Did #METOO advance the feminist movement in China? A typical Chinese case study of sexual harassment. Impact of power relations and morality

¿Impulsó el #METOO el movimiento feminista en China? Un estudio de caso sobre el acoso sexual. Impacto de las relaciones de poder y la moralidad

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Abstract

The #METOO campaign sparked worldwide attention to the issue of sexual harassment in 2017. Shortly afterward, sexual harassment cases also followed in Chinese universities. This study uses framing theory and content analysis, analyzing typical case news reports after the rise of the #METOO movement. Firstly, the study showed that Chinese news media mostly reported with social frame and individual frame, and seldom used the gender discrimination frame. Secondly, Although Chinese media actively promoted the progress and solution of sexual harassment cases, they mainly solved the problem from the perspective of power relations and failed to continue to dig into the problem of sexism. However, the way of reporting from the perspective of power relations may further influence the teachers' image in China and even bring negative stereotypes.

Keywords: Chinese universities, frame analysis, #METOO, sexual harassment, teacher image.

Resumen

La campaña #METOO despertó la atención mundial sobre el problema del acoso sexual en 2017. Poco después, los casos de acoso sexual también se sucedieron en las universidades chinas. Este estudio utiliza la teoría del *framing* y el análisis de contenido, con el objeto de analizar los informes de casos típicos tras el surgimiento del movimiento #METOO. En primer lugar, el estudio mostró que los medios de comunicación chinos informaron principalmente con el marco social y el marco individual, y rara vez utilizaron marcos de discriminación de género. En segundo lugar, aunque los medios de comunicación chinos promovieron activamente el progreso y la solución de los casos de acoso sexual, principalmente resolvieron el problema desde la perspectiva de las relaciones de poder y sin profundizar en el problema del sexismo. Sin embargo, el modo en que se informa desde la perspectiva de las relaciones de poder puede influir aún más en la imagen de los profesores en China e incluso dar lugar a estereotipos negativos.

Palabras clave: universidades chinas, análisis de marcos, #METOO, acoso sexual, imagen del profesorado.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, a series of sexual harassment cases have sparked discussions around the world. In 2017, the slogan of #METOO was brought up by American actress Alyssa Milano and others, which sparked a huge anti-sexual harassment campaign on social media (@Alyssa_Milano, 2017). Previously, the topic of sexual harassment was rarely mentioned in China. Following the #METOO campaign, the outbreak of anti-sexual harassment in China was concentrated in the universities, with more and more victims speaking out through social media platforms. Also, in the following years, anti-sexual harassment cases gradually broke out in other areas of China.

In China, as the proportion of women online continues to increase, more and more women are receiving and absorbing new information and views, and by June 2022, the ratio of men to women online in China is 51.7:48.3 (CNNIC, 2022, p. 21). Compared to traditional societies, both genders now have nearly equal access to information and participation in communication. As a result, the discussion of gender equality has become more frequent in cyberspace. As one of the first incidents to attract public and media attention in China, named *Sexual Harassment by Chen at Beijing University of Aeronaut & Astronaut (BUAA)*, its impact has been profound and widespread in China.

On October 15, 2017, a Chinese American female scholar, Cici Luo, replied anonymously on Zhihu (the Chinese version of Quora) to the question of How to evaluate named Chen in BUAA, mentioning his sexual harassment, but it did not trigger a widespread public discussion for the time being. On January 1, 2018, Cici Luo again posted her article about the sexual harassment she had suffered on Zhihu through Weibo (the Chinese version of Twitter). She announced that named Chen, a professor at Beijing Univ Aeronaut & Astronaut and a Changjiang scholar, had sexually harassed female students. The article was including the process of phone calls, threats, and evidence collection. The article immediately sparked a heated debate on the Chinese Internet, with more than 15,000 reposts, 3,500 comments, and nearly 20,000 likes on her Weibo. (Weibo account @cici小居士, 2018).

