

Digital Advocacy and Menstrual Poverty: The Role of Chinese Short Video Platforms in Shaping Gen Z Awareness

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

RECEIVED: 07-Mar-26

REVISED: 16-Jun-26

ACCEPTED: 25-Jun-26

PUBLISHED: 15-Jul-26

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Citation: Siyu (Elsa) Cai (2026). Digital Advocacy and Menstrual Poverty: The Role of Chinese Short Video Platforms in Shaping Gen Z Awareness. *Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res.* 8 (1), 233–244. <https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2026.v8.n1.id1361.p233>



ABSTRACT

Introduction: Menstrual poverty remains a persistent yet underexamined issue in China, shaped by enduring cultural taboos, uneven access to menstrual health education, and structural inequalities affecting rural and low-income communities. In the absence of a standardised national curriculum and open public discourse, short-video platforms have increasingly emerged as informal spaces for menstrual advocacy. This study investigates the role of Chinese short-video platforms in shaping Gen Z's awareness of menstrual poverty from 2020 to the present and considers how their influence may evolve in the future. **Methods:** Adopting a qualitative research design, the study combines critical discourse analysis and visual semiotic analysis within feminist theoretical frameworks, including digital feminism, intersectionality, reproductive justice, and biopolitics. The dataset comprises 15 of the most liked videos published on Douyin under the hashtag #menstrualshaming (月经羞耻) between 2020 and 2025, along with the 25 most liked comments associated with each video. The analysis focuses on language use, narrative structure, visual symbolism, and audience engagement. **Results:** Findings indicate that creators frequently employ first-person storytelling and emotionally charged narrative arcs that move from stigma to empowerment. Explicit references to menstruation challenge euphemistic conventions and disrupt culturally embedded taboos. Visual strategies—such as close-ups of sanitary products, symbolic use of red elements, and warm lighting—function as forms of visual activism, transforming previously concealed objects into symbols of pride and resistance. The inclusion of male participants reframes menstruation as a broader social concern rather than a private women's issue. Comment sections demonstrate action-oriented engagement, with users reporting initiatives such as “pad help boxes” and public expressions of solidarity. However, activism is often shaped by algorithmic and commercial logics, and systemic critique remains limited. **Discussion:** Short-video platforms play a pivotal role in reshaping public discourse on menstrual poverty by enabling affective solidarity and normalising open conversation among Gen Z. While these digital spaces foster empowerment and visibility, they operate within market-driven infrastructures that may commodify activism and prioritise individual transformation over structural reform. Sustainable progress requires institutional reinforcement, including comprehensive menstrual health education, inclusive digital content standards, and broader policy recognition of menstrual justice as a public concern.

Conclusion: Chinese short-video platforms have become influential sites of menstrual advocacy, redefining the boundaries of public discourse and expanding who is authorised to speak about bodily experience. Although not a substitute for systemic reform, their capacity to cultivate visibility, solidarity, and generational change positions them as significant actors in the evolving landscape of menstrual justice in China.

Keywords: Algorithmic culture, Digital activism, Gender discourse, Menstrual justice, Platform-mediated communication, Social media advocacy

1. Introduction and Background

An average woman will menstruate for approximately 37.5 years during her lifetime (Blair et al., 2022). In China, this translates to 660 million women managing their menstrual health at different stages of their lives (World Bank, 2024). Such a staggering figure highlights the pressing need to promote menstrual equality. The inability to afford hygiene products such as sanitary products, menstrual education, clean water, and hygienic facilities is known as menstrual poverty (García-Egea et al., 2025). It affects women in general, especially those in rural and low-income communities (Deniz & Acikgoz, 2025).

Despite its scale and importance, menstruation continues to be stigmatized across society (Y. Lin, 2023). Traditionally, menstruation has been influenced by Confucian culture, where menstrual bleeding is considered impure, contributing towards gender taboos and silence (Chen et al., 2025). In many cultures, women were prevented from participating in religious rites and certain household ceremonies during menstruation (M. Zhang & Zhang, 2023). These traditions have continued into modern times. Such persistent cultural narratives continue to block open discussion and generate misunderstandings.

