

Exploring Feminist Ideology and Its Influence on Body Image in Chinese Social Media: A Content Analysis of Xiaohongshu Posts

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Abstract: While studies have been conducted to explore the role of culture, media influences, and social comparisons on body dissatisfaction, research on the relationship between feminist identity and body dissatisfaction is lacking. This paper aims to fill this research gap by focusing on Generation Z and Millennial women on the Chinese social platform Xiaohongshu and using content analysis to examine the association between feminist identity development and body dissatisfaction. Findings indicated that body dissatisfaction and feminist identity development were negatively correlated. Women in the Passive Acceptance stage were far more inclined to have body dissatisfaction, while those in the Embeddedness-Emanation, Synthesis, and Active Commitment stages had greater optimism about their bodies. Furthermore, to better understand the complexities of body dissatisfaction and to offer novel perspectives for the advancement of theory and practice in related fields, future research could examine the use of feminist theory in mental health interventions, policy development, and social change to enhance body image standards and encourage women's self-acceptance.

Keywords: body dissatisfaction, feminist identity development, Xiaohongshu, content analysis, feminist ideology

1. Introduction

The feminist movement in China is booming due to the spread of feminist ideology in the West. Through literature and diverse forms of media, Chinese feminists have fought for women's rights, demanding gender equality and the overthrow of patriarchal systems[1]. Young Chinese people are far more active and dynamic when it comes to spreading feminist ideals on social media, with sites like Xiaohongshu serving as the primary venues for their expression and spread. For example, on Xiaohongshu, Chinese women have discussed and rejected traditional ideas of menstruation as humiliating[2]. Contemporary topics are increasingly being viewed through a feminist lens, as social media platforms like Xiaohongshu cultivate unity and collective identity among their predominantly female users. These platforms offer women secure, private digital spaces to voice their feminist ideologies[2].

Body dissatisfaction, widely discussed on Xiaohongshu, refers to individuals' negative judgments about their appearance[3]. Influenced by cultural and media ideals of thinness, youthfulness, and perfection, people often internalize these standards, fostering body image anxiety in both women and men, who feel pressure to attain ideals of muscularity and fitness[4][5]. Social media further intensifies this pressure through social comparison, as individuals evaluate themselves against others and experience increased anxiety to conform to beauty norms[6]. Although the recent body positivity movement encourages acceptance of all body types and has sparked more inclusive discussions around body image, the growing feminist awareness on platforms like Xiaohongshu has highlighted the ongoing tension between advocating for bodily autonomy and resisting the beauty standards enforced by social media[7][8]. While feminism has raised awareness of these issues, the persistence of body dissatisfaction and its impact on mental health, particularly for young women, remains a concern[9][10]. While the role of culture, media influences, and social comparisons on body dissatisfaction has been well explored in existing studies, there is a lack of in-depth research on the relationship between feminist identity and body dissatisfaction. Therefore, given the rise of feminist ideology in China's Xiaohongshu, this paper seeks to explore the relationship between feminist identity development and body dissatisfaction in the context of rising feminist ideology in China's Xiaohongshu platform.

This paper uses content analysis to examine how the feminist identity development on Chinese social media platforms is associated with body dissatisfaction, focusing on the experiences of Gen Z and Millennial women on the platform Xiaohongshu. By analyzing feminism's role in promoting body positivity, this study aims to enhance the presence of feminist discourse on social media, increase public openness to #BodyPositivity content, and advocate for platform algorithms that prioritize similar empowering messages for young audiences.

2. Literature review

2.1. Body Dissatisfaction & Social Media

Body dissatisfaction (BD) refers to individuals' negative evaluation of their own body parts, including size, weight, and overall appearance. It is commonly found in the female population, posing a severe issue in modern society. In a study conducted in Australia, 86.9% of women reported being dissatisfied with their weight or body size. Among them, 39.4% expressed moderate to severe dissatisfaction, which was found to have significant negative associations with various aspects of quality of life, particularly mental health and social functioning[11].

