

Evaluation on Chinese Mainstream Media Gender Equity Level Take People's Daily, China Women's Daily, and the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League WeChat public platform as examples

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Abstract. Many studies have shown that gender bias exists in the news. It is unclear whether and what sexism issues exist in mainstream media. The purpose of this study is to identify the types of sexist issues in the news and how they change in Chinese mainstream media. This study used content analysis to analyze all public news for three years from the People's Daily, China Women's Daily, and the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League WeChat public platform. The study found that all three mainstream media have gender discrimination problems, and their number and diversity are increasing every year.

1. Introduction

The issue of sexism in the news has received longstanding attention in all countries. Stereotypes, stigmatization, and other kinds of sexism visible in the news have been specifically studied in the case of studies by scholars. Relatively little research has been conducted in Chinese news. The disenfranchisement of women in society is a result of gender bias in the media, which impedes the advancement of gender equity [1]. The lack of female images leads to a decline in female self-identity [2]. Female stereotypes in the media support the notion that women should not have agency and reinforce prejudice and discrimination.

The purpose of this study is to summarize the problems of gender discrimination in mainstream media and to track how these problems have changed over time. Using a content analysis approach, the study identified a coding approach based on the literature and counted the frequency and types of sexism issues in three mainstream media outlets over three years. The study found that sexism was a problem in the mainstream media, with the most serious problem in the youth-oriented mainstream media. This study provides a reference in the work of mainstream media to help promote the dissemination of gender equality ideas.

2. Literature Review

The Feminist critical theory is the theoretical basis for assessing the situation of gender discrimination. The belief that women are inherently inferior to men has led to discrimination against women [3]. In terms of the reasons for the unequal treatment of women, patriarchy is the root cause of women's oppression. Daly discovers

that patriarchy can be found in societal customs, literature, history, and philosophy [4]. Feminism points out that the inequality between men and women is caused by the different divisions of labor in economic production. According to Sacks, women's oppression results from their lack of access to the resources necessary to maintain their societal independence [5].

The issue of sexism in the news has long been a concern in various countries. The language used in the news is sexist according to an analysis of political news in the New York Times [6]. The conservative role of newspapers is revealed by a textual analysis of 1,244 news headlines from Italian newspapers using the Spad-t statistical package [7]. Discrimination in new media has also raised concerns. Women encounter extreme hostility in online forums according to Sobieraj [8].

Research on gender-linguistic relations in China began in the late 1970s. Several articles point out that sexist coverage of women in the news is common [9-10].

Overall, research on sexism in Chinese news is scarce and focuses only on the manifestation of a particular discriminatory viewpoint alone. Therefore, this study poses the following three research questions.

1. What is the current state of Chinese media coverage through a feminist lens?
2. What are the differences in the degree and type of sexism in mainstream media with different audiences?
3. How has the issue of sexism in mainstream media changed over time?

3. Materials and Methods

In this investigation, the content analysis served as the primary research methodology. It is a typical approach to studying mass media. This study was conducted by

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purposive sampling. The Central Committee of the Communist Youth League(CCYL), China Women's Daily, and People's Daily were selected as the representatives of mainstream media in this study. CCYL is the party-run media responsible for youth ideology. China Women's Daily is the official media that speaks for women. People's Daily is the mainstream media facing all people in society. All articles on WeChat publics of the three media in 2014, 2018, and 2022 were selected as the objects of this study. This paper adopts UNESCO's gender-sensitive indicator [11] as a criterion to determine whether the news is sexist or not. The specific categories are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Categories of gender issues.

Category	Forms	Examples from News
Emphasis on female appearance	Describing the appearance of female protagonists unrelated to the subject of the news.	Half of the sports news described the different hairstyles of female athletes.
Stereotype of female's family image	The portrayal of women's traditional roles within the family.	"Less of an urban beauty and more of a figure working at home".
Analyzing from male's perspective	When exploring the impact of events, only the effects on men's lives are noted.	The motivation for women's efforts is attributed to man.
Associating women with childbirth	The portrayal of women in child-rearing roles without their own identity or name.	The text uses the term "Kiki's mother" to refer to women.
Labeling women	Substituting a characteristic to all women.	The heroine is called the "easy girl".
Emphasis on gender	The female gender is intentionally indicated.	"female drivers" vs "drivers"
Improper victim description	Failure to use objective rhetoric to distinguish between consensual sexual acts and criminal acts.	Referring to the victims of the incident as "malicious competitors".
Male good female poor	Negative news has multiple protagonists who are all female.	The four victims of the scam were all women.
Describing men as active	Portray men as rescuers or event promoters and women as rescued or bystanders.	An unknown male actively "saved the child's life", while "the mother was overwhelmed".

