Media and Communication
2026 • Volume 14 • Article 11531
https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.11531

ARTICLE

Open Access Journal

When Trust Facilitates Risk: Older Adults' Navigation of Deceptive Content in Urban China

Rui Duan [1] and Kun He [2]

[1] School of Marxism, Communication University of China, China
[2] Tilburg Law and Economics Center (TILEC), Tilburg University, The Netherlands

Correspondence: Kun He (k.he@tilburguniversity.edu)

Submitted: 14 October 2025 **Accepted:** 17 December 2025 **Published:** 12 February 2026

Issue: This article is part of the issue "Digital Resilience Within a Hypermediated Polycrisis" edited by Marc Esteve Del Valle (University of Groningen), Ansgard Heinrich (University of Groningen), and Anabel Quan-Haase (Western University), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.i499

Abstract

Older adults in China are increasingly active digital users, but they encounter distinctive challenges when navigating deceptive content online and offline, including misinformation, disinformation, and cyber fraud. Drawing on 35 in-depth interviews with older adults aged 50+ in urban Beijing, this exploratory study examines how older users encounter, interpret, and respond to deceptive content in everyday digital practices. Instead of relying solely on individual cognitive skills, participants described resilience as emerging through interconnected multiple layers of support, including family consultation, peer discussion, platform-level safeguards, and institutional assistance. The analysis identifies a recurring tension within trusted social networks: While relational expectations and norms of reciprocity may encourage information sharing, they may also discourage correction, creating what this study conceptualizes as a *human sentiment barrier*. This concept builds on sociological research on the downsides of strong-tie social capital, illustrating how the same relationships that provide emotional support can also facilitate the circulation of misleading information. By illustrating how older adults' evaluations of digital content are shaped by relational, cultural, and institutional contexts, this study reframes digital resilience as a socially embedded practice rather than an individual skill. Findings highlight the need for interventions that strengthen the social and infrastructural environments through which older adults make sense of online information.

Keywords

digital resilience; disinformation; mianzi; older adults; renqing

1. Introduction

The increasing digitalization of everyday life has ushered society into a hypermediated environment (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016). The digital transformation benefits information access and social engagement (Hülür & Macdonald, 2020) by allowing information to be circulated at unprecedented speed and scale. However, information circulated within such an environment not only often blurs the line between truth and falsehood but also creates new vulnerabilities to exposure to false or misleading content (Van Duyn & Collier, 2019), particularly for those with low digital literacy (Smit et al., 2023).

Older adults are among the most affected. Research consistently demonstrates that older adults aged 65 and above exhibit lower digital literacy compared to younger people (Guess et al., 2019). Their vulnerability is first associated with aging. Park et al. (2002) have demonstrated that the cognitive processing speed, working memory capacity, and attention to peripheral information decline with aging. Moving beyond cognitive disadvantage, their vulnerability is also socially related. Older adults often rely on interpersonal trust networks, such as family members, friends, or neighbors. However, due to digitalization and a hypermediated environment, these tightly knit communities have instead become breeding grounds for the dissemination of misleading content and disinformation (R. Wang et al., 2020).

This challenge is exacerbated in the Chinese context, where rapid demographic transitions and technological advancement have created unique vulnerabilities for the elderly population. China is experiencing a fast transition toward an aging society. According to the latest national census (2021), citizens aged 60 and above account for 18.7% of the total population, or around 264 million people. This number will surpass 300 million by 2025 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Furthermore, statutory retirement ages differ by gender and occupation, with many women retiring at 50 to 55. This creates a demographic group of "younger elderly" who are not conventionally categorized as seniors but who are highly active users of mobile platforms and frequently exposed to digital content. This broader 50+ group warrants analytical attention, especially because they represent an important segment of digitally engaged older adults.

China's unique demographic and sociotechnical conditions intensify these challenges. Rapid population aging intersects with accelerated digitalization: As of 2025, internet penetration in China reached 79.7%. Notably, the proportion of internet users aged 60+ increased from 6.7% to 14.1% between 2020 and 2025 (China Internet Network Information Center, 2025). This trend suggests that the broader 50+ age group, which exhibits higher adoption rates than the 60+ age group, constitutes a large and rapidly growing segment of the Chinese digital population. Many older adults rely on digital platforms, such as WeChat, Alipay, and Douyin, for daily communication, information acquisition, and financial services. However, rapid digitalization often outpaces the development of digital literacy, technical support, and institutional safeguards, which creates structural vulnerabilities that disinformation actors exploit (Sun et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2022).

To be more specific, the confluence of demographic aging and digital transformation has created a fertile ground for multiple forms of deceptive content, including misinformation (unintentionally shared false information), disinformation (intentionally fabricated content), and economically motivated online fraud. Research has shown that health-related disinformation and investment scams are designed to exploit the trust and limited digital literacy of elderly citizens (Sun et al., 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic further exacerbated these vulnerabilities. As elderly citizens were both highly motivated to seek health-related information and highly vulnerable to disinformation, they became primary targets for health disinformation and fraudulent medical advice in China (Zhang et al., 2022). In addition, older adults lack the necessary cognitive and digital literacy to navigate complex online ecosystems. Their vulnerability to disinformation is not simply an individual incapacity but the result of broader structural imbalances within China. Many older adults in China live in fragmented social situations. In rural areas, grandparents often live together with their grandchildren, another vulnerable group, as their adult children work elsewhere for prolonged periods (Jackson & Liu, 2017). This living arrangement isolates older adults from trustworthy guidance in evaluating information, which exacerbates their susceptibility to disinformation or deceptive content.