The commercialization of women's bodies in a consumerist society amplifies feelings of inadequacy and self-objectification among women and exacerbates their anxiety about body images. This is especially evident when the media promotes one single aesthetic standard, influencing the collective perception of beauty[12]. When women are exposed to either traditional media or social media, their body dissatisfaction can be triggered by messages promoting thinness and unrealistic beauty standards. Lukman and others found that excessive use of social media platforms like Instagram can increase women's anxiety about their bodies[13]. The portrayal of "fitspiration" images featuring thin women exercising has also been found to increase body dissatisfaction among women, regardless of whether they have an eating disorder[14]. Additionally, advertisements for weight-loss products on TV and image-processed thin models in print media, such as fashion magazines, have a significant impact on women with existing eating disorders, worsening their anxiety about maintaining their body image[15][16]. Viewing images that depict unrealistic, idealized bodies can negatively influence women's perceptions of their own bodies. As women internalize these unattainable standards, they may develop feelings of inadequacy and self-deprecation, leading to increased anxiety, body dissatisfaction, and low self-esteem[17]. In summary, the promotion of slim

bodies in both traditional and social media can reinforce the belief that thin and fit bodies are the standard and desirable, thereby exacerbating body dissatisfaction[18].

2.2. Body Dissatisfaction in China

Young women in China face the same challenges in avoiding the impact of social media on their body image. For example, research has demonstrated that many young Chinese people experience dissatisfaction with their bodies due to external influences and social culture, particularly social media[19]. Media representations of the ideal body have caused Chinese women to prioritize fitness, weight loss, and dieting. This has worsened body image issues and perpetuated gender inequality[20]. Furthermore, several studies have highlighted social media platforms like Xiaohongshu and Douyin as significant contributors to appearance anxiety. These platforms commonly promote "fair, young, and slim" appearances[21][22], and the marketing tactics of online influencers on these platforms often portray women's success as aligning with the mainstream[23]. Also, because of the social comparison mechanism, where women compare their appearance with others on social media, it's common for female appearance anxiety to increase after using social media[22][24].

2.3. Chinese Patriarchy

In addition to influential factors identified in previous studies, we propose that the Chinese patriarchy is also a significant factor leading to women's body dissatisfaction. In Chinese patriarchy, women have historically been marginalized while men have occupied dominant positions in society. The Chinese patriarchy has had a particularly severe impact on women's self-esteem and self-perception[25]. Xiaojing found that women in China are more likely to perceive the male gaze and experience pressure to maintain their appearance due to the influence of patriarchal beliefs[26]. The male gaze refers to a phenomenon that women are frequently perceived and evaluated from a male perspective, causing women to experience a double consciousness, where they struggle to reconcile their true identities with those imposed by societal norms[27].

On the contrary, men are generally less concerned about their appearance than women, and their self-worth and self-perception are more influenced by their social status and financial standing[28]. However, women with high social status and education may still be influenced by patriarchal beliefs. There remain educated Chinese women believe that being thin is being pretty[29]. As a result, they may adopt extreme weight-control behaviors and strive for a fragile physique. The idea that "thinner is better" is a popular aesthetic in Asian media and society[30]. Moreover, the internet has given rise to challenges that promote extremely thin body ideals, such as the "A4 waist," "reaching the belly button from behind," and "placing a coin or goldfish on the collarbone"[29]. These societal pressures stem from men's preference for delicate female figures, leading women to objectify their bodies to meet masculine ideals[31]. In summary, contemporary media, patriarchal norms, and men's preference for feminine imagery are the primary factors contributing to body image concerns among Chinese women.

2.4. Rise of Feminism in Xiaohongshu

Social media can also empower women by promoting self-acceptance and exhibiting a variety of body shapes[32][33]. Recently, in China, traditional norms about body images promoted by mainstream media have started being challenged by feminist notions on social media (e.g. Xiaohongshu), changing the way women perceive and interact with their bodies[2].

As a platform with a 90% female user base, Xiaohongshu serves as a major platform for females to express feminist ideas and take part in feminism-related activities. For example, in response to the previous male gaze, a similar female gaze has surfaced in social media as a reaction to this male gaze,

in which women evaluate males according to their social standing and outward looks[34]. Also, in Xiaohongshu's #StopMenstrualShaming activity, women are participating in discussions questioning patriarchal standards and exploring their feminist identities to cultivate a sense of collective feminism[2]. Scholars have found that the online feminist movement is leading to a decrease in the number of posts on social media platforms like Xiaohongshu that promote stereotypical beauty standards for women, such as being "fair, thin, young"[35]. On the other hand, there is a growing trend of body-positive messages on Xiaohongshu that encourage people to reject the objectification of women and embrace a variety of body types[8][35]. Overall, the rise of feminist notions gradually reshaped China's standards for the ideal female body by promoting gender equality and a more inclusive view of female beauty.