The existing literature has extensively discussed menstrual poverty as a multidimensional problem involving health and socio-cultural issues caused by economic disparities, cultural differences, and educational inequalities in China (Li, 2024). On the other hand, menstrual stigma is another key aspect researched widely as one of those that persists profoundly and affects individuals in relation to their physical health, social and psychological wellbeing (Winkler et al., 2024; Selva et al., 2026). Moreover, there is an emerging trend in the literature on the use of social media to discuss the menstrual experience and combat menstrual stigma, including feminist activism and stigma resistance, particularly within the Chinese context (Gu et al., 2023; Yi, 2022; Liu, 2025; Dai, 2025; Jiang, 2019; Y. Yang et al., 2023). Some researchers argue that digital platforms function as empowering spaces for open discussion and

collective identity formation (McHugh, 2020; Mohsina Rahman, 2025). However, others contend that such platforms remain limited in their ability to challenge deeply embedded cultural taboos (Tomlinson, 2025a). These contrasting perspectives suggest that while digital platforms offer opportunities for visibility, their effectiveness in challenging entrenched stigma depends on cultural context and content framing. While this study primarily examines menstrual stigma content under the hashtag #月经羞耻 (menstrual shaming), this discourse is analysed as a proxy for broader dimensions of menstrual poverty. In this study, menstrual stigma is conceptualised as a discursive manifestation of menstrual poverty, reflecting underlying inequalities in access, education, and social support. Expressions of shame, concealment, and limited access to supportive environments within these narratives reflect underlying structural inequalities in menstrual health education, resource availability, and social support systems. This is particularly relevant among younger users, especially Gen Z, who actively engage with short-video platforms and play a key role in shaping emerging digital health discourses (Olsson et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2025; C. Zhang & Zhu, 2025). This research can be framed within theoretical frameworks to capture the complex, intertwined relationship between menstrual poverty and short-form video platforms. Notable theories include digital feminism, which views online spaces as tools for challenging gender norms (Zhou, 2024; Huang, 2025; Banet-Weiser, 2019), and reproductive justice, which focuses on inequalities in access to menstrual health care (Tang & Clark, 2024; Li, 2024; Ross, 2006).

However, some important gaps remain. To begin with, one significant limitation of the topic under discussion is the lack of platform-specific literature on menstrual health on short video-sharing platforms like Douyin. Even though previous research has revealed that Douyin is increasingly becoming an important channel for disseminating health-related information, such as that related to cancers and infertility, there is limited evidence investigating the role of the same platforms

in addressing issues such as menstrual health (Lin et al., 2023), Fang, 2024; Yang et al., 2025; K. Zhang et al., 2025). Second, the potential for online spaces to act as spaces of resistance to stigma, but the results suggest that the way in which they can influence may be quite variable and dependent upon how the content is presented and framed (Abdulai et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2025; Wang, 2026).

Collectively, these gaps indicate that even though menstruation, menstrual hygiene, and menstrual stigma have been extensively explored in past research, there has not been enough research on how menstrual poverty is represented in short-video platforms in China. In particular, Douyin's role in shaping public awareness, perceptions, and discourse on menstrual poverty has not been sufficiently explored.

This study aims to address this gap by exploring the representation of menstrual poverty on Douyin and analysing how such content shapes awareness, attitudes, and discourse. By situating digital engagement within broader socio-cultural contexts, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of menstrual equity in contemporary China. Research Questions

- How are menstrual stigma and related dimensions of menstrual inequality represented in Douyin short-video content in China?
- In what ways do these representations shape public awareness and perceptions of menstrual health, stigma, and access-related challenges?
- To what extent does Douyin content challenge or reinforce cultural narratives that contribute to menstrual stigma and broader menstrual inequalities?