4. Results

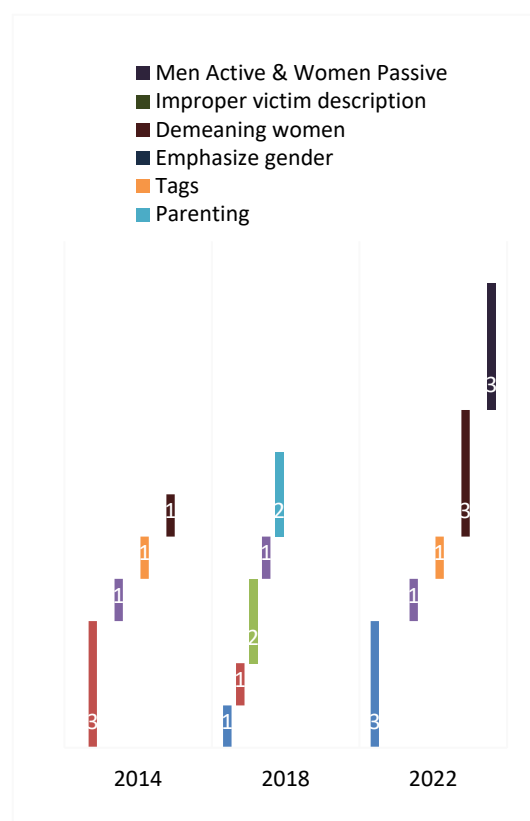


Fig. 1. The Number of Sexism news in China Women's Daily.

The total number of gender issues in the CWA has increased year by year, and the diversity of issues has increased. In 2014, issues focused on emphasizing stereotypes of women in the family, tying women to the family, and ignoring the individual value of women. In 2018, it emphasized stereotypes of all types of women, and issues linking women to parenting appeared for the first time. In 2022, it was obvious that there was an increase in the number of issues emphasizing women's physical appearance issues, which portrayed men as good and women as bad, and that portrayed men as active and women as passive increased in number.

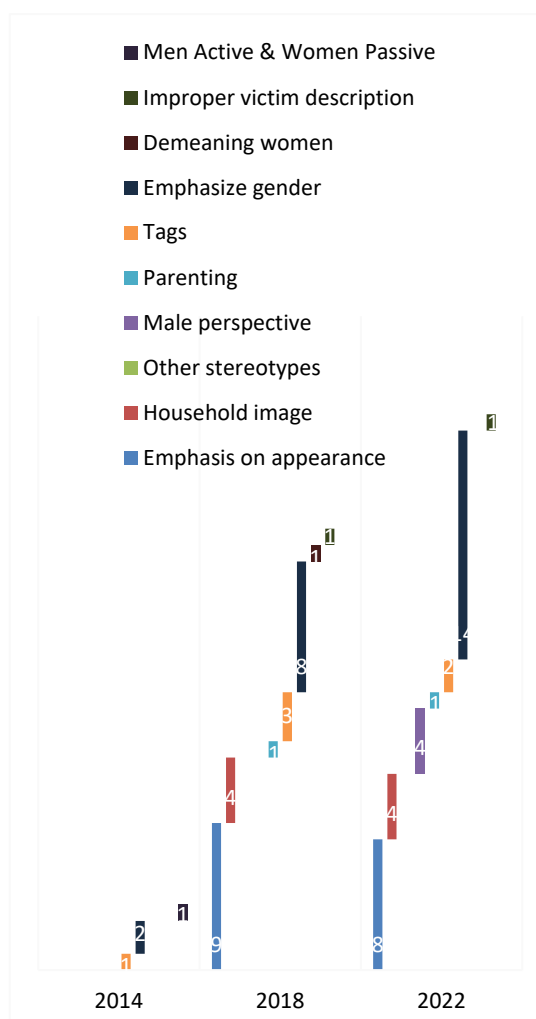


Fig. 2. The Number of Sexism news in CCYL.

The total number of gender issues in the CCYL has increased year after year and the diversity of issues has increased. In 2014, there were fewer issues in the news, mainly emphasizing gender factors not related to the news. From 2014 to 2018 to 2022, the number of gender issues in the news increased by 225% and 61.5% year-on-year. In 2018, emphasis on female appearance and emphasis on gender factors unrelated to the news were the main issues and tying women to family images and labeling women were secondary issues. In 2022, tuning female appearance and emphasis on gender factors unrelated to the news remained the main issues. Meanwhile, tying women to family image and analyzing the current state of society from a male perspective are secondary issues.