While many studies have investigated the factors that lead to body dissatisfaction, the relationship between feminist notions and body dissatisfaction is under-explored. Inspired by the Chinese feminist movement emerging on Xiaohongshu, this study aims to make a theoretical contribution to body dissatisfaction by investigating the relationship between people's feminist identity development and the degree of body dissatisfaction by analyzing the posts on Xiaohongshu. This study not only provides a more comprehensive understanding of body dissatisfaction but also contributes to a wider discussion about gender equality and women's rights in China[36].

3. Body Dissatisfaction & Feminist Identity Development

3.1. Overview of Feminist Identity Development

Feminist identity development is the process through which an individual identifies with and embraces the principles and ideologies of feminism, integrating them into their self-worth and self-perception. This development is complex and influenced by various personal, social, and cultural factors. Downing and Roush proposed a model of feminist identity development in 1985, describing the psychological and emotional changes women experience as they identify with feminism[37]. The model consists of five stages: Passive Acceptance, Revelation, Embeddedness-Emanation, Synthesis, and Active Commitment. These stages represent different levels of individual identification and acceptance of feminism.

According to Downing and Roush's model, people in the Passive Acceptance stage lack awareness of individual, institutional, and cultural discrimination against women[37]. They accept traditional gender role stereotypes and hierarchies and avoid contact with people or experiences that may challenge the patriarchal belief. People in the Revelation stage are angry about sexism and feel guilty about their involvement in sexism. They may alienate themselves from people who cannot understand their strong feelings and engage in binary thinking, viewing all men as negative and all women as positive. People in the Embeddedness-Emanation phase may begin to question traditional gender roles and societal expectations and attempt to break free from these constraints. However, people in this phase may become more attentive to women's issues and seek to connect with and support other women.

People in the Synthesis phase can integrate and synthesize their own female identity with other identities (e.g., race, sexuality, etc.)([37]). This stage involves women becoming more aware of the interactions and cross-influences between different identities and trying to find their own balance and consistency within these identities. In the Active Commitment stage, people are likely to be actively engaged in feminist movements and social change, speaking out and fighting for gender equality and women's rights. Women in the Active Commitment stage usually have a higher propensity for feminist identity and action.

3.2. Feminist Identity Development in Body Dissatisfaction

The feminist model of identity development suggests that to develop a positive feminist identity, women must first acknowledge and challenge the prejudice and discrimination they encounter. This process begins with passive acceptance. In this stage, people conform to traditional gender roles, suppress their own needs and desires, and internalize societal pressures about body image to a greater extent. Therefore, people at the Passive Acceptance stage are more likely to experience body image anxiety and higher levels of psychological distress. Moradi and Subich also found that Passive Acceptance feminists are at a greater risk of experiencing body dissatisfaction[38]. We propose our first hypothesis that people who express passive acceptance in their Xiaohongshu posts are more inclined to express body dissatisfaction.

H1: People at the Passive Acceptance stage are more likely to express body dissatisfaction in their Xiaohongshu posts.

People in the Revelation stage feel angry about sexism[37]. This group of people is characterized by binary thinking, considering all males as unfavorable and all females as favorable. Such binary thinking can help people identify social injustices, such as unrealistic body ideals that pressure women to pursue slimness, sexiness, and youthfulness, leading to body dissatisfaction and constant self-monitoring[39]. Therefore, people in the Revelation stage may challenge societal body image standards by highlighting the contradictions and pressures that come from traditional ideas about gender.

H2: People at the Revelation stage are less likely to express body dissatisfaction in their Xiaohongshu Posts.