Given demographic aging, uneven educational attainment, and a hypermediated digital ecology, Chinese older adults constitute a particularly vulnerable group to the challenges of disinformation. Thus, there is an urgent need to understand how Chinese older adults perceive, interpret, and respond to disinformation within their daily media practices. Research on digital resilience to disinformation has often concentrated on younger users or Western contexts, highlighting media literacy interventions and individual cognitive strategies (Kont et al., 2025; Smit et al., 2023). While valuable, such perspectives overlook the communal and cultural dynamics that shape digital resilience in non-Western societies. In China, older adults often rely on community-level governance structures, such as neighborhood committees (社区居委会, *shequ juweihui*) or community grid workers (网格员, *wanggeyuan*). This structural setting means that resilience is not solely an individual capacity but is embedded in intergenerational exchanges and community verification practices. This study re-examines digital resilience to disinformation under conditions of polycrisis by focusing on how elderly citizens in China encounter, interpret, and respond to disinformation. Specifically, it asks:

> RQ1: How do elderly citizens in China encounter disinformation in their daily digital media practices, especially during events like pandemics or in cases of cyber fraud?
>
> RQ2: What types and thematic frames of disinformation are most likely to deceive elderly citizens in China, and how are these messages crafted and disseminated within their social networks?
>
> RQ3: What strategies and social resources do elderly citizens use to evaluate the credibility of information in a hypermediated environment?

To answer these questions, this study employs a qualitative approach based on 35 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with elderly participants aged 50 and above (In China, many women retire at the age of 50 and remain highly active online). Participants were recruited mainly through personal referrals, senior activity centers, and neighborhood committees. Interviews mainly revolved around three aspects: (a) exposure to disinformation in daily digital practices; (b) evaluation strategies; and (c) responses after recognizing disinformation or cyber fraud.

The article is structured as follows. It first reviews the literature on disinformation and digital resilience. Next, it situates the Chinese case within global debates on hypermediation and polycrisis. It then outlines the methods and presents the findings from the interviews. The discussion and conclusion sections discuss the implications of these findings for rethinking digital resilience in hypermediated societies, highlighting the role of communal strategies and community-driven verification practices. By centering the voices of Chinese elderly citizens, this study underscores the need for a more inclusive and context-sensitive understanding of digital resilience.

2. Disinformation and Digital Resilience

Disinformation is characterized as verifiably false or misleading content that is intentionally fabricated and disseminated to deceive. UNESCO defines it as "deliberate (often orchestrated) attempts to confuse or manipulate" (Ireton & Posetti, 2018, p. 7), advancing specific agendas such as political manipulation and social division. In contrast, misinformation involves the unintentional spread of falsehoods, while malinformation involves weaponizing accurate information to cause harm (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Although cyber fraud shares certain characteristics with disinformation, such as its exploitation of cognitive biases and manipulation of information asymmetries, it is analytically distinct because its primary objective is economic gain rather than opinion shaping (Chiluwa & Samoilenko, 2019). To avoid conceptual conflation, this study treats disinformation, misinformation, and cyber fraud as related but distinct categories of deceptive information, distinguishing them based on intentionality. Throughout the article, the term disinformation is used specifically to refer to intentionally fabricated content designed to mislead, while misinformation and fraud-related deceptive practices are labeled accordingly when they arise in empirical data.

This intentionally manipulated content is widely distributed and circulated on social media, where producers exploit cognitive vulnerabilities to amplify reach (Tandoc et al., 2018). The situation is further exacerbated by social media's algorithmic curation mechanisms, which feed users with personalized content. These algorithms create feedback loops, such as echo chambers and filter bubbles (Del Valle & Bravo, 2018). Users are repeatedly exposed to reinforcing viewpoints, thereby accelerating their virality (Vosoughi et al., 2018). This not only blurs epistemic boundaries but also erodes public trust in institutions, media outlets, and even interpersonal networks, as users become increasingly skeptical or polarized in their information consumption habits (Shu et al., 2020).

Disinformation exploits heightened uncertainties to deepen societal rifts, serving as a destabilizing force in polycrisis environments (Brennen et al., 2021; Lee, 2020; Tolz & Hutchings, 2023). Characterized by cascading, interconnected crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, and climate disruptions, "polycrisis" describes overlapping shocks that amplify each other, creating fertile ground for manipulative narratives (Ștefănel & Allegri, 2025). For instance, during the Covid-19 pandemic, disinformation intertwined health misinformation with economic fears, disseminating false remedies and conspiracy theories that eroded trust in public institutions and vaccination efforts (Caceres et al., 2022). This destabilizing force of disinformation is further amplified by social media algorithms, which accelerate the spread of falsehoods that intersect with real-world anxieties (Eriksson Krutrök & Lindgren, 2022).

Deceptive content not only distorts facts but also targets vulnerable groups with tailored scams or propaganda. Vulnerable demographics, particularly older adults, who are often grappling with limited digital literacy and health anxieties, have become primary targets (Brashier & Schacter, 2020). During the Covid-19 pandemic, this was particularly evident. Manipulated narratives alleging that vaccines were population control mechanisms circulated virally among seniors, eroding adherence to mitigation measures and exacerbating isolation during lockdowns (Caceres et al., 2022).

In response to these deepening threats, scholars have increasingly turned to digital resilience as a proactive framework for safeguarding public discourse and institutional trust. As noted in the United Nations' 2024 *Global Risk Report*, mis/disinformation is ranked among the top threats (Azevedo, 2025). Scholars have recognized the urgent need to shift from mere detection to empowering audiences against these harms (Kont et al., 2025).

Digital resilience, in the context of disinformation, can be broadly conceptualized as the capability to anticipate, withstand, adapt to, and recover from deceptive information in hypermediated environments (Hinduja, 2020; Kont et al., 2025). Drawing from psychological roots, Hinduja (2020) defines digital resilience as "positive attitudes and actions in the face of interpersonal adversity online," extending beyond media literacy to include emotional regulation and systemic safeguards. Kont et al. (2025) refine this as a dynamic process through a systematic review of 95 studies, identifying 12 factors that influence resilience, such as thinking styles, political ideology, and media use. In addition, Kont et al. (2025) propose an integrated socio-ecological framework that categorizes factors across micro (e.g., cognitive styles), meso (e.g., social networks), and macro (e.g., policy) levels. These frameworks have been extended in meta-analyses, which aggregate intervention effects to demonstrate that digital literacy programs enhance resilience by fostering skepticism and verification habits, with moderating variables like education level influencing outcomes (Lu et al., 2024).

