



Sharing Behavior of Online Health Information among Older Adults in the Post Epidemic Era

Jing An, Zhijun Zhou

(School of Management, Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Nanjing, China)

ABSTRACT: The ravages of SARS-COV-2 in 2019 have had an extremely serious impact on the whole world, especially for the elderly, whose physical and mental conditions are extremely vulnerable to viruses. Despite the liberalization of epidemic prevention and control, the elderly still need more attention and care after the epidemic. The purpose of this study is to explore the related concepts and research of the elderly's online health information sharing behavior in the post-epidemic era, to provide reference for the elderly, a vulnerable group, to provide better online health information services in the post-epidemic era, and to lay a foundation for the follow-up related research, so as to strengthen the elderly's health information sharing ability and improve their self-health management ability, which has important practical significance.

KEYWORDS: Post-Epidemic era; Older Adults; Network Health Information Sharing

Received 22 May, 2023; Revised 01 June, 2023; Accepted 03 June, 2023 © The author(s) 2023.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. INTRODUCTION

Population aging is a worldwide problem with wide influence. In recent years, the aging situation of China's population is becoming more and more serious. According to the data of the seventh census in official website of the National Bureau of Statistics, in 2020, the elderly population over 60 years old in China has accounted for 18.7% of the total population, about 260 million people. Before 2025, the total number of elderly people over 60 years old in China will be close to 300 million; By 2050, the number of elderly people in China will be close to 400 million, and the proportion of elderly people will reach 30%. This shows that China is accelerating its entry into an aging society.

With the liberalization of domestic prevention and control policies for COVID-19 epidemic at the end of 2022, the post-epidemic era has arrived. Because of the high infectivity, high concealment and repeatability of SARS-COV-2, the elderly do not respond to the news in time, and their protection ability is not high and their health quality is low. SARS-COV-2 with high repeated infection rate is easy to have a serious impact on the physical and mental health of the elderly. In order to ensure the quality of life and physical and mental health of the elderly, it is extremely urgent to study the influence mechanism of the elderly's online health information sharing behavior, improve the elderly's information sharing ability and put forward feasible suggestions for improving the quality of new media and information on the Internet.

As of May 10, 2023, 4591 results can be retrieved by searching the topic of "information behavior" in HowNet. It can be seen that the research on "information behavior" in academic circles is hot at present, and the research topics mainly focus on "user information behavior", "information sharing behavior" and "empirical research". This study takes the elderly as the research object, which reflects humanistic care in management research. At present, the research on the network health information behavior of the elderly in China is still relatively scarce, so this topic has certain practical significance.

In order to promote the realization of the Healthy China Strategy, the elderly are an important group in the implementation of the Healthy China Strategy. Understanding the behavior of the elderly in online health information sharing can provide an important reference for promoting the realization of the Healthy China Strategy. In addition, understanding the behavior of the elderly in online health information sharing can help relevant institutions and organizations to better provide health information services for the elderly and meet their needs for health information. In the past, the Internet penetration rate was low, and the access to health knowledge of the elderly was greatly limited. Now, online health information has changed this situation. The popularization and application of new media technologies represented by mobile phones and the Internet have

changed the way the elderly obtain health information. New media is playing an increasingly important role in improving the health awareness of the elderly and improving the health literacy of the whole people.

II. RELATED CONCEPTS

2.1 Post-epidemic era

At present, there is no unified definition of the concept of post-epidemic era in academic circles. At present, the mainstream view is that post-epidemic era refers to the era after the Novel Coronavirus epidemic. Wang Zhuli, a scholar, believes that the post-epidemic era is not a state in which the epidemic is completely eliminated and completely restored to the state before the epidemic, but a state in which there is the possibility of a small-scale outbreak of the epidemic and it has a far-reaching impact on all aspects [1]. Therefore, in this paper, we define the "post-epidemic era" of the new crown epidemic as: after the COVID-19 epidemic has been stably controlled and the society has gradually returned to normal order, the threat of the virus to human beings has weakened, but it is still in the daily prevention and control state of the virus, such as wearing masks and proper isolation.