People in the Embeddedness-Emanation, Synthesis, and Active Commitment stages have a more mature and objective approach to examining gender issues than people in the early stages. This group of people is not only critical of current body image standards but also recognizes their negative impact on women's mental and physical health. They argue that the media reinforces an unhealthy obsession with thinness, promoting a narrow and exclusive beauty ideal that harms women of all ages[40][41]. This obsession affects not only young women but also extends to middle-aged and older women who face body image issues exacerbated by aging and changes in their bodies[42]. Research suggests that people with a mature female identity are more likely to have a positive attitude toward body image, as they are better at resisting cultural pressures related to thinness[43]. This group of people can reject the pursuit of thin body preferences, advocating for the development of healthy methods of weight loss and diverse body image standards to address gender-related issues specific to women[40][41][43]. In summary, the second research hypothesis of this paper is that women in the Embeddedness-Emanation, Synthesis, and Active Commitment stages will be more accepting of their body images in the content they post on Xiaohongshu.

H3: People in the Embeddedness-Emanation stage are less likely to express body dissatisfaction in their Xiaohongshu Posts.

H4: People in the Synthesis stage are less likely to express body dissatisfaction in their Xiaohongshu Posts.

H5: People in the Active Commitment stage are less likely to express body dissatisfaction in their Xiaohongshu Posts.

4. Method

4.1. Sampling

This article explores and investigates the impact and change of the iterative feminist ideology on body image and body dissatisfaction on Chinese social media in recent years using content analysis, with

Generation Z and Millennials, the women of the Chinese social platform Xiaohongshu, as the main objects of study, to observe the positive contribution of feminist identity development on body positivity's contribution.

To ensure the accuracy of my sample, I registered a new account on Xiaohongshu and used the hashtags to search and filter posts on the platform. The hashtags I searched for included #身材多样性 #女性意识觉醒 #自我接纳 #拒绝身材焦虑 #女性成长#身材 #身材焦虑 #健身 #身材羞耻 #穿衣自由 #girlstalk #颜值. The results of each search were sorted by 'All', and a total of 200 samples were captured and coded on the platform after excluding posts containing advertorials, posts by the same blogger discussing the same topic repeatedly, and posts that were too brief or lacked clarity.

4.2. Coding Procedures

The codebook used in the present study was informed by Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI)[44] and three subscales of the Appearance Schemas Inventory[45]. Both inventories were informed by the five stages of feminist identity development proposed by Downing and Roush[37]. All codes and examples of code can be viewed in Table 1, 2 and 3.

4.3. Coding Attributes & Themes

Age, Marital status & Maternity

The first set of variables are demographics of posts' publishers. According to the publisher's posts content and account profile, we coded the publisher's age range (generation z, millennials, unknown) , marital status (married, unmarried, unknown), and Maternity (childbearing, childless, unknown).

Table 1: Coding Variables of Personal Information.

	Variable	Coding
V1	Age	0=12-27 1=28-43 2=unknown
V2	Marital status	0=married 1=unmarried 2=unknown
V3	Whether to give birth	0=yes 1=no 2=unknown

Feminist identity development

To code the feminist identity development in Xiaohongshu posts, we used the conceptual definitions of five stages of feminist identity development to inform the coding scheme[37]. For example, Passive Acceptance refers to lacking the awareness of discrimination against women and the compliance to traditional gender roles. The post falling into this category shows content that implies publishers lack self-esteem and allow others' criticism of their appearance, such as "My boyfriend thinks I am too fat. I feel very low self-esteem after hearing my boyfriend's comment and am afraid to go out." Differing from Passive Acceptance, Synthesis refers to the appreciation of female positive aspects, integrating these qualities into a positive self-concept. Posts falling into this category will show content that demonstrates posters are breaking free from the restrictions posed by traditional gender norms and evaluating themselves and others based on their own personal values instead of gender stereotypes, such as "I can be unrefined, diet-free, and self-disciplined as a woman.

I don't have to change myself for the sake of other people's judgement; instead, I accept my body and feel great about it.” All five stage themes and example posts are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Coding Variables of Feminist Identity Development.