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

To examine the role that Chinese short-video platforms have played in shaping Gen Z's awareness of menstrual poverty from 2020 to the present—and to consider how this influence may evolve through a qualitative research design. It combines critical discourse analysis (CDA) and visual semiotic analysis, grounded in feminist theoretical frameworks.

2.2 Data Selection and Sampling Strategy

The empirical material comprises 15 of the most-liked videos published on Douyin under the hashtag #menstrualshaming (Yuejinxiuchi 月经羞耻), together with the 25 most-liked comments associated with each video, posted between 2020 and 2025. The selection focuses explicitly on language use, narrative structure,

and visual representation to understand how online discourse surrounding menstrual shaming is constructed, circulated, and contested on the platform.

The decision to select the most-liked videos is based on the assumption that engagement metrics such as “likes” indicate greater visibility, reach, and influence within the platform's algorithmic environment. Consequently, content that is highly liked is more likely to reflect dominant or widely circulated narratives. While this approach does not capture the full diversity of content, it provides insight into the most influential representations shaping public discourse. The complete sampling inventory, including video identifiers, posting dates, engagement metrics, and selection rationale, is provided in supplementary Table S1.

Although the dataset is drawn from content explicitly related to menstrual stigma (#月经羞耻), this study interprets such discourse as a critical entry point for examining broader dimensions of menstrual inequality. Stigma-related narratives often reflect underlying barriers to access, education, and social support, which are key components of menstrual poverty.

2.3 Analytical Approach

Drawing on CDA as developed by Norman Fairclough (1995) (Fairclough, 2003), the study interrogates how linguistic and narrative strategies construct power relations, reinforce or challenge societal norms, and articulate forms of resistance within menstrual discourse. Complementing this approach, visual semiotic analysis is employed to examine both denotative and connotative meanings embedded in visual elements, including framing, colour symbolism, camera angles, and metaphorical imagery.

The analysis follows an iterative coding process, in which videos and associated comments were reviewed multiple times to identify recurring themes. Initial open coding was used to capture key patterns in language and visuals, which were then grouped into broader thematic categories informed by the research questions and theoretical framework. A detailed summary of the coding framework, thematic categories, and representative codes is provided in supplementary table S2. Importantly, this study does not seek to measure menstrual poverty directly; rather, it examines its discursive manifestation through representations of menstrual stigma in short-video content.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Feminist media and communication theories further inform the analysis. These include digital feminism (Banet-Weiser, 2019) and the reproductive justice

framework (Ross, 2006). Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a critical lens through which to examine how digital spaces both reproduce and disrupt existing structures of gendered inequality, and how short-video platforms may function simultaneously as sites of empowerment and regulation.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were taken into account when using publicly available social media data. Although the analysed videos and comments are publicly accessible, care was taken to preserve user anonymity by not disclosing usernames or other identifiable information. The study adheres to principles of responsible data use, ensuring that content is analysed in aggregate form and not used in ways that could harm or expose individual users.

2.6 Methodological Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the reliance on highly liked content may introduce platform bias, as algorithmic systems prioritise certain types of content while marginalising others. Second, the relatively small sample size limits the generalisability of findings. Third, the study is subject to interpretive subjectivity inherent in qualitative analysis, particularly in discourse and visual interpretation. Despite these limitations, the approach provides valuable insight into dominant narratives and representations of menstrual poverty within Douyin's digital environment.

3. Result

The themes presented in the following sections emerged from the iterative coding process described in the methodology (see supplementary table S2 for the complete thematic coding framework).

3.1 Language and Narrative

On Douyin, creators who address menstruation-related issues use personalized narratives to connect emotionally with their audiences, especially Gen Z. Although this helps increase relatability, it ultimately draws more attention to personal change than to systemic dimensions of menstrual poverty.

3.1.1 Storytelling Language

Among the selected videos, the use of first-person pronouns ("I", "me") and informal language establishes a personal atmosphere of communication, inviting viewers to relate the narrative to their own life experiences. As shown in Figure 1 below, this strategy allows for viewer engagement through shared testimony. Consistent with digital feminism, these tactics allow creators to reclaim their discursive authority within platform constraints.