At 6 PM on the same day, BUAA stated on its official Weibo account, saying it would set up a working group to investigate and verify the case, and suspended named Chen's teaching work (Weibo account @北京航空航天大学, 2018). It said it would deal with the situation seriously, and would not tolerate the case once it was verified. On January 11, 2018, BUAA issued an official punishment notice on the official Weibo account. The result proved that named Chen had sexually harassed students, and decided to cancel his post of executive vice director of the Graduate School, as well as his tutor qualification (Weibo account @中国航空航天大学, 2018). On January 14, 2018, the Education Ministry revoked the title of Changjiang Scholar for named Chen, suspended and recalled the bonuses already awarded, and said it would work with relevant departments to improve the long-term mechanism for preventing sexual harassment in universities (Sina news, 2018).

Following this case, there has been a concentrated outbreak of sexual harassment in China's universities. Moreover, the characteristics of the incidents also attracted the attention of the majority of users by speaking out for the victims on Weibo, and then many media forwarded the reports. In just over six months, there have been 12 similar incidents around China (Appendix, Table 7).

It has even further the improvement of the Chinese government's regulations related to sexual harassment. Under the influence of many negative incidents in colleges and universities, the Ministry of Education issued a lot of guidelines on November 14, 2018, to further refine and clarify in institutional policy the regulations on penalties for the teachers involved (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2018). Therefore, it is of great significance to examine the news frame of this case.

2. Literature review

2.1. Conceptualization of sexual harassment

The definition of sexual harassment originated in the United States. MacKinnon (1979, p. 172) defined it from a feminist perspective and noted that Sexual Harassment is unwanted sexual demands imposed on women under conditions of unequal rights, and is a process of using control to extend male power and domination.

By the mid-1990s, the term Sexual Harassment was introduced to China and people began to rethink what had been considered a normal phenomenon (Song, 2014, p. 56). Shen (2004, p. 11) was the first person to point out that power is crucial and sexual harassment is a sexual behavior carried out by a relatively strong person against a relatively weak person, not for a normal sexual relationship, and leads to the resistance of the weak person. In 2005, The national people's congress of the people's republic of China introduced the concept of sexual harassment for the first time in the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women*. In the *Civil Code of the People's Republic of China* (The national people's congress of the people's republic of China, 2020), it is further stated that when a person acts sexually harassing another person in words, images, physical behaviors, or otherwise against the will of the people, the victim has the right to request the person to bear civil liability according to the law.

In China, campuses are among the places where sexual harassment is more commonly reported, especially in universities. The discussion of sexual harassment in universities also originated in the United States, where Till (1980) formally introduced the concept of Academic Sexual Harassment, defining it as the use of authority to emphasize a victim's sexual identity or sexual identification. This behavior prevents or impairs the victim's enjoyment of the full range of educational well-being, educational atmosphere, or educational opportunities. In China, thinking about sexual harassment on campus mostly began with the introduction of empirical systems from other countries or regions (He & Lv, 1999), and it was not until 2005 that Zhu and Zhao suggested that sexual harassment on campus has certain particularity. He noted that not all campus sexual harassment that occurs on campus and the victim is one or more students, teachers, or non-school personnel.

When discussing the definition of sexual harassment on campus in China, the starting point differs between America and China. In the United States, teacher-student relationships are mostly based on the equality principle, and the starting point places more emphasis on the harm that the victim suffers from education (Jin, 2008, p. 135). In contrast, in the traditional Chinese concept of teacher-student relationships, the teacher often has absolute intellectual and moral authority (Hu & Chang, 2018, p. 74). In this case, Ren and Sun (2018, p. 150) discussed the definition from the perspective of power relations, arguing that the powerful people in the school relationship carry out the behavior with sexual acts to pursue sexual stimulation. Also, this acts against the will of the weaker people and for sexual excitement. Such actions are against the will of the weaker party and cause physical or psychological discomfort to the vulnerable ones. Combined with the above analysis, this paper studies sexual harassment incidents in universities. And the case news reports do not involve students' sexual harassment of teachers, nor do they involve false voices of the victim.