	Variable	Definition	Examples	Coding
V4	Passive Acceptance	Lacking the awareness of discrimination against women, compliance to traditional male-dominant system	The message of the post was ‘My boyfriend thinks I am too fat. I feel very low self-esteem after hearing my boyfriend's comment and am afraid to go out.’	0=present 1=not present
V5	Revelation	Challenging traditional gender roles and dualistic thinking of gender.	The message on the post is, "The male elders in my family's preaching is making me body image anxiety and develop man-loathing."	0=present 1=not present
V6	Embeddedness/ Emanation	Developing close emotional connection with other women and holding an open attitude toward realistic perspective.	The video is a blogger shares her discovery that a lot of 50kg girls on social media have started referring themselves as little fatty, she thinks that this kind of body anxiety shouldn't exist and urges girls to reduce this kind of unhealthy anxiety.	0=present 1=not present
V7	Synthesis	Go beyond traditional gender roles and evaluating genders based on personal values.	In the video, the blogger mentions ‘I can be unrefined, diet-free, and self-disciplined as a woman. I don't have to change myself for the sake of other people's judgement; instead, I accept my body and feel great about it.’	0=present 1=not present
V8	Active Commitment	Commitment to changing social norms and achieving gender equality.	The video features the blogger recounting one of her online shopping experiences and discussing the relationship between sizing and women's body anxiety in the current women's clothing market. She suggests that there are multiple causes for this sizing mess, one of which is the fast-paced era that continues to squeeze women's rights to live comfortably in order to make more profit. She believes that what women need to do is not to follow more and more stringent standards of appearance, but to think about what body shape suits them better.	0=present 1=not present

Body Concern Assessment

The coding of body concern assessment was adapted from the Body Image Concern Inventory[44] and the Appearance Schemas Inventory[45]. The Body Image Concerns Inventory (BICI) was used to explore studies of concern for deformities associated with disorders such as somatic dysmorphic disorder and eating disorders, as well as to analyze correlations between clinical presentations and subclinical symptomatology. The scale is not only designed to detect appearance dissatisfaction and concern, but also assesses whether respondents engage in checking and camouflaging behaviors, seek comfort, display social apprehension, and avoid appearance-related assessment items[44]. The Appearance Schemas Inventory[45], on the other hand, assesses people's core beliefs or assumptions about the importance, significance, and impact of appearance in their lives by calculating total scores on three subscales: body image vulnerability, self-involvement, and appearance stereotypes[46]. Our coding scheme only adopted the Appearance Schemas Inventory's[45] Body Image Vulnerability, Self-Involvement, and Appearance Stereotypes as the three directions of assessment, and summarized some of the assessment details from the Body Image Concern Inventory[44] into the three subscales to comprehensively assess the sampled population's body dissatisfaction values.

According to the assessment, dissatisfaction and concern about appearance included expressing displeasure with appearance, feelings of body shame, thoughts about changing appearance, and attempts to hide some appearance flaws; appearance-checking behaviors included purchasing clothes or makeup to improve body image, excessive concern about appearance, missing social events because of appearance, and increasing dissatisfaction with image by looking in mirrors and taking selfies; and social issues due to appearance include sensing negative perceptions of one's outward appearance and seeking external evaluations of one's appearance.

Table 3: Coding Variables of Appearance and Body Focus.

	Variable	Examples	Coding
VV1	Dissatisfaction and Concern about Appearance		
V9	Posts that convey dissatisfaction with appearance	The post said, 'The same clothes look so different on me than on a celebrity, I have an ugly body, especially my hips and waist.'	0=present 1=not present
V10	Posts convey shame about the body	The poster said, 'The new dress I bought accentuated my chest and made me feel ashamed of what I was wearing. I'm afraid to wear this dress straight out of the house. '	0=present 1=not present
V11	Post expresses desire to change appearance	The poster stated 'I had a change in the shape of my face due to orthodontic surgery on my teeth, which caused me to develop appearance anxiety.'	0=present 1=not present
V12	Post mentions trying to hide certain flaws in appearance	The post is about how the poster felt self-conscious because of her thick legs and often wore trousers because she did not want to show her legs.	0=present 1=not present
VV2	Checking and Camouflaging Behavior, Reassurance Seeking		

Table 3: (continued).