[1]

2.2 Information behavior

Information behavior refers to a series of information-related activities, such as information acquisition, processing, transmission, storage, utilization and dissemination, which are carried out by people in the information environment. The research and analysis of information behavior can be traced back to the early 20th century. Wilson, a British scholar, defined information behavior as follows: information behavior is based on information channels and information sources, and the behaviors that occur are integrated and divided into active and passive [2]. Yue Jianbo believes that people meet their own needs through information behavior, including inquiring, selecting and using information to obtain the required information. The complete process of information behavior is from forming the need for information to meeting the need [3].

[1][2]

2.3 Health information

In 2014, health information was released for the first time in the field of general practice and community health, which covers health-related knowledge, skills, behaviors and concepts, and is an important resource shared and disseminated by both parties in the process of health communication. At present, scholars often think that health information refers to information related to human health and medical treatment, including health education information, health care information, medical information and so on.

After summarizing the definitions given by academic circles in health information, we can find that the meaning of health information is far beyond the boundaries of health in professional medical fields, but covers many fields such as nutrition, medical treatment and physical quality. Health information not only refers to medical treatment, drugs and other disease-related information, but also refers to information to improve health literacy. For example, balanced diet and nutrition, health care, maintaining mental health and other related knowledge [4]. Therefore, in this study, health information is defined as a series of knowledge, concepts and technical information that make the elderly healthier in physiology or psychology, improve their health literacy and improve their ability to share health information on the Internet.

[3]

III. RESEARCH STATUS

3.1 New Media and Health

Most scholars pay attention to the health status of the elderly. Taking Jiangsu Province as an example, the health literacy rate of 2403 elderly people aged 60-69 is only 7.5%, among which the basic knowledge and concept of health literacy, healthy lifestyle and basic skills of the elderly are 12.7%, 6.3% and 10.0%, respectively [5], which shows that the health literacy rate of the elderly in Jiangsu Province is low, and the health of the elderly should be widely concerned.[4]

With the wide application of Internet technology in people's daily life, as of May 10, 2023, advanced retrieval was used in HowNet to retrieve the two key words "new media" and "health", and a total of 11,076 results were obtained. It shows that the research of new media in the field of health has attracted great attention from scholars in recent years. New media has great advantages in the field of health communication. First of all, network new media can be updated in real time, which makes the dissemination of health information more timely and facilitates people to obtain the latest health information in time. Secondly, compared with traditional media, online new media is more interactive, and people can communicate and share health information with others through comments and praises, thus promoting the dissemination and exchange of health information. Finally, the network new media can make personalized recommendations according to users' interests and health needs, provide health information more in line with users' needs, and improve the information dissemination effect [6]. As a part of new media, health communication has occupied a major position in various media. With the rapid development of mobile Internet, smart mobile phones have become one of the main ways to spread

new media healthily. With the popularity of smart mobile phones, people do not need to be limited by time and space in their daily life, and can get information through mobile phones anytime and anywhere [7]. In addition, with the development and progress of society, new media has become daily and daily, with a high utilization rate. A study conducted semi-structured interviews with 34 residents, of which 29 residents were able to skillfully use new media to obtain health information through the Internet [8], which shows that the penetration rate of new media health communication is high.

[5][6][7]

3.2 Health Information Behavior

With regard to the research on the health information behavior of the elderly, some scholars have studied the current situation of the health information literacy of the elderly in rural areas through questionnaire survey and statistical analysis, and concluded that the elderly have the worst ability to obtain health information, and the total score of health information literacy is below 50 points (out of 100 points) [9]. In the research of health information behavior, scholars at home and abroad mostly study the behavior of searching and obtaining health information, but less study the behavior of information sharing. Some scholars have studied the online health information search behavior of the elderly and summarized and analyzed it. It is concluded that the elderly mostly search for information from TV programs and mobile terminals with short videos of Douyin, and the information types mainly include specific disease information such as cancer and chronic diseases, as well as medical resources, health care and health news policies [10]. Generally speaking, the influencing factors of urban elderly's online epidemic health information search behavior include perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, information awareness, information ability, social influence and aging attitude, etc. These factors will have a positive impact on the elderly's information search behavior [11]. After three years of COVID-19 epidemic, it is found that many elderly people have increased their use of mobile phone network after the epidemic, among which personal physical and mental factors, information factors, behavior willingness, medical environment, family and social support have great influence on their behavior [12].[8][9][10][11]

