

Engaging with Egg-Freezing Information: Chinese Single Women on Douyin

Qingai Zhao

Department of Women's Studies, Faculty of Social Science, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Abstract

Reproductive information can enter women's everyday lives before it becomes part of an immediate reproductive decision. Digital platforms intensify this encounter by making fertility information routinely accessible beyond clinical settings. Chinese single women provide a revealing case because they encounter increasingly visible egg-freezing information within gendered and institutional conditions surrounding reproductive timing and access to fertility-preservation services. This study examines how 24 unmarried Chinese women who had not undergone egg freezing engaged with and appraised such information on Douyin, using semi-structured interviews and reflexive thematic analysis. Three tensions characterized participants' information practices. First, visible interaction did not necessarily reflect informational engagement: women could watch closely, read comments, and compare claims while avoiding likes, comments, or saves. Second, credibility did not guarantee situated applicability. Participants assessed medical, experiential, peer, and commercial information in relation to bodily, economic, relational, and institutional circumstances. Third, critical engagement did not necessarily produce certainty: women compared and verified information, revisited earlier encounters, and sometimes postponed judgment while remaining engaged. Together, these tensions challenge a linear understanding of reproductive information engagement as progressing toward decision-making. They show that understanding such engagement requires attention not only to visible platform activity, but also to how women assess information in relation to their circumstances and continue engaging without reaching a settled judgment.

Keywords: Digital Platforms; Fertility Preservation; Gender; Reproductive Health; social media