V13	Posts mentions buying clothes or makeup to disguise or improve their appearance	This blogger mentioned that she used to be afraid to wear leggings because of her flat buttocks, and with the help of a buttock-lift underwear, she was able to plump up her buttocks.	0=present 1=not present
V14	Post mentions the excessive scrutiny and focus on appearance	The message of the post was ‘I think I’m already thin, but I still have a lot of dissatisfaction with my appearance and I still want to lose weight and have cosmetic surgery to improve my appearance.’	0=present 1=not present
V15	Post mentions having missed out on social events due to appearance	The blogger had been afraid to leave the house because she felt ugly, and she felt more comfortable and more secure at home.	0=present 1=not present
V16	Post indicates that looking in the mirror or taking selfies increases their body dissatisfaction	The post stated ‘I purchased nice dresses to wear out of the house, but suffered from appearance dissatisfaction when I looked in the mirror at the mall.’	0=present 1=not present
VV3	Social Concerns and Avoidance Related to Appearance		
V17	Post mentions feeling that others have a negative opinion of “my” appearance	The blogger stated ‘I feel like people have negative comments about my face and body.’	0=present 1=not present
V18	Post mentions seeking comments from others about “my” appearance	The post mentions ‘I wish I knew how others rated my appearance.’	0=present 1=not present

5. Results

We used R for data analysis. In order to examine the potential association between different stages of feminist identity development and body dissatisfaction in Xiaohongshu posts, we employed proportional odds logistic regression. This approach was chosen because the three variables related to body concern were converted into an ordinal variable, and each stage of feminist identity was coded as a dummy variable. Three proportional odds logistic regressions were conducted respectively for body dissatisfaction and concern about appearance, camouflaging behavior and reassurance seeking, and social concern and avoidance. Results of three models are shown in Table 4, 5 and 6.

5.1. Demographics

In the present sample, we found that 6.5% of the posters belonged to the 12-27 age group, 48% to the 28-43 age group, and the remaining sample members were unsure of their age. Nine cases out of the entire sample were married, 49.5 percent of the sample was single, and 46% of the sample did not know whether they were married or not. When the data was analyzed according to maternity status, nearly half of the sampled cases were those who had given birth (47.5%), 16 cases (8%) were those

who had not given birth, and 89 cases, or 44.5% of the total sample were the unknown samples. In addition, since there is no restriction on the real name of users on the platform, a large proportion of users did not register their personal information for personal information protection reasons, resulting in a large number of unknown samples in the collected user information.

5.2. Hypothesis Testing

H1 proposed that people at the Passive Acceptance stage were more likely to express body dissatisfaction in their Xiaohongshu posts. Results of three models indicated that people at passive acceptance were more likely to express dissatisfaction about appearance ($b=1.075$, $SE=0.508$, $p=0.034$), and social concern and avoidance ($b=1.705$, $SE=0.533$, $p=0.001$) in Xiaohongshu posts; whereas there was no relationship with camouflaging and reassurance seeking ($b=-0.762$, $SE=0.490$, $p=0.120$). Therefore, H1 was partially supported.

H2 proposed that people at the Revelation stage were less likely to express body dissatisfaction in their Xiaohongshu posts. Results showed no significant relationship between Revelation and dissatisfaction about appearance ($b=-0.597$, $SE=0.453$, $p=0.188$), camouflaging and reassurance seeking ($b=-0.748$, $SE=0.498$, $p=0.133$), and social concern and avoidance ($b=-0.624$, $SE=0.698$, $p=0.371$). Therefore, H2 was not supported.

H3 hypothesized that people at the Embeddedness/Emanation stage were less likely to express body dissatisfaction. Results showed that people at this stage were less likely to express dissatisfaction about appearance ($b=-1.082$, $SE=0.493$, $p=0.028$), camouflaging and reassurance seeking ($b=-1.465$, $SE=0.542$, $p=0.007$), and social concern and avoidance ($b=-2.943$, $SE=0.678$, $p<.001$). Therefore, H3 was supported.

H4 hypothesized that people at the Synthesis stage were less likely to express body dissatisfaction. Results showed that people at this stage were less likely to express dissatisfaction about appearance ($b=-1.004$, $SE=0.377$, $p=0.008$), camouflaging and reassurance seeking ($b=-1.020$, $SE=0.429$, $p=0.017$). However, there is no significant relationship between Synthesis and social concern and avoidance ($b=-0.406$, $SE=0.533$, $p=0.446$). Therefore, H4 was partially supported.