Youth and elderly populations are often the primary targets of disinformation and thus the primary research foci of digital resilience. For young people, digital resilience frameworks emphasize proactive interventions. For instance, digital literacy curricula in schools simulate disinformation scenarios to build cognitive defenses while also equipping students with peer-driven resilience strategies (Ivan, 2025). Conversely, research on older adults has traditionally underscored vulnerabilities tied to cognitive aging and digital divides, advocating supportive frameworks that integrate assistive technologies with interpersonal scaffolds (Shu et al., 2020). However, this deficit-oriented framing has been increasingly challenged. Quan-Haase et al. (2018) demonstrate that older adults are far from a homogeneous group of digitally disengaged users; instead, they exhibit diverse patterns of skills, motivations, and online practices that cannot be captured by a simple divide between "users" and "non-users." Building on this insight, Moore and Hancock (2022) evaluate a digital media literacy program for older adults, finding that it bolsters resilience to fake news by enhancing source evaluation skills, with pre-and post-tests indicating reduced susceptibility to health disinformation. These frameworks reveal a tension: Youth-oriented models stress autonomy and innovation, while elderly-focused ones emphasize scaffolding and inclusion; yet, both underscore the need for holistic, context-aware strategies to bridge generational divides in digital landscapes.

3. Disinformation, Cyber Fraud, and Vulnerability of Older Adults in China

The rapid digitalization of Chinese society has profoundly changed the lives of its older adults. While platforms such as WeChat, Douyin, and Kuaishou have become integral to daily routines, facilitating information access and social connections, they also expose older adults to disinformation and cyber fraud. This vulnerability became particularly acute during the Covid-19 pandemic, as seniors often suffer from underlying health conditions and heightened anxiety. Thus, seniors are more susceptible to disinformation and misleading content (Hu et al., 2025).

Research on older adults' perceptions of deceptive content reveals perceptual biases in how seniors view their own and others' susceptibility. For example, based on a survey of 317 older adults, Hao et al. (2024) found the prevalence of third-person perception. Under third-person perception, older adults believe that others are more vulnerable to disinformation on digital platforms than they are themselves. This bias is stronger among those with better fact-checking habits and verification abilities but lower trust in information, aligning with China's cultural emphasis on *mianzi* (face, 面子) and traditional values (e.g., family-forwarded content leveraging phrases such as "forward to those you care about"). As older adults rely heavily on mobile platforms for social communication and information, their low digital literacy leads to over-dependence on unverified networks, increasing exposure to health scams and disinformation. Tian and Mi (2025) add to this by exploring perceptions of self-efficacy. Their findings demonstrate that past failures and fear lower self-perceived competence in using digital platforms, which further entrenches avoidance of new technologies. However, during the pandemic, mandatory digital tools forced passive integration; yet, persistent gaps in digital literacy, skills, and resources heightened exposure to fraud and disinformation.

These studies collectively illustrate the interplay between digital adoption, cultural contexts, and misinformation vulnerabilities in China. While Hao et al. (2024) focus on perceptual biases (third-person perception) among older adults, offering a more nuanced, multi-layered view of their digital experience, significant gaps remain. Research predominantly relies on surveys and policy analysis, with limited qualitative exploration of how elderly citizens encounter, interpret, and respond to specific disinformation types (e.g., deepfakes, cyber fraud) during crises. Moreover, while communal resources like community grid workers are mentioned, their role in building resilience is underexplored.

4. Methodology

To answer the above-mentioned questions, we employ a qualitative research design grounded in a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). Constructivist grounded theory emphasizes iterative coding and constant comparison, which provide a systematic analytical structure through open, axial, and selective coding. This approach is particularly suitable for examining how older adults encounter, interpret, and navigate deceptive information within their everyday media practices. The following part of this section outlines the sampling rationale, recruitment strategies, data collection procedures, ethical considerations, analytic framework, as well as measures taken to ensure analytic rigor.

The study adopts a combined purposive and snowball sampling approach to recruit 35 interviewees aged 50 and above, balanced in terms of gender (see Supplementary File). The choice of 50 as the lower age boundary reflects China's demographic and institutional context. Many women retire between the ages of 50 and 55 and subsequently find themselves in a transitional life stage marked by greater temporal flexibility and comparatively stable financial resources. This combination of increased free time and accumulated savings makes them more active on platforms such as Douyin, Kuaishou, and WeChat, and more attractive targets for health, financial, and socially engineered deceptive content. Despite their high level of digital engagement, this group is typically overlooked in studies that adopt a strict 60+ or 65+ definition of older adults. Including individuals aged 50+, therefore, enables a more comprehensive understanding of older adults' digital experiences.

Participants were recruited through three channels. Twelve interviewees were recruited through personal referrals, using the initial interviewees' networks to identify others with relevant experiences, especially those with extensive exposure to disinformation. Thirteen were recruited from community senior activity centers, where older adults gather for social activities. Ten were recruited through neighborhood committees and community grid workers, who facilitated outreach to identify suitable participants. Sampling continued until thematic saturation, defined as "the point at which gathering more data about a theoretical construct reveals no new properties nor yields any further theoretical insights about the emerging grounded theory" (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010, p. 611). All participants primarily lived in Beijing, China's capital city, which has high internet penetration rates among the elderly population. The interviews were conducted online between April and July 2025, in Mandarin Chinese. Each interview lasted 45 to 60 minutes and was recorded and transcribed.

Before the interviews, we first explained the study's purpose, assured confidentiality, and confirmed informed consent. We then asked participants about their daily digital media practices, including which platforms they use, how often, and for what purposes. We particularly focused on notable incidents in which they encountered suspicious or false information. Core questions included: Which digital platforms do you use most frequently? Can you recall a recent example of disinformation or fake news you saw online that attracted your attention? In addition, participants were asked to describe the tactics they employed to identify, interpret, and verify information authenticity. Core questions included: Have you ever seen information online that you later found out was false or misleading? How did you realize that the information was wrong or inaccurate? We also explored participants' subsequent behaviors and attitudes after recognizing disinformation or misleading content. Core questions included: What steps do you usually take to check whether information is true or false? Do you discuss suspicious information with family members, friends, or others before deciding whether to believe or share it? We asked follow-up questions when needed to clarify vague statements, solicit concrete examples, or explore unexpected insights. Core questions included: Are there any organizations, community members, or other groups that help you verify information? This in-depth interview approach helped us understand not just what participants do, but why they make certain decisions when encountering disinformation.