At the same time, however, creators confront the stigma-related narratives of menstruation by using language to counteract them. As highlighted above, menstruation is seen as "embarrassing" in many areas in China owing to its highly taboo nature. By referring to menstruation directly, creators normalise previously silenced experiences and challenge gendered linguistic norms. This shift demonstrates how linguistic visibility operates as a form of resistance, reframing stigma as a discursive indicator of underlying menstrual inequalities rather than merely a cultural taboo, transforming private experiences into collective and political concerns.

3.1.2 Emotional Framing and Narrative Progression

The use of emotional titles and rhetorical questions, such as "When can Chinese girls no longer be ashamed



Figure 1. Screenshots showing the use of first-person pronouns in Douyin videos to build emotional intimacy.

Source: Author, 2026

of menstruation?” not only functions as a means of drawing people’s attention but is also an implicit critique. In this way, emotionally loaded titles draw viewers to engage with the video content through likes, shares, and comments, while allowing them to comment on the video without explicitly criticizing it.

Most highly engaged videos share one feature: a story plot that progresses from negative experiences associated with feelings of shame and stigmatization to positive outcomes centered on acceptance and empowerment. This kind of narrative focuses on empowerment as self-transformation, but it is also a reflection of the post-feminist sensibility discussed by Gill (2007) (Gill, 2007). Thus, empowerment is viewed as connected to stigmatization, in which stigma is acknowledged and challenged, yet is primarily resolved at the individual rather than the systemic level, leaving broader inequalities in access and education only indirectly addressed.



Figure 2. Screenshots of rhetorical and emotional titles emphasizing destigmatization.

Source: Author, 2026

3.1.3 Narrative Formats

3.1.3.1 Personal Stories

Typically, personal narratives capture stories of stigma, whether it is embarrassment, concealment, or exclusion, and then go on to capture re-framings and acceptance. These narratives frequently depict familial exclusion, peer teasing, and intergenerational responses to menstruation, illustrating how stigma is reproduced and negotiated across different social contexts (Figure 3). For example, in “Menstrual Shaming – When They Bleed, They Become Gods Who Create Life,” the differing views across generations demonstrate how awareness and open discussion have changed perceptions of menstruation (see supplementary table S1 and example video 1 for a detailed illustration).

This genre of storytelling uses emotional openness to evoke empathy in the reader, as seen in how audiences react to similar experiences. But at the same time, this kind of storytelling relies on platform logic, as these narratives are created with the intention of gaining more traction. As a result, empowerment emerges through visibility and shared experience, even as it remains embedded within algorithmic and commercial structures.

3.1.3.2 Societal Experiment and Public Engagement

In contrast, videos documenting societal experiments shift focus from individual experience to collective participation. These videos explicitly challenge stigma by making menstruation visible in public contexts.

Symbolic actions such as rejecting negative labels like “dirty” or “moody” and using red ribbons to represent menstrual blood make menstruation more visible and challenge the idea that it should remain hidden or confined to the private sphere (Figure 4). The inclusion of male participants further reframes menstruation



Figure 3. Screenshots showing familial exclusion, peer teasing, and intergenerational responses to menstruation.

Source: Author, 2026

as a shared social issue, aligning with principles of reproductive justice that emphasise dignity and collective responsibility (Figure 5). A representative example of this format is provided in supplementary table S1 and example video 2, which illustrates how public participation and symbolic actions are used to challenge menstrual stigma.

3.2 Visual Elements

The visual grammar of menstrual poverty posts on Douyin represents a balance between authenticity and platform optimization. Through their use of visuals, menstruation experiences become relatable enough to foster empathy in viewers, without crossing the platform's boundaries, thereby making visible discursive representations of menstrual inequality.



Figure 4. Screenshots from a campus-based societal experiment challenging menstrual stigma.