H5 proposed that people in the Active Commitment stage were less likely to express body dissatisfaction. Results demonstrated that people at the Active Commitment stage were less likely to express dissatisfaction about appearance ($b=-1.244$, $SE=0.440$, $p=0.005$). However, there is no significant relationship between Active Commitment, camouflaging and reassurance seeking ($b=-0.847$, $SE=0.512$, $p=0.098$), and social concern and avoidance ($b=0.422$, $SE=0.672$, $p=0.530$). Therefore, H5 was partially supported.

Table 4: Results of Proportional Odds Logistic Regression on Dissatisfaction and Concern about Appearance.

Predictors	Beta	SE	P-value
Passive acceptance	1.075	0.508	0.034
Revelation	-0.597	0.453	0.188
Embeddedness/Emanation	-1.082	0.493	0.028
Synthesis	-1.004	0.377	0.008
Active commitment	-1.244	0.440	0.005

Table 5: Results of Proportional Odds Logistic Regression on Checking, Camouflaging, and Reassurance Seeking Behaviors.

Predictors	Beta	SE	P-value
Passive acceptance	-0.762	0.490	0.120
Revelation	-0.748	0.498	0.133
Embeddedness/Emanation	-1.465	0.542	0.007
Synthesis	-1.020	0.429	0.017
Active commitment	-0.847	0.512	0.098

Table 6: Results of Proportional Odds Logistic Regression on Social Concern and Avoidance.

Predictors	Beta	SE	P-value
Passive acceptance	1.705	0.533	0.001
Revelation	-0.624	0.698	0.371
Embeddedness/Emanation	-2.943	0.678	<0.001
Synthesis	-0.406	0.533	0.446
Active commitment	0.422	0.672	0.530

6. Discussion

The purpose of this paper is to explore the impact of feminist ideology on body dissatisfaction, with a particular focus on the representation of female Generation Z and Millennials on the Chinese social platform Xiaohongshu. Through the creation of new accounts and the screening of posts using pertinent tags, the study employed content analysis to gather 200 samples for examination. The association between feminist identification and body dissatisfaction at various phases was investigated using proportional odds logistic regression and R (Version 2024.04.02). The findings confirmed the negative correlation between the feminist identity development and body dissatisfaction, with those in the Passive Acceptance stage being more likely to display body dissatisfaction while those in the Embeddedness-Emanation, Synthesis and Active Commitment stages were less likely to do so. Overall, the hypothesis has been verified by the findings of this paper, indicating that feminist identity development may have an impact on the rise in body positivity on social media.

Hypothesis 3 is fully supported by our finding that female Internet users in the Embeddedness-Emanation stage tend to adopt self-expression strategies focused on authenticity and personal growth rather than following society's beauty standards[23]. As a result, the relationship between their general happiness and body size is relatively moderate. This is consistent with the findings of Lewis and Donaghue that individuals' body dissatisfaction diminishes when their self-esteem is not entirely dependent on their appearance[47]. Further, rather than relying on outside approval, women in the Embeddedness-Emanation stage experience satisfaction in their own accomplishments and connections[47]. The pressure to maintain a certain body image is significantly reduced when they feel no obligation to prove themselves to others.

According to another significant conclusion of this paper, people at the Revelation stage may actually be more inclined to express body dissatisfaction on platforms. However, hypothesis 2 was not supported by our investigation results, while we initially started reading the literature, we predicted that individuals at this stage would be less likely to feel body dissatisfaction. In the phase of reflection and summarization, we hypothesize that people in the Revelation stage are more likely to be enraged by sexism and rely on binary thinking to understand gender issues[39]. In this context, they may be more inclined to express their anger on platforms for general discussion and attention.

In other words, they use their body dissatisfaction as a means to speak out against injustice and advocate for social change.

