



Optimization of Health Communication Strategies and Guidance of Digital Health Behaviors: A Critical Review of Jiang Li's Research

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Abstract

Currently, with the advancement of social economy and the growing public awareness of health, health communication has emerged as a crucial pathway to enhance public physical health and improve people's quality of life. Theoretical innovation and practical translation in this field have garnered significant academic and practical attention. Jiang Li, Associate Professor in the Department of Media and Communication at City University of Hong Kong, has long been deeply engaged in health communication research, producing influential scholarly works on topics such as vaccination and mobile health. This study systematically synthesizes her academic achievements in health communication, conducting a detailed analysis from the dimensions of research context, research characteristics, and research contributions. It aims to reveal the developmental trajectory of her health communication research and provide valuable insights for future studies in this field.

Keywords

Health Communication, Intervention Strategies, Digital Health

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1.Introduction

With economic development and the interplay of multiple factors such as environmental pollution and population aging, public attention to health issues has been steadily increasing. Despite the continuous improvement of the global health governance system, we still face challenges including the recurrent outbreaks of infectious diseases like influenza, the high incidence of chronic illnesses, the proliferation of misinformation related to health, and the low penetration of health tools. Against this backdrop, health communication serves as a bridge connecting public health policies and public health behaviors, playing a pivotal role in narrowing the digital divide in the health sector and facilitating behavioral changes toward healthier lifestyles. Theoretical innovation and practical application in health communication have garnered growing attention from both academic and professional communities. Jiang Li, Associate Professor in the Department of Media and Communication at City University of Hong Kong, has made significant contributions to advancing the field of health communication through her research on optimizing health communication strategies and guiding health behaviors.

2.Introduction to the Researcher

Jiang Li holds a Bachelor of Arts in Advertising from the School of Journalism and Communication, Peking University, a Master's degree from Hong Kong Baptist University, and a Doctoral degree from Cornell University, USA. During her doctoral studies at Cornell University, she participated in several projects focusing on health communication among ethnic minorities—an experience that deepened her recognition of the significance and development potential of health communication. After obtaining her PhD in 2011, Jiang joined the Department of Media and Communication at City University of Hong Kong, where she currently serves as an Associate Professor and Doctoral Supervisor. Her primary research interests include network communication, health communication, social media, and interpersonal communication.

In the field of health communication, Jiang's work is centered on empirical research. Employing methods such as questionnaire surveys, experiments, and content analysis, she explores topics including the evaluation of health communication strategies in public service advertisements, the impact of family communication in health communication, and the user behavior mechanisms of digital health tools. Rooted in the local social and cultural context of Hong Kong, her research investigates issues such as vaccination among Hong Kong residents and health information acquisition among foreign employees. Simultaneously, adopting a global perspective, she examines topics like home food handling practices and health app adoption among international populations.

These research endeavors have made substantial contributions to the localized development and practical implementation of health communication theories. An in-depth review of Jiang's

research outcomes offers valuable insights into the disciplinary landscape of health communication and provides actionable references for addressing practical challenges in the field today.

3. Research Context and Core Research Review

Jiang Li's research has consistently aligned with cutting-edge issues and practical social needs in the field of health communication, exploring topics such as vaccination, e-health, and health behaviors of specific groups. It has formed a research trajectory progressing from theoretical verification to the expansion of scenarios and segmented populations, and further to in-depth intervention practices.

3.1 Theoretical Verification and Traditional Communication Scenario Exploration Stage (2015 and Before)

During this stage, the core of Jiang Li's health communication research was to introduce and verify the applicability of classic theories in the field. By introducing and validating foundational theories including the Theory of Planned Behavior, the 5A Classification Framework, fear appeals, and normative appeals, she established the theoretical and methodological framework for her research.

3.1.1 Verification of Classic Theories

Through a literature review of e-health research in social science journals and a study on food safety among American residents, Jiang tested the Theory of Planned Behavior and the 5A Classification Framework.

In her research on food safety, Jiang introduced the Theory of Planned Behavior and employed a questionnaire survey to examine the food safety behaviors of American residents. The theory summarizes behavioral predictors into attitudes, social factors, and perceived behavioral control. The study found that perceived behavioral control was the strongest predictor of behavioral intentions for both handwashing and food thermometer use; subjective norm was the second strongest predictor for thermometer use, while attitude toward the behavior was the second strongest predictor for handwashing (Shapiro et al., 2011).

3.1.2 Exploration of Traditional Communication Scenarios

Jiang conducted research on public service advertisements and health information acquisition among Filipino foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong. In her study on evaluating health communication strategies in public service advertisements, Jiang and Gong Wanqi (2015) adopted four theoretical frameworks—fear appeals, normative appeals, information presentation methods, and frame analysis—to conduct a content analysis of Hong Kong's influenza public service advertisements from 2010 to 2013. The study revealed several issues: most influenza

advertisements lacked clear targeting of specific groups and insufficient targeted publicity for high-risk populations; inadequate explanation of influenza threats and influenza vaccine efficacy; and excessive didacticism.

In summary, Jiang's research at this stage focused on traditional health communication scenarios and the verification of classic theories, centering on fundamental issues such as food safety and influenza prevention. It also initially demonstrated attention to vulnerable groups, accumulating methods and experience for subsequent research on digital health and segmented populations.

3.2 Scenario Expansion and Segmented Population Research Stage (2016–2021)

With the development and popularization of the Internet, public health information-seeking behaviors have gradually shifted from traditional TV and newspapers to online platforms, making mobile health a hotspot in the field. Additionally, the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019 triggered a surge in public demand for health information, highlighting the issue of the health information divide among segmented populations. Responding to this contextual and practical need, Jiang shifted her research focus to diverse health domains and segmented populations. Meanwhile, at the theoretical level, the scope and depth of theoretical application in her health communication research were further expanded.