Source: Author, 2026

3.2.1 Shot Composition

Visual framing plays a key role in shaping how audiences engage with menstrual narratives. Across videos, creators use composition techniques to enhance relatability, authenticity, and emotional impact (see supplementary table S3 for additional visual coding examples).

3.2.1.1 Personal Stories

Personal narratives predominantly employ eye-level shots in everyday settings such as bedrooms or workplaces, creating a sense of intimacy and conversational equality (Figure 6). This ensures that the stories are more relatable, prompting the audience to



Figure 5. Screenshots of male participants engaging in public discussions of menstrual stigma.

Source: Author, 2026



Figure 6. Eye-level shots and casual home settings foster relatability in personal storytelling videos.

Source: Author, 2026

draw connections from their personal experiences to those depicted. Engagement of the audience on comment forums implies that such visual strategies facilitate shared storytelling and expand discursive space around menstruation.

3.2.1.2 Societal Experiment Documentation

In contrast, societal experiment videos often use handheld camerawork in public spaces, producing a sense of spontaneity and uncertainty. This aesthetic positions creators as participants rather than authority figures, lowering barriers to engagement and reinforcing authenticity.

3.2.1.3 Close-ups and Visual Symbolism

Close-up shots of sanitary products can be seen as repetitive visual symbols in the dataset. These images foreground menstruation in a direct yet controlled manner by depicting menstrual practices while adhering to platform guidelines (Figure 7). Additional visual observations and interpretations are provided in supplementary table S3.

Many videos emphasize the association of pads with shame, particularly the practice of concealing them in opaque black plastic bags when purchased. In contrast, some creators hold pads in public and perform symbolic resistance to stigma, transforming everyday objects into markers of visibility and dignity (Figure 8).

Notably, the most liked comments frequently adopt an action-oriented tone. Some viewers describe implementing “pad help boxes” in school toilets, enabling students to borrow products when needed. Others attach tags to their bags stating, “You can borrow pads from me.” Such practices directly challenge prohibitions against discussing menstruation publicly and translate digital

discourse into tangible forms of solidarity (Figure 9). Representative audience comments supporting these findings are presented in Supplementary Table S4.



Figure 8. Screenshots from “No Pads Shaming”, highlighting the public visibility of sanitary products.

Source: Author, 2026



Figure 9. User comments demonstrating actionable support initiatives (e.g., ‘pad help box’ campaigns).

Source: Author, 2026



Figure 7. Close-up images of sanitary pads and their symbolic transformation within video narratives.

Source: Author, 2026

3.2.2 Use of Light and Colour

Lighting and colour are used to reinforce narrative transitions from stigma to acceptance. Scenes depicting negative experiences are often visually subdued, whereas warm tones and natural light mark moments of empowerment.

As shown in Figure 10, brighter lighting and golden hues symbolise confidence, openness, and affirmation. These visual cues complement narrative structures, reinforcing the shift from concealment to visibility and aligning aesthetic representation with themes of destigmatisation, while simultaneously functioning as discursive representations of menstrual inequality and access-related challenges (supplementary table S3 provides detailed visual coding observations).

4. Discussion

4.1 Narrative Structure and Emotional Arc

The findings demonstrate that short-video creators on Douyin craft stories about menstruation through an emotional journey from stigmatization to acceptance. It is important to note that this emotional journey is not limited to descriptions of experiences but also reflects the growing shift in attitudes towards menstrual discourse. While these narratives may appear individualized, such content can be considered collectively to expose systemic gaps, particularly in menstrual education and access to sanitary products.

The findings suggest that menstrual stigma functions not only as a cultural phenomenon but also as an indicator of underlying structural inequalities. In this sense, stigma discourse provides indirect insight into the lived realities

of menstrual poverty, particularly in relation to access, education, and social support.

Although these stories can be viewed as representing the shift towards open menstrual discourse in China, which was traditionally marked by silence and euphemism, there is still some similarity with other countries where digital platforms are used for “everyday activism” based on personal experiences (Gaybor, 2022; Aidoo & King, 2026; Tomlinson, 2025c). This suggests that Douyin content aligns with a wider transnational trend in digital feminist practice.