According to the current news, most of the victims in universities are highly educated students who have not to worked formally but have received a certain degree of higher education. They are able to understand sexual harassment more rationally and are brave enough to use the media to expose it. Therefore, the definition needs to be further defined in this paper. Based on the above studies and analysis, the definition of sexual harassment in universities in this study is as follows: Sexual Harassment in colleges is a form of non-consensual sex-related harassment committed by powerful people (e.g., teachers, school administrators) against vulnerable people (e.g., students) based on a university relationship, which includes layers of words, text, image, physical contact with sexual connotations, sexual harm, and leaves the victim with a negative psychological or physical impact.

2.2. Views on sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is not uncommon worldwide. 72% of respondents from a secondary school in Nepal admitted to experiencing sexual harassment in their lives (Thapalia *et al.*, 2020). The focus of current studies on sexual harassment is typically on women (Herzog, 2007). 15.91% of participants at Guangzhou universities in China said they had experienced sexual harassment and also found that women were more likely to be affected by sexual harassment (Xin *et al.*, 2021, p.396), especially physical sexual harassment (Li *et al.*, 2023, p. 2337). However, some investigations and studies argued that around 30% of men actually experience sexual harassment in the workplace (Pew Research Center, 2018; McLaughlin *et al.*, 2012, p. 640). Researchers discovered that stress levels, sexual violence experiences, and lifetime non-contact harassment experiences

were all substantially correlated with depressive symptoms in participants, with lifetime non-contact harassment experiences accounting for 23.4% of individuals (Wei *et al.*, 2022, p. 1).

In terms of how people perceive sexual harassment, people in different countries do not have exactly the same perceptions. In comparison to American participants, Norwegians showed lower benevolent sexism, higher feminist identification, and substantially lower beliefs in a just society when it comes to perceptions of the anti-sexual harassment movement #METOO (Kunst *et al.*, 2019, p. 19). In the Chinese context, Chinese culture places much emphasis on protecting female virginity and chastity (Luo, 2000, p. 581), and there is a general lack of awareness of sexual harassment among Chinese university students (Huang *et al.*, 2019, p. 4673). There are also differences in the perceptions of different gender groups. A number of studies revealed that men are more tolerant and inclined to blame the victim than women in their attitudes towards sexual harassment (Russell & Trigg, 2004, p. 565; Sakallı-Uğurlu *et al.*, 2007, p. 11; Kunst *et al.*, 2019, p. 17). Mou and colleagues (2021, p. 11) further discovered that there is a positive association between the tolerance of sexual harassment and the traditional gender role values of Chinese women (Mou, *et al.*, 2021, p. 11).

2.3. Framing theory and news reports of sexual harassment in colleges

Framing theory was first proposed by Bateson (1955, p. 39), who described framing as a set of specific rules for producing and understanding information, in which only meaningful information is included and other information will be excluded. Subsequently, Goffman (1974, p. 21) introduced it into sociology, arguing that framing is a cognitive structure by which people perceive and interpret social experience, enabling framers to locate, perceive, identify, and label those seemingly infinite facts. In terms of application, news framing studies can be divided into production, content, and effects studies of the media. Production and content studies aim to explore the narrative characteristics of news events. Effectiveness studies, on the other hand, focus on the production and strength of framing effects and on measuring audience framing related to specific media issues only (Guo & Teng, 2018, p. 46).

In the study of news framing on the topic of sexual harassment, McDonald and Charlesworth (2013, p. 95) analyzed 311 sexual harassment stories from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia and found that the frames commonly used in media coverage of sexual harassment issues were personal, institutional/systemic, gender inequality, and technical/legal. Carter and Steiner (2003, p. 143) stated that sexual harassment news tends to follow the rape script, which includes that the rape occurred because the woman initiated the seduction, e.g., that the raped woman ran away and begged and do not take the initiative to fight back.