However, no matter scholars at home and abroad, most of the research on new media and health behavior is concentrated in college students and special patients. The high utilization rate of new media among young people makes most of the related studies focus on them, while the middle-aged and elderly people are rarely involved. The influence of new media on health behavior is mainly realized by the influence of health information with new media as the carrier on people's health behavior. For example, taking students as research objects, the higher the reception level of new media health information of college students of different genders, grades and places of origin, the better their health behaviors [13]. In addition, different from people's general idea, the authority of online health information will not have a significant impact on the health behavior of the elderly audience, and what really affects the health behavior is their trust and awareness of health information [14].[12][13]

The above analysis of new media is based on the new media as an information platform. For the role of new media in real life, we usually only stay on the ordinary information dissemination platform, ignoring its social platform role.

As a social media, compared with mass media, new media is easier to persuade the elderly to take some behaviors to improve their physical and mental health through information dissemination based on interpersonal relationships [15]. The persuasiveness of interpersonal communication makes Internet health communication an effective channel to change healthy behaviors [16]. When new media acts as social media, it connects independent social individuals into a whole, and makes them provide emotional support and useful information for each other. Some scholars have mentioned the theory of social emotional choice, that is, elderly individuals tend to get along with more familiar people in order to satisfy their emotional and emotional values, and their sharing behavior of health information mainly occurs in strong social relations, such as children and spouses [17].

[14][16][16]

3.3 Information Sharing Behavior

As for the research of information sharing behavior, many scholars at home and abroad have studied the influencing factors of information sharing behavior in different situations and obtained results. Previous studies have suggested that demographic characteristics such as gender and educational background will directly affect network information sharing behavior; Network information sharing behavior is influenced by many factors, such as whether the information content is interesting, timely and important, how the information source channel is, how the language style and length characteristics of the information text are, how the information type is, and so on. In particular, the emotional content contained in information plays a vital role in the process of spreading rumors on the Internet, because many information receivers may be infected by the emotions in rumors and have similar emotions and sharing. In the positive energy information sharing behavior of social network users under public health emergencies, emotion, information quality and social norms all have a mechanism for information sharing behavior [18].[17]

Foreign scholars have also made some research on social media information sharing behavior in the Internet age, but mainly focused on the research of young people. Foreign scholars investigated residents aged 18 to 35 in Hawaii to study the social network health information sharing behavior of young people in Hawaii during the SARS-COV-2 pandemic. Through regression model, it is concluded that people who think that COVID-19 risk is greater will share health information with more people; When sharing health information, women and patients with chronic diseases will listen to more opinions [19]. Understanding the social networks and information sources of young people is very important for popularizing health knowledge and designing effective health communication. Regarding the health information sharing and patient consent preference of patients in COVID-19, most patients think that the more informed they are, the more likely they are to help [20]. With regard to the health information sharing behavior of Chinese elderly people on WeChat, some studies show that the purpose of health information sharing of Chinese elderly people is mainly based on relationship maintenance, not real information support [21]. This also confirms the above-mentioned theory of social emotional choice. In addition, it is found that social culture is an important explanation mechanism.[19][20][21]

Funding: This research was supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) (Grant Number 71904019 & 72271128), Jiangsu Social Science Foundation (Grant Number 21GLB014 & 22GLB034), and Suzhou Science and Technology Bureau (SYSD2019196), and a project of Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications (Grant Number NYY221010).