3.2.1 Scenario Expansion: Exploration of Diverse Domains

Research during this stage transcended traditional communication scenarios, expanding into diverse areas such as mobile health, intergenerational communication, and public health events through investigations into public risk perception during public health crises, e-health tool usage, the feedback effect in health communication, influenza vaccination, and COVID-19 tweets.

For example, in a study on the impact of intergenerational communication on the infectious disease prevention behaviors of middle-aged and elderly individuals, Jiang, Gong Wanqi, and Guo Qin (2021) introduced the family communication paradigm and used a questionnaire survey to explore the influence of intergenerational communication on disease prevention among this group. The study found that a conversation-oriented family communication paradigm helped middle-aged and elderly people understand epidemic developments, enhance their disease prevention knowledge, and reduce negative emotions during the pandemic. In contrast, while a compromise-oriented family communication paradigm also increased their disease prevention knowledge, it tended to intensify disputes in family epidemic prevention communication, thereby augmenting negative emotions among middle-aged and elderly individuals during outbreaks and weakening their willingness to practice social distancing.

In the article *Interpersonal Influences on Self-Management in the eHealth Era: Predicting the Uses of eHealth Tools for Self-Care in America*, Jiang and Sun (2021) integrated Social Cognitive Theory and the Comprehensive Model of Information Seeking. They found that incorporating

interpersonal factors into health interventions improved the self-management efficacy of target groups and indirectly promoted e-health behaviors.

3.2.2 Population Segmentation: Research on Health Behaviors of Specific Groups

At the level of research objects, Jiang's studies segmented populations, focusing on groups such as foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong, middle-aged and elderly individuals, and men who have sex with men (MSM) in Hong Kong.

Among these, the research on MSM in Hong Kong designed several health promotion videos to foster healthy sexual behaviors among this group, based on findings from focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews (Xin et al., 2021). Research on foreign domestic workers concentrated on their online health information-seeking behaviors, adopting the Comprehensive Model of Information Seeking. It found that age had a significant negative impact on customization (i.e., the degree to which information carriers meet individual-specific needs) among foreign domestic workers, while health awareness had a significant positive impact on this customization (Bernadas & Jiang, 2019).

In summary, Jiang's research during this stage focused on diverse scenarios and segmented populations, shifting from single-theory application to multi-theory integration. In the process of gradually exploring intervention strategies, it provided reliable recommendations for health behavior interventions in diverse scenarios and among segmented populations.

3.3 In-depth Intervention Strategy Stage (2022 and After)

The accumulation of previous theories, research methods, and exploration of intervention strategies enabled Jiang to continue expanding research scenarios and segmented populations during this stage, while focusing on problem-solving and providing more effective intervention strategies for different health contexts.

During this period, Jiang's research explored topics such as fitness apps, electronic word-of-mouth, misinformation resistance, social media self-disclosure, and vaccination. Based on her findings, she proposed practical and effective intervention strategies to promote public use of fitness apps and enhance the effectiveness of vaccination publicity, among other goals.

For instance, in a study on COVID-19 vaccination rates and influencing factors among elderly individuals, Jiang et al. (2023) introduced the Health Belief Model and conducted an exploration through random telephone surveys. The study found that compared with those who received their first dose in the first and second phases, elderly individuals who received their first dose in the third phase were more likely to hold negative perceptions of COVID-19/vaccines, lack family support, and experience depressive symptoms. Based on these results, the study proposed corresponding intervention strategies: governments and health professionals should promptly correct misinformation, provide clear and consistent information to elderly individuals and their

families, and prioritize attention to elderly people with depressive symptoms in the early stages of a pandemic.

Overall, the trajectory of Jiang Li's health communication research has evolved in three key dimensions: theoretically, from the verification of single theories to the integration of multiple theories; in terms of research scenarios and objects, from traditional scenarios to diverse contexts with increasingly segmented target groups; and in the exploration of intervention strategies, toward increasing depth and practicality.

4. Research Characteristics and Contributions

4.1 Research Characteristics

The majority of Jiang Li's research adopts a quantitative approach. By employing methods such as questionnaire surveys and content analysis, she ensures the scientific rigor and accuracy of her conclusions. Meanwhile, her research exhibits distinct local characteristics: it emphasizes integrating the social and cultural context of Hong Kong—such as collectivist values and low political trust—to localize and develop health communication theories, thereby enhancing the local applicability of her findings. Additionally, Jiang's research integrates theories from multiple disciplines, including communication studies and psychology, establishing an interdisciplinary research perspective that facilitates cross-fertilization and innovation in health communication theories.

4.2 Research Contributions

4.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

Jiang Li's research enriches the content of theories such as the Health Belief Model, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Social Support Theory, and Social Comparison Theory. It also advances the exploration of the local application of theories including Vaccination Theory, the Family Communication Paradigm, and the Comprehensive Model of Information Seeking, providing a new direction for the development of health communication theories.

4.2.2 Practical Contributions

Her research outcomes hold significant guiding value for health communication practice. For instance, based on her findings, Jiang proposes that the Internet can be prioritized as a communication channel for young immigrant women or those with strong health awareness; and that government-initiated health campaigns should be cautiously used as intervention measures among groups with low political trust in Hong Kong. These recommendations are crucial for promoting improvements in public health behaviors.

5. Conclusion

Jiang Li's research perspective of "rooted in local contexts and oriented toward global horizons" enables her health communication studies to both insight into the social context of Hong Kong and offer insights for global health communication research. This perspective also points the way for future exploration in the field: future health communication research should continue to delve into segmented issues within specific populations, cultural contexts, and technological scenarios, while maintaining a global perspective to elevate local experiences into theories.

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