Ethical approval was granted by the authors' institutional review board. Pseudonyms were assigned (from I1 to I35), and identifying details were removed during transcription. Although data collection occurred in Mandarin, analytic memos and emergent themes were documented in English. To ensure translation accuracy, a two-stage translation validation procedure was used. First, original Mandarin quotations and conceptual summaries were translated into English by one of the authors. Second, the other author independently reviewed the translations for semantic fidelity and cultural nuance. Any inconsistencies were resolved through discussion.

Data analysis followed constructivist grounded theory, guided by the cyclical processes of open, axial, and selective coding (see Table 1). Analysis proceeded in three stages.

1. Open coding: All transcripts were examined line-by-line to generate initial codes that captured participants' actions, perceptions, and reasoning. Codes such as "checks with children," "trusts official accounts," "hesitates to correct relatives," and "recognizes high-return scams" were kept close to participants' language to preserve meaning. At this stage, the goal was descriptive completeness rather than conceptual abstraction.

2. Axial coding: Initial codes were then compared and clustered based on conceptual similarity, shared function, or contextual relevance. For example, codes related to "state media trust," "official hospital accounts," and "government verification" were grouped under "institutional trust"; codes related to "peer discussion" and "group verification" were grouped under "collective assessment." Axial coding enabled the development of mid-level analytic categories.
3. Selective coding: Finally, axial categories were synthesized into three overarching themes that explain how older adults navigate digitally deceptive content: exposure patterns, credibility assessment, and resilience strategies embedded across individual, platform, and community levels.

Table 1. Summary of codebook.

Selective Theme	Axial Codes	Key Open Codes
Exposure patterns	Health deception, Financial fraud, Social inducement	authoritative endorsement, exaggerated efficacy, free gifts, high returns, livestream gurus, QR freebies, impersonation
Credibility assessment	Institutional trust, Experience-based reasoning, Risk filtering	trust in CCTV, distrust of Moments, recall workshops, legal TV references, red flag detection, checks with children, trusts official accounts
Resilience strategies	Individual, Platform, Community, Collective assessment	family verification, group discussion, anti-fraud app, call interception, workshops, recognizes high-return scams
Cultural constraints	*Renqing*, *Mianzi*, *Guanxi*	saving face, reciprocity, obligation to help, concealment of scam, hesitates to correct relatives

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, the two authors independently coded the first 10 transcripts. Coding discrepancies were discussed and resolved through negotiated consensus, leading to the refinement of the codebook and increased consistency across subsequent coding. We also conducted participant validation. Preliminary findings were shared with six participants to verify whether the identified themes aligned with their lived experiences. Their feedback informed the final refinement of categories.

5. Findings

This section presents the main findings, structured around the three research questions.

5.1. RQ1: Patterns of Exposure to Deceptive Content

Interview data show that all participants have experienced exposure to deceptive content, and 23 participants have experienced financial or social losses. These encounters clustered into three domains: health and wellness, investment and finance, and social inducement. Each domain exhibits distinct characteristics in terms of dissemination channels and content features.

5.1.1. Health and Wellness Content

This category constitutes the most prevalent form of deceptive content. These messages circulated primarily through Douyin, WeChat Moments, and independent social media accounts. They typically employ three deceptive strategies.

1. Authoritative endorsement: Fabricated identities, such as “top-tier hospital experts” or “national health commission researchers,” are used to invoke institutional credibility.
2. Exaggerated efficacy: The messages frequently assert implausible therapeutic effects, claiming that certain products can “cure hypertension and diabetes,” “prevent cancer,” or even “reverse aging.”
3. Free inducement: Scammers exploit the appeal of cost-free offers, such as “free health lectures,” “free medical check-ups,” or “free supplements,” to lure older adults into adding WeChat contacts or participating in offline promotional events. For example, I11 (aged 57) reported a deceptive message that offered a “free health course”: “They said many elderly people had already recovered after taking the course and encouraged me to buy it.”

5.1.2. Finance Fraud and Scam Content

A second major exposure domain involved high-return investment schemes. Fourteen participants described being approached through personal contacts, livestream hosts, and targeted advertisements. Many respondents framed this deceptive content as appealing partly because the 50+ age group often has more savings and discretionary time, making them attractive targets. Investment and financial deceit are often constructed within the frame of “high-return promises.” It is often disguised as P2P investments, cryptocurrency schemes, or retirement wealth management projects. I7 (aged 53) shared her experience: “I invested 20,000 yuan in a P2P project that was introduced by my close friend. I never told my family members, because it is a shame to let others know that you have been cheated.” I31 (aged 57) was also introduced by her friends to a high-rebate P2P investment project: “My friend told me that investing 100,000 yuan could earn 20,000 yuan in a month. At first, I didn’t believe her. Later, she came to my home and showed screenshots of her six months of profits.” Furthermore, investment and financial deceit often leverage trust within social networks, such as friends and neighbors, to create the illusion that “people around them have already made profits” (I31, aged 57).

5.1.3. Socially Engineered Deceptive Content

Participants also described frequent encounters with deceptive invitations embedded in daily digital interactions, such as “scan a QR code to receive free eggs” (I2, aged 64) or “share a post on WeChat Moments to get free oil” (I32, aged 70). For instance, I4 (aged 58) joined a WeChat group after scanning a “free eggs” QR code: “The group kept posting cheap product links and later asked us to pay deposits to ‘reserve goods.’ After we paid, the group was dissolved.” Another tactic is impersonation fraud, which tricks older adults into clicking malicious links or filling in personal information to steal ID numbers or bank card details. I17 (aged 81) received an SMS from someone impersonating a community committee manager, which said that “they could help me apply for a pension subsidy and asked for my bank card number.”

5.2. RQ2: How Credibility Is Assessed in a Hypermediated Environment

Through prolonged engagement with hypermediated environments, older adults in China have developed a triadic evaluation process combining institutional cues, personal experience, and interest-based filtering. This approach is characterized by institutional authority as the foundation, experiential reasoning as the core, and interest-driven evaluation as the protective mechanism.

