chang (2025), Shen and Jiao (2024) and Yin (2022). The research demonstrates that feminist media content both displays existing social changes by serving as their representation while aiding in their actual development.

Little Women received Chinese cultural adaptation treatment in order for it to conform to native storytelling methods, according to research by S. Chang (2025). The 1990s version of Little Women went beyond direct Western content adaptation because the producers chose plot elements that reflected China's social and political environment at that time. Little Women was presented to the Chinese audience through media that transformed key novel themes of sisterhood and female independence into local societal norms when promoting the story. According to Foucault's discourse theory, from 2013, media and literature enable institutions to establish power dynamics. The traditional media institutions use various representation methods to depict feminist content about women against social norms compared to official gender standards. Yin (2022) states that Chinese feminism evolved because of government limitations, together with feminist activism at local levels. The 1990s marked Chinese media censorship as its highest point until Beijing allowed both global market freedom and fundamental social development. Only human themes were not enough for state authorities, who adapted them during official processes for state objectives. Chinese feminist groups attempted to align with official gender norms through co-optation but continued to fight back through the media systems, which both controlled them and enhanced their political power.

Digital Feminism and the Emergence of New Media Platforms

Digital feminism has proven to be one of the main discoveries of this review because it fundamentally shapes feminist communication in China. The traditional media maintained patriarchal control, yet digital internet access succeeded in establishing venues where feminist movements could thrive. According to Yin and Sun (2021), the Chinese MeToo movement leveraged digital platforms to fight gender inequality through emerging activist practices, which surpassed traditional media limitations. According to their research, the origins of digital feminist activism in China can be found in the late 1990s, during which time Internet forums and blog platforms first started giving women independent platforms beyond state media to talk about gender issues. Digital media tools in feminist activism evolved to create Habermas's (1989) public sphere by making the internet available for

discourse democracy. Online platforms offered Chinese citizens a broadened space of public dialogue despite official government censorship because they enabled minorities, including feminists to speak out. According to Yin and Sun (2021), digital feminism in China functions as a dual process where state control meets feminist resistance through a continuous state-struggle for feminist media management. Research on Chinese feminist media evolution needs to evaluate digital platforms since they have become essential for enabling marginalized voices to find public expression.

Gendered Parenting and Popular Feminism

Shen and Jiao (2024) examined "widow-style parenting" methods to investigate how media packages endorse prevalent feminist views within Chinese cultural society. Studies of social media content found that television prettifying content upholds accepted gender-based social conventions. Widow-style parenting became a widespread practice in China during the 1990s and remains present in modern media for examining workplace gender-based inequality. Chinese media presents strong maternal characters in their storytelling but continues to uphold societal rules that label women as the preferred caregivers even when their families have male representatives. The Chinese mainstream media fights against feminist progress as described in Yin (2022) because traditional gender standards remain its operational framework. According to Shen and Jiao (2024), media adopts the "widow-style parenting" depiction method which focuses on individual female experiences while ignoring systemic inequalities in family life challenges. The media displays contradictory practices through their backing of female empowerment, alongside maintaining traditional norms that assign total family responsibility to women. Chinese media allows feminist expression that adheres to traditional gender roles since state officials grant permission for it.

Reproductive Rights and Body Politics

Zou and Liu (2024) analysed Chinese reproductive rights discourse through observations of intrauterine devices (IUDs) on Weibo, the major social media platform in China. The Chinese government controls women's autonomy through its position which links between social reproductive freedom and government control of bodies. Women use valuable digital platforms to spread reproductive health information against official state messages but this leads to state surveillance pressure on their activity. The research by Zou and Liu shows that digital restrictions foster feminist resistance because Chinese women actively protect their reproductive freedom together with bodily autonomy. Studies conducted by S. Chang (2025) and Yin (2022) support research outcomes demonstrating how women exercise self-dominion by fighting against domination. The physical self-determinacy fight of Chinese women persists through their continued defense of reproductive rights as essential feminist issues as explained by Zou and Liu (2024). Chinese feminists engage in intense resistance by using already monitored public platforms to air discussions about reproductive care.

Conclusion and Implications for Feminist Media in China

This research showcases the continuous development of feminist concepts within Chinese cultural discourse. During the 1990s, traditional media perpetuated patriarchal gender rules but feminist movements exposed and challenged these norms using literature together with cyber-activism and social media communications. During the significant developmental stage of the 1990s, feminist concepts started to become more noticeable in Chinese media but the government still retained strong control. Digital platforms that emerged in the 2000s and continue forward created feminist communication channels which enable women to avoid censorship by traditional media gatekeepers. Chinese media functions as both an instrument of feminist constraint and an avenue which empowers feminists during their discourse. Though traditional media restricted feminist content it functioned as a platform which transported feminist messages to audience members. The digital realm now serves as an active arena for feminist involvement because it allows women to communicate their obstacles and confront those limitations established by the state. A complete analysis of the evolving feminist discourse must explore how traditional and modern media platforms influence gendered storytelling in China.

CONCLUSION

The examination tracked the influence of media materials on feminist literary stories in Chinese women's literature and utilized traditional and digital media channels from the 1990s. Data gathered from five systematic literature review (SLR) studies demonstrated how gender concepts migrated through Chinese media organizations during Chinese economic and societal periodical shifts. During the 1990s feminist discourse growth experienced dual positive influences from traditional media networks together with emerging digital media platforms. Through their state ownership traditional media platforms displayed women carrying out maternal household duties as they portrayed them as wives through patriarchal narrative frameworks. The official media of

China connected its biased content to the traditional male-dominant structure of Chinese society to broadcast feminist messages, which the government authorized. Following patriarchal restrictions female writers adapted their storytelling content to make its storytelling possible in mass media outlets.

During the late 1990s, digital platforms proved themselves as critical tools because they brought major industrial transformations to media industries. Digital forums and blogs functioned as feminist platforms for readers to participate in dialogue with writers about testing the messages underlying mainstream gender narratives. The basic digital platform features created an opportunity for digital feminism to flourish through which women could reveal discriminatory gender conduct without encountering strong state access restrictions. The protection of writers by digital platforms from media censorship enabled them to build an inclusive public space for feminism so they could democratize Chinese gender-related discussions. The research findings demonstrated that feminist topics presented in the media are affected by social elements as well as political authorities who manage how feminist matters appear in media content. Feminist perspectives received different audience reactions as socialist gender principles evolved from socialist ideologies to neoliberal market-focused gender views through the 1990s. Middle-class women in urban neighborhoods accepted messages about female liberation and maternal reform through feminist ideals but rural residents refused this content due to their commitment to traditional customs and restricted access to alternative information sources. The research shows that media weaves complex interrelations between literature and feminist speech. Through media, women find ways to express feminism while resisting censorship, although media provides spaces where limitations against feminism can also appear. Through new media channels, feminist stories gained increased visibility at the turn of the 1990s as the era progressed into viewing more feminist content.

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