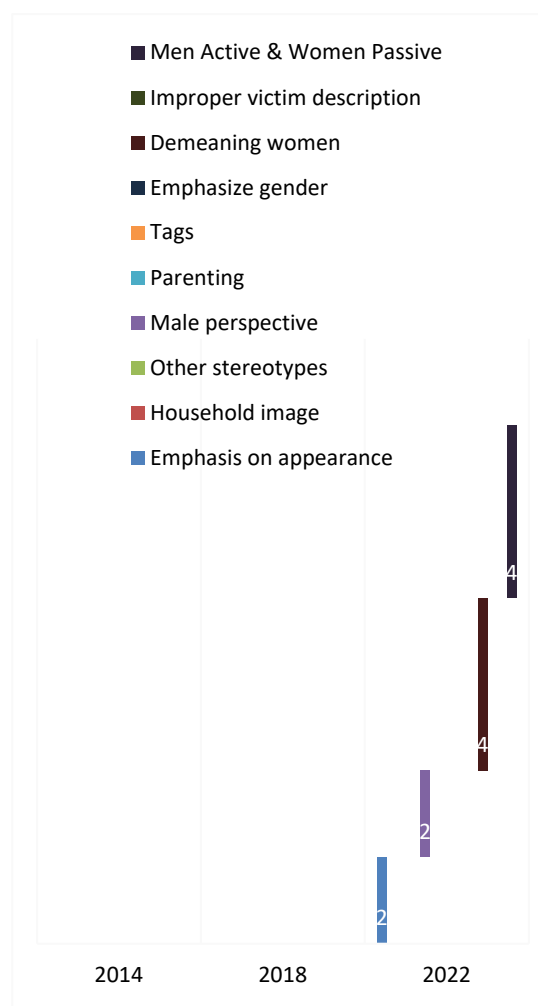


Fig. 3. The Number of Sexism news in People's Daily.

The issue of sexism first appeared in the news of People's Daily in 2022, mainly for the problem of portraying men as good and women as bad and the problem of portraying men as active and women as passive. It also has problems with emphasizing the image of women and analyzing things from a male perspective.

Overall, both the total number and diversity of issues in the news have increased year by year. The problems of tying women to the family, emphasizing women's appearance, portraying men as good and women as bad, and depicting men as the active ones and women as the passive ones are common problems. Analyzing social phenomena from men's perspective is the problem of implicit sexism. From different media, People's Daily deals with less gender discrimination, and the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League deals with more problems..

5. Discussion

People's Daily is less problematic, while the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League is more problematic. CCYL has the highest number and diversity of sexist issues. Its emphasis on women's appearance is four times more frequent than that of People's Daily

during the same period. CCYL needs to pay attention to its wording to avoid gender stereotypes. In the organization's introduction of its public website, China Women's Daily writes: "The only female mainstream broadsheet in China." It should be more careful to avoid sexism in its reporting.

The issues of China Women's Daily focused on emphasizing stereotypes of various types of women, and later the number of issues that demeaned women and portrayed them as passive gradually increased. It avoided issues that emphasized gender issues unrelated to the news and inappropriate victim portrayals. The issue of linking women to childbirth and the issue of demeaning women appeared less frequently in CCYL, but all other issues appeared more frequently. The issue of gender discrimination was absent in the first two years of People's Daily's coverage, and the issue of devaluing women and portraying women as passive appeared in 2022. Overall, People's Daily had the fewest sexist issues and CCYL had the most discriminatory issues.

Gender issues in the news are a reflection of social problems and can further exacerbate them by influencing perceptions, as CCYL writes, "Husbands are busy at work, wives with children." This kind of news will solidify the image that women should take care of their families. The emphasis on female appearance is a traditional female stereotype that objectifies women. The portrayal of male superiority and female inferiority exacerbates the problem of gender inequality. Portraying men as active and women as passive reinforces the radical feminists claim that men are aggressive and dominant, and women are submissive and passive.

In summary, there is a need for improvement in the attention given to gender issues by the mainstream media in China. Media outlets should work to ensure that their coverage is balanced and diverse.

6. Conclusion

This study explores the specific manifestations of gender issues in different mainstream media. By bringing attention to the unconscious biases that can lead to gender discrimination in the news, this study encourages media workers to recognize and challenge their gender-biased thoughts. This study also has limitations. Only the public articles of mainstream media were selected for investigation in this study. More research is needed to analyze the current status of sexism in the news of mainstream media of various carriers, and more years of news content are yet to be analyzed.

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