Sexual harassment is still a new topic in China. As the influence of #METOO expands in China, research in this area has been concentrated in recent years. Li (2019, p. 22) found that the web of Phoenix reported on sexual harassment mainly in the dimensions of objective information, guiding public opinion, and humanistic concern. In reporting news about student-teacher conflicts, Diao (2014, p. 56) found that Chinese media often used emotionally charged words such as brutal beatings, molestation, and mockery in their headlines, which were likely to have a strong negative visual impact on readers. This can easily bring a powerful visual impact to readers. Hu and Chang (2018, p. 81) have compared the news frames of sexual harassment issues in China and the US, finding that Chinese media tended to adopt the social frame, while US media mostly adopted a gender discrimination framework and a controversial framework. With the outbreak of sexual harassment incidents in Chinese colleges, the current audience's perception of prejudice against sexual harassment in universities may be the result of the amplification effect after the focus of media exposure (Zhao & Wu, 2018, p. 49). Some researchers found that personal action frames and collective action frames were widely used by women and ordinary users, whereas issue-specific frames were more frequently adopted by men and organizational users in the content of #METOO Weibo (Li *et al.*, 2021, p. 1). Thus, this leads to the research question of this paper:

RQ_1: What are the characteristics in terms of news subject, sources, and content details in the case of the *Sexual Harassment by Chen at BUAA*?

RQ_2: What is the frame for media coverage of the *Sexual Harassment by Chen at BUAA*?

2.4. Chinese teacher images and reported stereotypes

Teachers have a high moral profile and demand in China. People have been advocating the moral standard of respecting teachers in ancient society (Ding, 2001, p. 4). A high sense of responsibility and ethics has also become the moral code that Chinese teachers have been required to abide by (Yuan, 2016, p. 109). In modern Chinese society, the image of the teacher is characterized by multiple values, with teachers gradually shifting towards the role of instructors, although they are still mostly portrayed as role models (Ma and Yu, 2008, p. 49).

The language employed in the media industry is seen as a significant source of role models (Kitzinger *et al*., 2008, p. 1). Media is one of the most important channels for the public to learn about external information, and people's perceptions of teachers are largely influenced by the media (Tao, 2013, p. 6). Some researchers revealed that news framing is gendered to reinforce stereotypes and facilitate mechanisms for control (Gong *et al*., 2017, p. 197). Stereotypes were fixed ideas in people's minds, and once formed, it is difficult to get rid of such stereotypes (Lippmann, 1922). Stereotypes do not have an emotional orientation, but they can provide some support for prejudice. For example, older employees are often portrayed as trustworthy but incapable (Kroon *et al*., 2018, p. 1).

The presentation of media stereotypes can have an impact on the perception of the audience. One study showed that stereotypically feminine images in social media advertising reduce leadership aspirations for women (Walsh *et al*., 2022, p. 538). In the case of negative news reporting, if the news media over-dramatizes some negative content, it is easy to cause the public to form a negative impression of a kind of people or things (Zhang & Ding, 2011, p. 104). Zhu (2017, p. 16) found that in the past three years, the majority of media reports about teachers on the Web of China Sina were negative, with the public easily labeling professors as perverts. Ke (2016, p. 24) noted that a large number of media reports had triggered changes in netizens' perceptions of teachers and that the public had some moral fears about the university education system and university professors. Thus, stereotypes tend to lead individuals to make generalized results based on a limited amount of material, ignoring individual differences and leading to cognitive biases (Wu & Wang, 2013, p. 59). Therefore, we formulated the following research question:

> RQ_3: In the news reports of the *Sexual Harassment by Chen at BUAA*, what is the image of teachers portrayed by the media?