5.2.1. Institutional Cues: Hierarchical Credibility Assessment of Information Sources

Older adults have developed a stratified "trust hierarchy" when evaluating information credibility. Many placed strong trust in officially verified sources, such as state media (including CCTV, *People's Daily*, and official government websites). Twenty-nine participants indicated that they "exclusively trust information disseminated by CCTV or *People's Daily*, while maintaining skepticism toward alternative platforms" (I18, aged 65). Verified institutional accounts (such as official hospital public accounts or authenticated banking applications) constitute the intermediate tier. Conversely, independent social media accounts and unsolicited messages were treated with caution. Twenty-six participants reported being reluctant to "readily accept health articles circulated through Moments" (I33, aged 56) or "engage with hyperlinks from unfamiliar public accounts" (I15, aged 68).

5.2.2. Experience and Case-Based Reasoning

Participants drew heavily on accumulated experience from anti-fraud education workshops, legal TV programs, and stories shared by acquaintances. These experiences offered recognizable templates that supported rapid evaluation. Eighteen participants indicated that they evaluate credibility by contextualizing suspicious information against deceptive cases experienced by acquaintances or family members. Similarly, I8 (aged 63) applies identification skills acquired from the television program *Legal Report*: "The program documented numerous investment fraud cases that mirror the stock recommendation messages I receive, which makes me skeptical of such content."

5.2.3. Interest-Based Risk Filtering

Participants also selectively scrutinized content based on personal stakes. Content perceived as irrelevant was often ignored. Evaluation was less about general literacy and more about situated risk assessment. For instance, information about health and finance elicited deeper evaluation, often involving consulting relatives or searching for corroboration. I26 (aged 72) explained that "I will ask family members to confirm if a message asks me to fill in personal details." I19 (aged 68) also noted that "this mismatch shows they mean to cheat you if it is advertised as 'curing all ailments.'"

5.3. RQ3: Multilevel Practices of Navigating Deceptive Content

Interview findings reveal that older adults' resilience to deceptive content is structured through multilevel practices across individual, platform, and community.

5.3.1. Network Resistance: Individual and Familial Strategies

Network resistance is a common practice for evaluating misleading or questionable content. Consulting adult children and grandchildren was a common practice. For those living in intergenerational households, older adults often ask their grandchildren for help: "My grandson is better at using the phone. He often checks information by searching what sounds like *du niang* [度娘, *du niang* means Baidu]" (I35, aged 74). Beyond family, peer groups also played a role in rapid information checking. Many participants referred to WeChat friends' groups (e.g., square-dancing groups) as spaces for rapid cross-checking and information deliberation: "We have a square-dancing group; many people verify messages with friends in the group" (I33, aged 56). While such groups rarely provide authoritative confirmation, collective discussion raises awareness of the need for caution. When uncertainty persists, group members often suggest checking with the community grid workers or community police officers, whose "contact details are on the community notice board" (I32, aged 70).

5.3.2. Platform-Level Mechanisms: Call Interception and the National Anti-Fraud Center App

Platform-based interventions serve as an essential external digital safeguard. Many participants reported the usefulness of telecommunication warnings (e.g., numbers marked as fraudulent) and the National Anti-Fraud Center app (see Figure 1). Many participants used these tools primarily when uncertainty had already been triggered by personal judgment. For instance, telecommunication platforms now integrate user-generated labeling systems that allow individuals to tag suspected scam numbers. When others receive calls from these numbers, warnings are displayed, indicating how many users have flagged the number as fraudulent. As I19 (aged 68) explained, upon receiving a call from an alleged "police officer" who was investigating a supposed financial crime, his phone interface immediately displayed a warning that "53 users have marked this number as fraudulent," allowing him to recognize and avoid the scam in time.

Figure 1. Screenshot of the National Anti-Fraud Center app.

The second tactic entails the use of specialized anti-fraud applications, exemplified by the National Anti-Fraud Center app developed by the Chinese government. This application not only provides rich educational materials and real-world fraud cases but also offers practical functionalities, such as scanning suspicious software and identifying potential phishing or scam applications on a mobile phone. One interviewee (I8, aged 63) recounted:

> A friend told me about an app that could check whether I had committed any traffic violations while driving. I downloaded the app and entered my personal information, including my license plate number. Then, a chat window in the app asked me to add the person on WeChat, claiming that they would help me check my driving record. I added them and sent over my driver's license information. Later, I felt something was wrong, so I scanned the app using the National Anti-Fraud Center app, and it showed that the app I had downloaded was a scam app.

5.3.3. Community Support: Public Service Infrastructure and Collective Engagement

Community support services play an especially important role for empty-nest (single-living) older adults. Community support encompasses two primary components: anti-fraud education and digital literacy training. Anti-fraud education employs multiple forms, such as information posters, WeChat group broadcasts, and household visits. Anti-fraud education disseminates essential knowledge about common scam patterns and preventive awareness. I11 (aged 57) explains:

> There's a notice board inside the elevator of our building displaying anti-fraud warnings and the contact information of the community police officer. Every time I take the elevator, I see it. It serves as a constant reminder to remain alert and cautious about potential scams.

As for digital literacy training programs, community grid workers organize different workshops, including sessions on mobile phone safety and tutorials on the use of anti-fraud applications. For instance, I10 (aged 51), a community grid worker, reported: "We invite community police officers to teach residents how to use the National Anti-Fraud Center app and share firsthand experiences." These workshops thereby transform abstract warnings into tangible, emotionally resonant lessons. Furthermore, these community-based interactions facilitate peer learning and social reinforcement. Notably, 18 participants affirmed that exchanging anti-fraud experiences with peers enabled them to develop more practical and context-sensitive prevention strategies. I12 (aged 69) shared the following experience:

> After being scammed, I initially didn't dare to tell my friends because I felt so embarrassed. But during a community-organized event, everyone was actively sharing their own experiences, so I gathered the courage to talk about mine as well. Through that sharing, I learned a lot, and now I know to stay alert when I encounter similar situations in the future.

After the Covid-19 pandemic, most communities have hired several community grid workers. They actively intervene in the daily lives of older adults (He et al., 2024; Xu & He, 2022). Community support interventions represent a socially embedded and participatory approach to disinformation resistance.