Additionally, there was partial support for Hypotheses 1, 4, and 5. This study indicates that individuals in the Passive Acceptance stage do not participate in Checking, Camouflaging Behavior, or Reassurance Seeking. The feminist identity development mode defines Passive Acceptance as conforming to gender norms, suppressing needs and wants, and internalizing social limits around body image[37]. In contrast to the Passive Acceptance stage, Checking and Camouflaging Behavior demonstrates that individuals will manage their body image anxiety by repeatedly checking their appearance or seeking reassurance from others[44]. It is a positive behavior that incorporates self-monitoring and regulation attempts. Meaning that people in the Passive Acceptance stage are less likely to have Checking and Camouflaging Behavior because they are used to suppressing their feelings rather than seeking external support. In Hypothesis 4, the suspicion about the relationship between the variables Synthesis and Social Concerns and Avoidance Related to Appearance was incorrect. This paper found that women in the Synthesis stage are more likely to engage in discussions about body image in a supportive manner. Those in the Synthesis stage have a more mature and objective view of gender issues, and they are not only critical of current standards of body image, but also aware of the negative impact of these standards on women's mental and physical health[37]. In contrast, those with Social Concerns and Avoidance Related to Appearance manifestations are concerned about external perceptions of their appearance and develop social avoidance as a result[44]. Thus, rather than worrying about how others would see them and avoiding talking about body image, the Synthesis stage is actively participating and making an effort to change issues connected to body image. Furthermore, we could infer that there is no direct correlation between Active Commitment, Camouflaging Reassurance Seeking, and Social Concern and Avoidance. Perhaps due to the fact that individuals in the Active Commitment stage embrace diverse body types and depend less on outside approval. Instead of avoiding body dissatisfaction, they frequently participate in body image conversations.

7. Future Directions

In practical terms, the conclusions drawn from this study can be applied to multiple areas: from a feminist research perspective, traditional gender specifications and body standards typically consolidate male power and limit women's self-identity and bodily autonomy. This paper helps reveal how women's behaviors and identities are controlled and regulated through the shaping of body standards from a feminist perspective, providing data and theoretical support for an in-depth discussion of gender, social identity, and body anxiety. From the perspective of socio-cultural construction, body anxiety is not an isolated issue, but is profoundly influenced by factors such as socio-cultural environment, media representations, gender roles, and social expectations, etc. This paper discusses that body standards are socially constructed, reflecting authority structures and gender inequalities, and contribute to women's better understanding of the cause of body anxiety and coping with it, and to the reduction of the level of body anxiety. In terms of media and cultural industry insights, this paper provides a theoretical basis for promoting greater inclusiveness and diversity in body image standards, guiding the media and advertising industries to promote diversity and inclusiveness and to reduce the focus on monolithic body image standards when it comes to the portrayal of body image and standards of beauty.

Moreover, studies related to feminism/body anxiety in the future could proceed to delve deeper into the effectiveness of mental health interventions (e.g., group therapy, educational programs, etc.) based on feminist theories in alleviating body anxiety; explore how feminist theories guide policy development and social change to promote more inclusive body image standards and female self-acceptance; and examine how the body positivity movement affects women's self-identity and body

image anxiety, and assessing its role in social movements. Through these research directions, we aim to gain a thorough understanding of the complexity of body image anxiety and to contribute to the development of theory and improvement of practice in related fields.

8. Conclusion & Limitation

This study aimed to investigate the impact of Chinese feminism on social media posts related to body image anxiety. However, several limitations remain, which may influence the generalisability and credibility of the findings. Firstly, the purposive sampling method used in the study may have led to a one-sided sample and selection bias, thus limiting the full understanding of the target group. Secondly, the coding in the study was done by a single coder, which to some extent reduces the reliability of the results as the lack of cross-validation by multiple coders may lead to the effect of subjective bias. In addition, due to the limited sample size and the lack of personal identifying information of most users, the positioning of the study population appeared to be ambiguous, which in turn weakened the depth and accuracy of the analyses. Moreover, the study only gathered data from a single social media platform over a short period of time, it is conceivable that the results obtained may not be fully representative of similar posts in other time periods or platforms. Therefore, future studies should consider adopting more diverse sampling methods, enlarging the sample size, and covering multiple social media platforms to enhance the representativeness and credibility of the study.

Overall, nearly 45% of Chinese women regarding body image still revealed anxiety about their appearance[10], despite the studies above finding some feminist-influenced content in the China's social media posts. This suggests that while Chinese feminists endeavor to promote body positivity and self-acceptance in the Internet, in practice many young women are nevertheless still influenced by traditional standards of beauty. Additionally, although some posts show themes of authentic female body image and self-compassion, the social media environment as a whole continues to be characterized by an unwarranted emphasis on physical appearance. With the goal to create a more inclusive and positive social media space for Chinese women, additional study needs to investigate how posts that combine both self-compassion and positive body image themes can be effective in reducing body image anxiety and promoting healthier body perceptions.

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