At the same time, the emphasis on personal transformation risks obscuring structural dimensions of menstrual poverty. By framing empowerment as an individual journey, systemic barriers such as policy gaps and regional inequalities may remain under-addressed. Thus, while these narratives contribute to destigmatisation, their capacity to drive institutional change depends on how effectively they are translated into collective advocacy (Nayyer et al., 2026).

4.2 Visual Activism

The research highlights the notion of visual activism, in which images are used to normalize menstruation and address its associated stigma. Unlike typical awareness campaigns, visual activism works through subtle emotional cues, such as displaying sanitary towels, lighting them with warm colors, and representing them with red ribbons (Mørk Røstvik, 2024). These interpretations are further supported by the visual coding inventory presented in supplementary table S3.

Compared with previous media representations in China that emphasized discretion, these images reflect



Figure 10. Screenshots illustrating symbolic transitions from shame to acceptance through colour and lighting.

Source: Author, 2026

a cultural shift towards openness and acceptance. The same patterns can be observed in digital campaign efforts worldwide, where normalization is a significant element of destigmatization (Thakur et al., 2025; Jimenez et al., 2025).

However, this form of activism remains constrained by platform dynamics. The need to conform to algorithmic preferences and content moderation may limit how explicitly menstruation can be represented (Uwazuruike, 2026). Furthermore, visual activism can become superficial when it focuses more on symbolic actions than on long-term efforts to address deeper structural issues, such as menstrual taboos (Q. Zhou et al., 2022), thereby limiting its effectiveness in addressing underlying dimensions of menstrual poverty.

Commercialization is yet another factor that adds to the complex relationship. As the menstrual theme is incorporated into the world of influencers and branding, the distinction between advocacy and commercialization becomes increasingly blurred (Mehta et al., 2025). Although such an approach could reduce activist intent, it reflects the current reality in which commercial visibility can expand reach and normalisation (Coleman & Sredl, 2022). Thus, visual activism on Douyin operates within a tension between resistance and commodification.

4.3 Gender Inclusion and Participation

One of the more significant contributions of this study is the rise of male participation in discussions about menstruation. This means that instead of treating menstruation as a gender-specific private topic, it becomes an issue of common societal responsibility by involving males in conversations (Tomlinson, 2025c).

This practice is different from what was traditionally practiced in China, where menstruation is only talked about privately by women. Comparable findings from other contexts suggest that involving men in reproductive health conversations can reduce stigma and increase support for policy initiatives (Varsha et al., 2025; Roudsari et al., 2023; Patrick et al., 2025).

However, male participation in the analyzed content remains limited and largely symbolic. At the same time, the relatively limited scale of sustained male engagement suggests that this shift remains emergent. Greater reinforcement—both in digital spaces and in formal educational settings—is required to consolidate gender-inclusive dialogue.

4.4 Critical Reflections: Platform Constraints and Risks

However, despite enabling the emergence of novel types of menstrual content, Douyin poses some

challenges. One such challenge concerns the spread of misinformation, which arises due to the lack of a standardized model for communicating health information (Tomlinson, 2025b). As a result, the information about menstruation disseminated through short videos may not always be medically accurate (Olsson et al., 2024). On the other hand, content moderation mechanisms and platform censorship limit what can be expressed, prompting creators to use indirect rather than direct language to communicate their ideas (Uwazuruike, 2026). Moreover, the nature of performative activism means that content created with the intention of going viral can only scratch the surface of issues, as it aims to provoke an emotional response rather than encourage further activism (Thimsen, 2022). Additionally, commercialization also risks framing menstrual health as a consumable issue rather than a structural concern tied to equity and access (Mehta et al., 2025). Together, these dynamics highlight the need to critically situate digital menstrual activism within the broader political economy of social media platforms.