5.4. The "Human Sentiment Barrier": Social Ties as Both Protection and Vulnerability

A recurring pattern across interviews was the tension between relational expectations and the need to be cautious. Close social networks become both protective and vulnerable. This tension stems from structural dynamics embedded in *guanxi* (social relationships, 关系; Chen et al., 2013) and *renqing* (interpersonal sentiment, 人情). *Guanxi* and *renqing* are deeply ingrained cultural norms, emphasizing emotional reciprocity, social harmony, and trust (C. L. Wang et al., 2008). On the one hand, around 30 participants regarded information from their networks as more reliable. On the other hand, this interpersonal trust became a critical conduit for the circulation of deceptive content. For instance, many respondents reported that they frequently received "bargain-cutting" (砍一刀, *kanyidao*) invitations from family members or friends on platforms such as Pinduoduo (拼多多, an e-commerce company in China). This feature enables users to reduce the price of a product through collective participation, transforming private consumption into a form of networked social engagement. Each person who clicks the link and "helps cut" contributes a small discount to the total price (Zhao et al., 2019). However, this model introduces privacy and security concerns, especially for older adults. Many participants reported that "it is our social obligation to help family members" (I23, aged 64). Consequently, deceptive content intentionally leverages relational trust, creating new forms of digital vulnerability under the guise of social participation.

This pattern reflects what sociological scholarship identifies as the downside of strong-tie social capital (Portes & Landolt, 1996; Villalonga-Olives & Kawachi, 2017). Strong ties provide emotional security, but they can also inhibit critical questioning and facilitate the diffusion of deceptive content within trusted networks. Participants' accounts illustrate how these relational norms, what we term the "human sentiment barrier," shape both susceptibility and response: They reduce the willingness to challenge misleading messages and increase reluctance to seek help after being deceived. I1 (aged 56) shared her experience of keeping a fraudulent incident as a secret: "We promised not to tell anyone, not even our husbands." Furthermore, to avoid causing others to lose *mianzi*, some older adults prioritize preserving harmony over correcting falsehoods. I3 (aged 64) reported an interesting case in which a relative enthusiastically recommended an herbal product, claiming it was highly beneficial for health. Although she recognized that it was misleading, she still purchased the product. She framed the act as a form of social reciprocity rather than gullibility: "I spent a little money to make her happy; after all, you never know when you might need her help" (I3, aged 64).

6. Discussion

By drawing on 35 in-depth interviews, this study extends existing knowledge of digital resilience through a non-Western, culturally grounded lens. Our findings demonstrate that resilience among older adults operates not only through cognitive skills but through intertwined socio-cultural networks that shape both vulnerability and resistance. This section situates these findings within broader theoretical debates, highlighting three key contributions: First, it argues that digital resilience to deceptive content is socially embedded. Second, it examines the paradox of relational trust. Third, it addresses digital resilience in authoritarian contexts.

6.1. Rethinking Digital Resilience as Socially Embedded: Beyond Individual Competence

While existing research often emphasizes individual cognitive skills or treats social support as a secondary factor in navigating deceptive content (Humprecht et al., 2020), our findings suggest that resilience among older adults in China is better understood as a multi-layered verification process embedded within familial, community, and institutional contexts. Rather than functioning as an isolated individual capacity, resilience unfolds through the interaction of individual judgment, technological features such as platform warnings, and locally accessible support structures. This dynamic aligns with socio-ecological models of resilience (Kont et al., 2025), which conceptualize protective processes across micro, meso, and macro levels. Our data indicate that these layers do not operate independently: Platform signals often gain meaning through community discussion, and community education initiatives are strengthened when they are supported by technological tools.

This socially embedded form of resilience has important theoretical and practical implications. It suggests that interventions focusing solely on improving individual digital literacy may be insufficient, not because of cultural predispositions, but because information evaluation is relational and contextual for many older adults. Deceptive content frequently leverages existing trust networks, and participants consistently described peer discussions and family consultations as more impactful than formal instructional programs. In this sense, digital resilience emerges not simply as an individual skill set but as a relational capacity cultivated through ongoing participation in verification practices distributed across social networks and community infrastructures.

These findings call for a shift from asking "How digitally literate is this individual?" toward asking "How robust and accessible are the social and institutional supports that shape this individual's digital decision-making?" Such a reframing allows for more targeted interventions that acknowledge the collective and infrastructural dimensions of navigating digital environments in later life.

6.2. Cultural Mediation and the Paradox of Relational Trust

Another contribution of this study is the identification of the "paradox of relational trust," a phenomenon whereby the same social networks serve both as protective resources and as vectors of vulnerability. Our findings reveal that many older adults regard information from familiar networks as more trustworthy than content from strangers. However, these same networks become conduits for disinformation transmission. Furthermore, cases in which participants such as I3 (aged 64) purchased fraudulent health products to avoid causing a relative to "lose face" demonstrate that resilience to deceptive content is not purely rational but is deeply embedded in cultural norms (Y. Wang et al., 2025).

This paradox is deeply rooted in Chinese cultural norms of *guanxi*, *renqing*, and *mianzi* (Chen et al., 2013; C. L. Wang et al., 2008). Older adults' reluctance to challenge falsehoods or disclose experiences of deception reflects a deep moral economy centered on relational harmony. This phenomenon redefines digital vulnerability not as a lack of rationality but as a culturally normative prioritization of social cohesion over epistemic accuracy.

In Western frameworks of digital resilience, social networks are often regarded as protective factors. However, trust within networks can simultaneously disable critical evaluation. Our finding of the "human sentiment barrier" captures this dual nature. While affective social networks enable digital resilience and emotional support, they also create moral obligations that override risk assessment. When older adults described helping family members and friends as a "social obligation" (I23, aged 64), they illustrated a decision-making logic in which relational maintenance supersedes information credibility. Following such a logic, malicious actors increasingly exploit not only cognitive deficits but cultural strengths, weaponizing trust, reciprocity, and social obligation.

6.3. Digital Resilience in an Authoritarian Context: State Infrastructure as a Constitutive Force

Authoritarian governance enables state interventions, such as the National Anti-Fraud Center app, call interception systems, and community grid workers, which play an important role in building digital resilience. However, despite the merits of state interventions, these interventions raise issues regarding the relationship between state capacity, surveillance infrastructure, and protective mechanisms. The theoretical implication is that digital resilience cannot be understood without considering political economy and governance structures. Previous frameworks in Western literature often implicitly assume that resilience emerges from multiple stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, independent media, and individual literacy. Our findings highlight an alternative model in which the state actively constructs resilient infrastructure. In this sense, we argue that resilience frameworks must account for regime type as a moderating variable that shapes not only vulnerability patterns but also the very mechanisms through which protection is organized.