3. Method

3.1. Sample selection and basis

Based on a review of news of sexual harassment in Chinese universities since 2003, this study selects a typical case of *Sexual Harassment by Chen at BUAA*. The incident served as the beginning of the #METOO movement's impact in China, and attracted the attention of the Chinese Ministry of Education, inspiring many victims from different fields to speak out, and even to formally regulate sexual harassment in the *Civil Code of the People's Republic of China* (2020). Therefore, it is of great significance to study the news frame of this case.

This paper crawled the news from January 1 to February 7, 2018, based on the progress of the incident. The keywords *Sexual Harassment* and *Beijing University Aeronaut & Astronaut* were set in Chinese Baidu News (https://news.baidu.com) to capture the data, and after eliminating invalid data, a total of 180 valid samples were captured.

3.2. News framework coding manual

This study adopts the content analysis method, draws on the list of news frames designed by Tankard *et al*. (1991), and combines Hu and Chang's (2018) news frames of sexual harassment in China and the United States and this research question to construct the news frame suitable for this study. Pan and Kosicki (1993,

p. 55) defined it from the perspective of discourse analysis, and note that media framing is the process of workers organizing texts over time, thus forming a fixed form of cognition, interpretation, and presentation for selection, emphasis, and exclusion. As can be seen above, news can be framed in such a way. In the process of selecting and reorganizing facts, the purpose of reproduction of reality is achieved (Zang, 1999, p. 45). Therefore, this paper aims to explore the structure of the news report of this typical case through the framing theory to think about the deep intention of the news, and thus analyze its motivation.

In terms of news content, this study coded the news topics: 1 = incident progress, 2 = solution measure, 3 = instance presentation, 4 = cause analysis, 5 = legal citation, 6 = different expert opinions, and 7 = media comments.

Secondly, in the part of content details, the details were divided into sources (1 = victim, 2 = perpetrator, 3 = university, 4 = government department, 5 = multiple experts, 6 = victim's family and friends, 7 = legal provisions, 8 = foreign media, 9 = no source); Identity (1 = detailed description of perpetrator, 2 = brief description of perpetrator); Name (1 = original name of the perpetrator, 2 = privacy treatment of perpetrator's name)

3.3. Reliability testing

Before the formal coding, the two coders coded the first 50 news of the sample separately and conducted pre-tests and discussions until the coding reliability measured by the Holsti formula was 91.8%.

4. Results

4.1. Basic Information Analysis

4.1.1. News topics

The news topic is the central idea and core viewpoint of reports. The news of incident progress (Table 1) accounts for almost half of the overall coverage (49.4%), which drove readers to pay more attention to the progress of the event itself.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of news topics

News topics	Sample	Percentage (%)
Incident progress	89	49.4
Solution measures	34	18.9
Media comments	28	15.6
Instance presentation	13	7.2
Different expert opinions	8	4.4
Cause analysis	5	2.8
Legal citation	3	1.7
Total	180	100

Source. Own elaboration

By subdividing the incident progress (Table 2), it is found that the mass media mainly reported the response of the university and the response of government departments (64.1%), and the main content of the news was the treatment of the event. In contrast, there were few reports about the perpetrator's response (1.1%).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of incident progress

Incident progress	Sample	Percentage (%)
University response	41	46.1
Government department response	17	19.1
Supporting Information for Victims	16	18.0
Event details	6	6.7
Disclosed content	5	5.6
Incident Narrative	3	3.4
Perpetrator Response	1	1.1
Total	89	100

Source. Own elaboration

Among the solution measure (Table 3), the media mainly focused on reports such as encouraging victims to speak out (50%) or improving the campus prevention system (38.2%). In contrast, only 5.9% of the news wrote about solutions from a legal perspective.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of solution measure

Solution measure	Sample	Percentage (%)
Encouraging victims to speak out	17	50.0
Improving the campus prevention system	13	38.2
Legal settlement	2	5.9
Improving teachers management	1	2.9
Advocate society face up to sexual harassment	1	2.9
Total	34	100