REFERENCES

- [1]. Wang Zhuli. How should education be transformed in the post-epidemic era? [J]. Audio-visual Education Research, 2020, 41 (4): 8
- [2]. Wilson, T. D. Human Information Behavior [J]. Information Science, 2000 (32): 49-55.
- [3]. Yue Jianbo. Fundamentals of Information Management [M]. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 1999.
- [4]. Li Yuelin, Cai Wenjuan. Review of research on health information search behavior abroad [J]. Library and Information Work, 2012, 56 (19): 128-132.
- [5]. Hu Jie, Guo Haijian, Yang Li, Qu Chen, Yu Chen, Li Xiaoning, Zhang Xujun. Health literacy status and influencing factors of the elderly aged 60 ~ 69 in Jiangsu Province [J]. Journal of Public Health of China, 2016, 32 (09): 1156-1158.
- [6]. Guo Zhizhuo. Research on Health Communication under New Media Environment [J]. Newsworld, 2014 (04): 159-161.
- [7]. Zhong Wei, Huang Peizhen, Su Ping. Study on the intervention effect of primary school students' health literacy in Haizhu District of Guangzhou [A]. Guangzhou Health Publicity and Education Center. Draft Collection of the 13th Academic Exchange Activities on Health Education and Health Promotion in Guangzhou [C]. Guangzhou Health Publicity and Education Center: Guangzhou Health Publicity and Education Center, 2022: 303-309.
- [8]. Zhao Jiakui, Lin Jun, Zhu Yanhong, Lu Ying, Pan Yun. Application of participatory health education in health literacy intervention of urban residents [J]. Health Education and Health Promotion, 2015, 10 (03): 165-168.
- [9]. Xiong Huan, Luo Aijing, Xie Wenzhao, Huang Panhao. Current situation and influencing factors of health information literacy of rural elderly [J]. Journal of Agricultural Library and Information Technology, 2022, 34 (10): 44-56.
- [10]. Yang Yamei, Peng Qianqian, Yu Jinyuan. Research on Internet Health Information Search Behavior of the Elderly from the Perspective of Government [J]. Fujian Computer, 2022, 38 (11): 59-62.
- [11]. Zhang Xue. Study on Influencing Factors of Health Information Search Behavior of Urban Elderly on Internet Epidemic [D]. Tianjin: Tianjin Normal University, 2022.
- [12]. Yao Kui, Liang Muyi, Lei Yuejie. An empirical study on the use and satisfaction of nutrition information during COVID-19 outbreak [J]. Chinese Journal of Food and Nutrition, 2023, 29 (3): 6.
- [13]. He Rongwei, He Xiaoyi, Wu Sami, Chen Xinlin, Kong Danli. Investigation on the influence of new media health information dissemination on college students' health behavior [J]. New Media Research, 2017, 3 (21): 20-24.
- [14]. Chen Zhizhong, Huang Huiyun, Chen Jiayu. An empirical study on the influence of health communication information on audience's health behavior-an experiment based on eating behavior tendency [J]. Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China), 2016, 38 (07): 52-57.
- [15]. He Jun, Huang Wushu. Can new media bring more matching jobs to migrant workers? --Investigation and research based on four cities in Yangtze River Delta [J]. Journal of Nanjing University (Philosophy, Humanities and Social Sciences), 2018, 55 (05): 8.
- [16]. Cassell M M and Jackson C and Chevront B. Health communication on the Internet: an effective channel for health behavior change? [J]. Journal of health communication, 1998, 3 (1): 71-79.
- [17]. Chen Juan, Gan Lingbo. Seeking Relationship from Information--Research on Health Information Sharing Behavior of the Elderly Based on WeChat [J]. News reporter, 2021, (09): 10-24.
- [18]. Huo Mingkui, Zhu Jiaqi. Behavior mechanism and management strategy of positive energy information sharing of social network users under public health emergencies [J]. Information Science, 2020, 38 (11): 121-127.
- [19]. Phillips Michael M. et al. Social Networks, Health Information Sharing, and Pandemic Perceptions among Young Adults in Hawai'i during the COVID-19 Pandemic [J]. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 2022, 19 (24): 16,833.
- [20]. Tosoni Sarah et al. Patient consideration preferences on sharing personal health information during the COVID-19 pandemic: "The more informed we are, the more likely we are to help". [J]. BMC Medical Ethics, 2022, 23 (1): 53.
- [21]. Wei Wang and Xin Zhuang and Peng Shao. Exploring Health Information Sharing Behavior of Chinese Elderly Adults on WeChat. [J]. Healthcare, 2020, 8 (3): 207.