7. Conclusion

This study advances a culturally grounded understanding of disinformation resilience among older adults in China. It reveals that resilience is not merely an individual cognitive skill but a relational and infrastructural capacity embedded in social trust, cultural values, and institutional design. Overall, the Chinese experience offers valuable lessons, underscoring that building resilience requires not only smarter users but stronger, more caring systems.

Despite its contributions, this study also has several limitations. The sample is drawn primarily from urban Beijing and was recruited largely through community institutions such as neighborhood committees and grid workers. As a result, participants may be more connected to local institutional structures and more exposed to formal workshops or anti-fraud initiatives than older adults in general. This sampling frame limits the transferability of the findings to rural, migrant, or lower-income older populations, whose access to institutional support, digital infrastructure, and social networks may differ substantially. The study should therefore be understood as an exploratory case study of urban Beijing, offering insights into how older adults in a highly resourced urban environment navigate deceptive content. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data introduces risks of recall bias and social desirability effects (Bergen & Labonté, 2020; Kvale, 1996), particularly when discussing sensitive topics such as financial loss or embarrassment. Future research incorporating rural or multi-site comparative samples could more fully examine how relational norms, institutional trust, and digital infrastructure shape resilience across diverse global contexts.

Funding

Publication of this article in open access was made possible through the institutional membership agreement between Tilburg University and Cogitatio Press.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Data Availability

The interview data are not publicly available due to privacy concerns.

LLMs Disclosure

Interview data were initially translated from Chinese into English using GPT-4o, after which the translations were manually checked and calibrated by the authors to ensure accuracy and cultural nuance.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the authors (unedited).

References

Azevedo, C. G. (2025, August 20). Disinformation is a global risk. So why are we still treating it like a tech problem? *United Nations Development Coordination Office*. https://un-dco.org/stories/disinformation-global-risk-so-why-are-we-still-treating-it-tech-problem

Bergen, N., & Labonté, R. (2020). "Everything is perfect, and we have no problems": Detecting and limiting social desirability bias in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, *30*(5), 783–792. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732319889354

Brashier, N. M., & Schacter, D. L. (2020). Aging in an era of fake news. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *29*(3), 316–323. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721420915872

Brennen, J. S., & Kreiss, D. (2016). Digitalization. In K. B. Jensen, R. T. Craig, J. D. Pooley, & E. W. Rothenbuhler (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of communication theory and philosophy*. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118766804.wbiect111

Brennen, J. S., Simon, F. M., & Nielsen, R. K. (2021). Beyond (mis)representation: Visuals in Covid-19 misinformation. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *26*(1), 277–299. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161220964780

Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (Eds.). (2010). *The Sage handbook of grounded theory*. Sage.

Caceres, M. M. F., Sosa, J. P., Lawrence, J. A., Sestacovschi, C., Tidd-Johnson, A., Rasool, M. H. U., Gadamidi, V. K., Ozair, S., Pandav, K., Cuevas-Lou, C., Parrish, M., Rodriguez, I., & Fernandez, J. P. (2022). The impact of misinformation on the Covid-19 pandemic. *AIMS Public Health*, *9*(2), 262–277.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage.

Chen, C. C., Chen, X. P., & Huang, S. (2013). Chinese *guanxi*: An integrative review and newdirections for future research. *Management and Organization Review*, *9*(1), 167–207. https://doi.org/10.1111/more.12010

Chiluwa, I. E., & Samoilenko, S. A. (Eds.). (2019). *Handbook of research on deception, fake news, and misinformation online*. IGI Global.

China Internet Network Information Center. (2025). *Zhongguo hulianwangluo fazhan zhuangkuang tongji baogao*. https://www.cnnic.net.cn/n4/2025/0117/c88-11229.html

Del Valle, M. E., & Bravo, R. B. (2018). Echo chambers in parliamentary Twitter networks: The Catalan case. *International Journal of Communication*, *12*, 1715–1735.

Eriksson Krutrök, M., & Lindgren, S. (2022). Social media amplification loops and false alarms: Towards a sociotechnical understanding of misinformation during emergencies. *The Communication Review*, *25*(2), 81–95. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2022.2035165

Guess, A., Nagler, J., & Tucker, J. (2019). Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook. *Science Advances*, *5*(1), Article eaau4586. https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aau4586

Hao, J., Pulido, C. M., & Song, Y. (2024). "Others are misled, not me": Third-person perception and misinformation sharing among Chinese elderly on WeChat. *Journal of Transcultural Communication*, *4*(2), 116–139. https://doi.org/10.1515/jtc-2024-0013

He, K., Eldridge, S., II, & Broersma, M. (2024). Tactics of disconnection: How netizens navigate China's censorship system. *Media and Communication*, *12*, Article 8670. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.8670

Hinduja, S. (2020). *Digital resilience*. Cyberbullying Research Center. https://cyberbullying.org/digital-resilience

Hu, B., Liu, X., Lu, C., & Ju, X. (2025). Prevalence and intervention strategies of health misinformation among older adults: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Health Psychology*, *30*(7), 1427–1443. https://doi.org/10.1177/13591053241298362

Hülür, G., & Macdonald, B. (2020). Rethinking social relationships in old age: Digitalization and the social lives of older adults. *American Psychologist*, *75*(4), 554–566. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000604

Humprecht, E., Esser, F., & Van Aelst, P. (2020). Resilience to online disinformation: A framework for cross-national comparative research. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *25*(3), 493–516. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161219900126

Ireton, C., & Posetti, J. (2018). *Journalism, fake news & disinformation: Handbook for journalism education and training*. UNESCO Publishing.