4.5 Strengths and Limitations

The current research also provides many important insights into digital menstrual discourse. First, the novelty of focusing on Douyin, an insufficiently researched platform in prior literature, can be viewed as one of the paper's major strengths. This enables analysis of new forms of short-video communication that differ from those found in traditional media outlets. In addition, the theoretical lens applied in this study is innovative, as it combines multiple feminist perspectives, including digital feminism and affective labour. This approach enables a deeper examination of how narrative and visual elements contribute to the destigmatisation of menstruation. It also supports identifying "visual activism" as a key phenomenon. The role of emotional storytelling and audience engagement in making sense of personal experiences and achieving empowerment is also discussed, as is the emergence of men as part of the menstrual discourse community. Finally, the use of qualitative content analysis enables a nuanced, context-rich understanding of how stigma and empowerment are negotiated within platform-specific constraints, as expressions of underlying menstrual inequality.

This study has several limitations. The analysed content primarily represents cisgender women's experiences, with limited inclusion of trans and non-binary individuals, thereby reflecting ongoing exclusions within menstrual discourse. Additionally, the focus on Douyin restricts the generalisability of findings to other platforms or cultural contexts.

4.6 Policy and Practice Implications

From these results, some actionable but context-specific recommendations emerge. Education on menstrual health should be gradually integrated into existing health and biology curricula rather than introduced as a standalone policy measure. Pilot projects in selected regions can serve as an initial step toward broader implementation. At the same time, cooperation between digital platforms, schools, and other public organizations involved in healthcare may become key to providing reliable information. Making awareness-raising activities both appealing and medically accurate can counter misinformation, while digital measures like source prioritization may also be helpful.

In addition to awareness, there should be a focus on implementing cost-effective measures, such as distributing menstrual hygiene products through schools and workplaces. Such interventions directly address the structural dimensions of menstrual poverty that are only indirectly reflected through stigma-related discourse. It is important to promote diverse representation across rural areas and genders, and this should be done progressively through policies and guidelines from platforms. Future research should extend this work through comparative studies across cultural contexts, cross-platform analyses of digital engagement patterns, and longitudinal designs to better understand the sustained impact of digital menstrual advocacy.

5. Conclusion

Short-video platforms like Douyin have played an important role in menstrual advocacy by leveraging their emotional and symbolic power to shape public discourse through narrative and personal content. In addition to providing information and raising awareness, social media platforms help build community and empower, especially among the Gen Z audience.

The most significant contribution of this paper is its explanation of how digital storytelling on short-video platforms can serve as a form of everyday advocacy. It enables previously marginalised voices to participate in public discourse on menstruation.

Despite the importance of the phenomenon under discussion, it should be admitted that it contributes to individual rather than institutional engagement. Therefore, solving the problem of menstrual poverty calls for a more comprehensive approach based on equity and access to education. This necessitates complementary efforts by educational institutions and the medical community in menstrual education and content governance.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to Professor Esparza for his guidance and for introducing her to the field of gender studies. The author also appreciates the language editing support provided by Beyond Proofreading Services and Pubrica. Finally, the author thanks her family for their continuous support and encouragement.

Funding

No Funding was received for this research.

Competing Interest Statement

The author declares no competing interests.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) did not employ any of the Generative AI and/or AI-Assisted technologies for Language refinement, drafting background section, and did not perform any Tasks of the technology.

Data Availability

The coding framework, video dataset inventory, visual analysis inventory, and selected audience comments that support the findings are provided in the Supplementary Materials (Tables S1–S4 and example videos 1 and 2).

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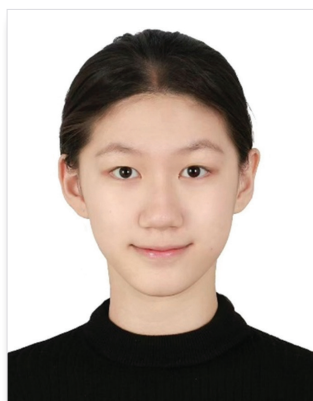
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[View Appendix-1](#)

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