Source. Own elaboration

4.1.2. News sources

The media sources (Table 4) mostly cited the involved university (64.4%) and the victim (46.7%), while less included the perpetrator (8.3%). Secondly, the news media cited sources from experts and government departments (20%), such as psychologists and the Education Ministry, but very few sources (5%) cited legal texts.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of news sources

News sources	Sample	Percentage (%)
University	116	64.4
Victim	84	46.7
Multiple experts	36	20.0
Government department	31	17.2
Perpetrator	15	8.3
Legal provisions	9	5.0
Foreign media	2	1.1
No source	14	7.8

Source. Own elaboration

In addition, there is a bias in the reporting direction (Table 5), with nearly half of the media reports (46.7%) finally mentioning the campus' treatment, pointing to the university as the resolution of the measure.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of the responsibility point to the university

News sources	Sample	Percentage (%)	Account for
University	43	23.9	
Victim-University	27	15.0	46.7
Victim-University-Different experts	9	5.0	
University-Different experts	5	2.8	
Victim-Perpetrator-University	8	4.4	
Victim-Perpetrator-University-Different experts	3	1.7	
Victim-Perpetrator	2	1.1	8.4
Victim-Perpetrator-Different experts	1	0.6	
Victim-Perpetrator-University-Different experts-Legal provisions	1	0.6	
Total	99	55.1	

Source. Own elaboration

In contrast, Chinese news media rarely include sources of the perpetrator in the coverage. Only 8.4% of reports sources included both the victim and the perpetrator, and the majority of them were brief descriptions.

4.1.3. Content details

In terms of content details (Table 6), 86.1% of the news articles quoted the original name of the perpetrator directly, and 13.9% of reports used Chen or Professor Chen instead. It can be seen that the privacy principle of the news media in reporting events needs to be improved.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of content details

Content details		Sample	Percentage (%)
Perpetrator name	Original name	155	86.1
	Privacy treatment	25	13.9
Perpetrator identity	Detailed description	61	33.9
	Brief description	119	66.1

Source. Own elaboration

At the same time, it is also clear that some media will sensationalize the perpetrator's personal information (33.9%), for example, academic achievements, university positions, etc., exposing the behavior contrast between the perpetrator's academic information and sexual harassment to attract the public attention.

4.2. Frame analysis

4.2.1. Social Frame

News reports of social framing often explore sexual harassment in the context of the industry background, reporting on the judicial and administrative processes and exploring solutions.

This event often uses this framework. The theme of the news usually starts from the event of sexual harassment in college, seeking the progress of the event and discussing the solutions. But in the part of seeking solutions, most media reports label the perpetrator as a professor and point to the university, rather than improving the judicial mechanism based on the position of sexual harassment.

4.2.2. Individual frame

The individual frame is mainly in reporting the incident progress of sexual harassment, including the cause, process, result, and impact, and its result is mostly considered as the problem of the individual quality of the perpetrator. In this case, the media mostly used individual framing, with most news reports focusing on the progress of the incident.

However, the difference is that not many reports attribute the outcome to the quality of the person involved. Instead, the coverage mostly associated the perpetrators with their identities and campus. In the content, this case focuses on the details caused to the victim by the sexual harassment event in colleges and emphasizes the identity of the perpetrator.

4.2.3 Gender discrimination frame

The gender discrimination frame focuses on the phenomenon of sexual harassment from the perspective of gender equality against the backdrop of hierarchy in a patriarchal society. In terms of reporting subject, the news in this framework is mostly reported from the direction of gender equality. Although this case started with the #METOO movement, it is less often used in this frame, and the source of the event focuses on the response of the university authorities involved.

5. Discussion

5.1. Explanations of the findings

This study analyzes the reporting framework of typical sexual harassment incidents in China following the impact of the #METOO movement. The anti-sexual harassment incidents in China first broke out in the field of universities, which not only has the common characteristics of women's courage to speak up in the #METOO movement, but also has the particularities of power relations and moral concepts in China.