Ivan, C. (2025). Teaching resilience to disinformation: A national and European perspective. *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, *38*(3), 822–842. https://doi.org/10.1080/08850607.2025.2468611

Jackson, S., & Liu, J. (2017). The social context of ageing and intergenerational relationships in Chinese families. *The Journal of Chinese Sociology*, *4*(1), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40711-016-0050-1

Kont, J., Elving, W., Broersma, M., & Bozdağ, Ç. (2025). What makes audiences resilient to disinformation? Integrating micro, meso, and macro factors based on a systematic literature review. *Communications*, *50*(2), 534–555. https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2023-0078

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative interviewing*. Sage.

Lee, F. L. F. (2020). Social media and the spread of fake news during a social movement: The 2019 Anti-ELAB protests in Hong Kong. *Communication and the Public*, *5*(3/4), 122–125. https://doi.org/10.1177/2057047320969437

Lu, C., Hu, B., Bao, M. M., Wang, C., Bi, C., & Ju, X. D. (2024). Can media literacy intervention improve fake news credibility assessment? A meta-analysis. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *27*(4), 240–252. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2023.0324

Moore, R. C., & Hancock, J. T. (2022). A digital media literacy intervention for older adults improves resilience to fake news. *Scientific Reports*, *12*(1), Article 6008. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-08437-0

National Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *Major figures on 2020 population census of China*. China Statistics Press. https://www.stats.gov.cn/sj/pcsj/rkpc/d7c/202303/P020230301403217959330.pdf

Park, D. C., Lautenschlager, G., Hedden, T., Davidson, N. S., Smith, A. D., & Smith, P. K. (2002). Models of visuospatial and verbal memory across the adult life span. *Psychology and Aging*, *17*(2), 299–320. https://doi.org/10.1037/0882-7974.17.2.299

Portes, A., & Landolt, P. (1996). The downside of social capital. *The American Prospect*, *94*, 18–21.

Quan-Haase, A., Williams, C., Kicevski, M., Elueze, I., & Wellman, B. (2018). Dividing the grey divide: Deconstructing myths about older adults' online activities, skills, and attitudes. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *62*(9), 1207–1228. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218777572

Shu, K., Bhattacharjee, A., Alatawi, F., Nazer, T. H., Ding, K., Karami, M., & Liu, H. (2020). Combating disinformation in a social media age. *WIREs Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery*, *10*(6), Article e1385. https://doi.org/10.1002/widm.1385

Smit, A., Swart, J., & Broersma, M. (2023). Digital inclusion of low-literate adults: Challenging the sequential underpinnings of the digital divide. In B. Herlo & D. Irrgang (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Weizenbaum Conference 2022: Practicing Sovereignty—Interventions for Open Digital Futures* (pp. 72–84). Weizenbaum Institute. https://doi.org/10.34669/wi.cp/4.7

Ștefănel, A., & Allegri, M. R. (2025). European elections in times of (poly)crises: Populism, polarization, emotions, and the deliberative disintegration. *Media and Communication*, *13*, Article 11288. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.11288

Sun, Z., Cheng, X., Zhang, R., & Yang, B. (2020). Factors influencing rumour re-spreading in a public health crisis by the middle-aged and elderly populations. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(18), Article 6542. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17186542

Tandoc, E. C., Jr., Lim, Z. W., & Ling, R. (2018). Defining "fake news": A typology of scholarly definitions. *Digital Journalism*, *6*(2), 137–153. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2017.1360143

Tian, X., & Mi, S. (2025). A study of the deconstruction and construction of self-efficacy in internet use among older people. *BMC Geriatrics*, *25*(1), Article 355.

Tolz, V., & Hutchings, S. (2023). Truth with a Z: Disinformation, war in Ukraine, and Russia's contradictory discourse of imperial identity. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, *39*(5), 347–365. https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2023.2202581

Van Duyn, E., & Collier, J. (2019). Priming and fake news: The effects of elite discourse on evaluations of news media. *Mass Communication and Society*, *22*(1), 29–48. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2018.1511807

Villalonga-Olives, E., & Kawachi, I. (2017). The dark side of social capital: A systematic review of the negative health effects of social capital. *Social Science & Medicine*, *194*, 105–127. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.10.020

Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). The spread of true and false news online. *Science*, *359*(6380), 1146–1151. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aap9559

Wang, C. L., Siu, N. Y., & Barnes, B. R. (2008). The significance of trust and *renqing* in the long-term orientation of Chinese business-to-business relationships. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *37*(7), 819–824. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2008.01.008

Wang, R., He, Y., Xu, J., & Zhang, H. (2020). Fake news or bad news? Toward an emotion-driven cognitive dissonance model of misinformation diffusion. *Asian Journal of Communication*, *30*(5), 317–342. https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2020.1811737

Wang, Y., Xu, Y., & Wu, S. (2025). "Sharing is caring even when it's wrong": The factors influencing health misinformation sharing and relational correction among Chinese older adults from a cultural perspective. *Health Communication*, *40*(11), 2389–2403. https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2025.2457188

Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2017). *Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policymaking*. Council of Europe. https://rm.coe.int/information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-framework-for-researc/168076277c

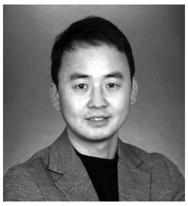
Xu, J., & He, S. (2022). Can grid governance fix the party-state's broken windows? A study of stability maintenance in grassroots China. *The China Quarterly*, *251*, 843–865. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741022000509

Zhang, C., Liao, W. F., Ma, Y. M., & Liang, C. Y. (2022). Research on older people's health information search behavior based on risk perception in social networks—A case study in China during Covid-19. *Frontiers in Public Health*, *10*, Article 946742. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.946742

Zhao, W., Wang, A., & Chen, Y. (2019). How to maintain the sustainable development of a business platform: A case study of Pinduoduo social commerce platform in China. *Sustainability*, *11*(22), Article 6337. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11226337

About the Authors

Rui Duan is a lecturer at the School of Marxism, Communication University of China. He holds a PhD in communication studies with a focus on political communication. His current research areas include Marxist philosophy, political communication, comparative regional communication studies, and digital resilience.



Kun He is a postdoctoral researcher at the Tilburg Law and Economics Center (TILEC), Tilburg University. An interdisciplinary scholar, his research focuses on four main areas: human–AI communication (with particular attention to how large language models respond to sensitive prompts), AI regulation, populist communication across platforms and modalities (especially online and bottom-up populism in China), and visual (AI-driven) disinformation.