In terms of the topic of the news, Chinese media focused on the progress of the incident and the measures taken to resolve it, with particular attention paid to the response of the university and the education department of the perpetrator involved. It is true that Chinese media focused on how to solve this sexual harassment case. However, the coverage does not focus on the improvement of the sexual harassment regulations, but rather on the response of the campus, which makes it easier for readers to consider the university as the only responsible. At the same time, the perpetrator's status is also highlighted, an act that undermines China's ethical requirements for teachers and for which the Chinese media mostly seek solutions from the perspective of morality and power.

This reveals that the Chinese news media is not reason enough in guiding the direction of sexual harassment reports. Although the university needs to continuously improve the prevention system, in a broader sense, sexual harassment in universities is a kind of sexual harassment case, Chinese media should

put their vision into the legal regulation of sexual harassment, so as to more thoroughly promote the development of anti-sexual harassment and the feminist movement.

The reporting sources are predominantly the university involved and the victim, and some reports cite multiple sources, which balances the content to some extent. However, the media rarely include the source of the perpetrator in reports, and some bias can be found. In addition, the reports rarely cite the legal provisions related to sexual harassment in China. This is also related to the imperfect laws and regulations on sexual harassment in China. This typical case, as a trigger for the outbreak of sexual harassment issues in China in recent years, has not been able to give thoughts on a deeper level of regulation.

In terms of reporting details, some Chinese news media directly quoted the identity of the perpetrator, and some news has even used extreme terms such as perverts among teachers to emphasize the impact of this incident on the corruption of teacher ethics, which may invariably affect the public's perception of the overall image of Chinese teachers. But the problem is that individuals do not represent the image of the whole Chinese teachers' image, let alone directly add negative labels.

In the part of news framing, Chinese media mostly uses social frame and individual frame. The reports follow the progress of the incident, expecting a solution to the sexual harassment case. The reason for this is that mechanisms and policies to prevent sexual harassment have been missing in China, and the media would like to take this opportunity to address this sensitive issue head-on and seek reasonable solutions.

The problem, however, is that most media attribute the solution to the campus, a problem-solving direction that is biased and not actively directed from the perspective of constructing an anti-sexual harassment system. This tendency may be due to the fact that from the beginning of the incident, the information sources used were mostly the victim and the school involved. Secondly, the details of the report emphasized the identity of the perpetrator, which tended to make readers think that the university became the ultimately responsible one and failed to reasonably guide the direction of public opinion.

Another potential problem with this kind of reporting framework is that it may distort the truth of the incident. If someone intentionally frames someone else for personal grudges by breaking the story online that he/she was sexually harassed by another person. Subsequently, direct quotes from the media without verification can easily produce fake news. It may be difficult for the general audience to distinguish between truth and false directly, and it may be easy to sympathize directly with the alleged victim, and even cause distress to another person involved.

Secondly, Chinese media are less likely to adopt a gender discrimination framework. The concept of sexual harassment, which originated in the United States, was originally thought of from a feminist perspective. The #METOO movement is one of the manifestations of the contemporary feminist movement. For China, on the other hand, there is not a long history of feminist movement development. Instead, the public considers sexual harassment more in terms of power relations, believing that the core conflict in which sexual harassment occurs is how to address the issue of power. As a result, when addressing such incidents, the media news are also more intuitive in their desire that the authority makes a ruling, so as to cancel the power entrusted to them. It is also evident from the sexual harassment cases in Chinese universities that tutors in Chinese universities have a great deal of power over the guidance of their students. The problem, however, is that the Chinese media has failed to think more deeply about the issue of female sexual harassment in terms of gender inequality and gender discrimination.

In addition, another reason why sexual harassment in China has mostly erupted in colleges in recent years is that teachers have a high moral status in traditional Chinese culture. And when incidents of sexual harassment are exposed, the scandals are so far from the requirements of Chinese teacher ethics and the image of teachers that have been promoted in China. Thus, once such scandals happen in universities, it is easy to trigger a powerful public opinion. In the direction of such sexual harassment news reports, media coverage has also been mainly about how universities can deal with such individual teachers who do not conform to teacher norms; that is to say, it is more about how to uphold the moral imperatives expected of the teaching community rather than addressing it from a legal perspective.

5.2. Limitations and future directions

It should be noted that there are some limitations to this study. First, audience attitudes toward news reports of sexual harassment need to be further advanced in the future. This paper mainly focuses on a frame analysis

of the content of the reports, but the series of sexual harassment incidents in universities has raised public attention to this sensitive topic. The aspects of facilitating offline citizen engagement discussions are still unclear and worthy of future study.

Second, the sample in this paper has certain limitations. Although the case selected is a typical example, different cases have their own characteristics to varying degrees. In this respect, the content discussed in this research may not cover all cases. Nevertheless, the interpretability of this study still has relative generality. The sexual harassment incidents in universities, as a relatively typical online movement in Chinese social media, are essentially the rise of feminism on social media. Since then, numerous significant sexual harassment incidents occurred in various settings such as kindergartens and restaurants in China, which also sparked massive online movements on Chinese social media. Researchers can further pursue tracking research based on the specific characteristics of each case.

Finally, the audience's image perception of the teaching community can be further studied. The paper mainly explores the research issue of news framing of sexual harassment news reports in the university, and it has also been found that the portrayal of the overall image of teachers can be influenced by typical negative coverage. In future research, scholars can further consider the change in people's perception of the teacher image affected by negative coverage.

6. Conclusion

This study showed the news framing of typical sexual harassment incidents in China after being influenced by the #METOO movement and examines the role and effect played by the media in sexual harassment incidents.

This study stated that the Chinese media often used the social frame and individual frame, and rarely use the gender discrimination frame in the case of the *Sexual Harassment by Chen at BUAA*. After the incident sparked public opinion on Weibo, Chinese news media actively followed up on the content to promote the progress and resolution of this case. But the media mainly examined the sexual harassment case from the perspective of power relations, with the university as the final resolver, without further exploring the gender discrimination issue behind the power relations.

In addition, in this case, the Chinese news media rarely attributed the perpetrator's personal qualities, but more often associated the individual with his status as a perpetrator. There is also a problem with the overly extreme wording in some of the reports, presenting an image of Chinese teachers who are of poor character and unethical. A potential problem that may create a negative stereotype of Chinese teachers among the masses.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Appendix

Table 7. Chinese media coverage of sexual harassment in universities during 2018.1-2018.8

Country	Date	Case
China	01 Jan.	Sexual harassment by Chen at Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics
China	12 Jan.	Sexual harassment by Xue at the University of International Business and Economics
China	11, Apr.	Sexual harassment of a student by Gu at Renmin University of China
China	13, Apr.	Sexual harassment of a student by Zhang at Renmin University of China
Korea	23, Apr.	Sexual harassment of a student by a professor at Pusan University
China	08, Jul.	Sexual harassment of several students by Zhang at Zhongshan University
China	26, Jul.	Sexual harassment of a student by Xie at Communication University of China
China	29, Jul.	Sexual harassment of a number of female students by Chen at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies
China	29, Jul.	Sexual harassment of a student by Zhang at Northwestern University
China	29, Jul.	Sexual harassment of female students by Tian at Northwestern University
China	29, Jul.	Sexual harassment of a number of female students by a gymnasium teacher at Changchun University of Chinese Medicine
China	02, Aug.	Sexual harassment of a number of students by Xiong at Hunan University
China	12, Aug.	Sexual harassment of a graduate student by Liang at Shandong University of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Source. Own elaboration