

A Study on Voluntary Services Promoting Community Resilience Governance from the Perspective of Publicness

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Abstract: This study focuses on the effective exploration of voluntary service participation in community resilience governance from the perspective of publicity. Currently, community voluntary services are confronted with problems such as insufficient endogenous motivation, unsmooth collaborative mechanisms, and restricted autonomy and flexibility when promoting resilience governance. The author holds that we should start with the cultivation of public values to activate the endogenous motivation of voluntary services, encouraging residents to take voluntary services as an important way to advance public services and promote public interests. Additionally, we need to improve the collaborative network between community services and community resilience governance, so as to effectively respond to various risks and challenges and continuously enhance the level of community resilience governance.

Keywords: Publicity; Voluntary Service; Community Resilience Governance

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1. Introduction

Ulrich Beck, a German sociologist, once pointed out in his book *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*: “Modern society is a risk society.” With the acceleration of industrialization and modernization, human society is facing complex risks that are difficult to accurately predict and control, posing a severe threat to people’s production and life as well as social order. The community is the basic unit of urban society and the fundamental support for risk prevention, control, and governance in human society. Therefore, accelerating the improvement of communities’ ability to respond to public emergencies and strengthening community resilience governance are key measures to enhance the country’s emergency management capabilities in the future. Voluntary services in urban communities have advantages such as flexible resource mobilization, rapid risk identification, and activation of social capital, playing an important role in urban community resilience governance.

2. Literature Review

At present, domestic and foreign research on community resilience governance mainly unfolds from the following perspectives:

The connotation and theoretical basis of community resilience governance. Scholars have clarified the connotation of community resilience governance and conducted multi-dimensional analyses^[1,2].

Research on practical paths and strategies of community resilience governance. Studies have focused on improving the community emergency management system from aspects such as governance systems, professional technologies, service spaces, and actors^[3,4].

The construction process of community resilience governance mechanisms. The basic conditions for community resilience governance mechanisms include multi-stakeholder collaboration, internal cohesion and external connection of resources, and emotional trust and mutual assistance^[5].

In the field of voluntary service research, scholars at home and abroad have mainly focused on politics, public management, sociology, and other disciplines. Voluntary service is regarded as an important practical mechanism for citizens to widely participate in national governance innovation, generally manifested as voluntary service actions in social public welfare cooperation or public service production. The research mainly includes two aspects:

The emotional value and social significance of the development of voluntary services. As an emerging force promoting the movement of social systems, voluntary services have unique advantages such as professionalism and cultural attributes^[6]. Voluntary values have been extended to purposes such as identity formation and the fulfillment of humanitarian and social responsibilities^[7].

The practical paths of voluntary services. Studies have provided development paths for voluntary services from the perspectives of recruitment methods for professional volunteers, sources of volunteers and service contents, incentive mechanisms, and supervision systems^[8,9].

The above domestic and foreign research literatures have important academic enlightenment for this research. At present, academic circles mostly carry out theoretical research on community resilience governance from a macro or meso level, but lack attention to micro-level practical support and realistic contexts. From the perspective of community resilience governance, there is little research on how voluntary services can form a collaborative governance mechanism with other community governance subjects (such as the government, community organizations, residents, etc.), and research on community emergency governance mechanisms in the context of voluntary services also needs to be strengthened. Therefore, this study attempts to construct a “sinicized” theory and practice paradigm of community resilience governance, thereby promoting the innovative development of China’s community governance practice.

3. Value Implications and Functional Orientation of Voluntary Services in Community Resilience Governance

Currently, voluntary services are carried out based on the needs of people at the grassroots level in their daily lives. Community volunteers provide relevant services to realize community public interests in a voluntary and unpaid manner, which is a form of organized altruistic behavior. Voluntary service is an endogenous social capital for building resilient communities. Through community voluntary services, residents can be united, the construction of community communities can be accelerated, and a sound mechanism for coordination and cooperation in the community can be established. This effective form of resource mobilization and integration can activate residents’ subjective actions, transforming the community’s response mechanism to public emergencies from “passive defense” to “active adaptation,” and enhancing the ability of urban communities to self-organize, self-adapt, and self-repair during public crises.

Voluntary services in the community resilience governance system have unique functions and roles in stimulating subject resilience, enhancing action resilience, and promoting resource resilience. They can empower cities to strengthen risk governance and form an effective self-rescue mechanism when communities face emergencies. The specific functions and roles of voluntary services are reflected in the following aspects:

First, voluntary service helps enhance the subjective resilience of residents, activate their awareness of independent participation, stimulate the initiative of community residents in community governance, and effectively improve

their ability to respond to and adapt to public risks. Through participation in voluntary service, community residents continuously strengthen their own subjectivity and gain more say and public decision-making power in community affairs. At the same time, community residents' continuous participation in community public activities builds social capital, thereby reducing the transaction costs of collective actions and forming a governance community for sharing community risks. This empowerment process of voluntary service also gives rise to a psychological contract among community residents, making them regard the control and prevention of community risks as their own responsibility. As a result, they show stronger autonomy and synergy in risk perception and response decision-making, promoting the transformation of individual adaptability into system resilience.

Second, it helps strengthen the operational resilience of community residents. Voluntary service promotes the establishment of a normalized emergency mechanism in the community, thereby forming a dynamic emergency mechanism of "prevention - response - recovery" in the community. The flexibility of voluntary service can effectively make up for the shortcomings of the normalized emergency mechanism, promote the integration of community resources and process optimization, and give full play to the freedom and non-institutionalized characteristics of voluntary service in community resilience governance. In the prevention stage, voluntary service is used to strengthen the intensity and breadth of risk monitoring, so as to effectively prevent community risks and public emergencies; in the response stage, it improves the timely response ability and disposal efficiency of community organizations to community risk accidents and accelerates the construction of community resilience governance mechanisms; in the recovery stage, it consolidates the community risk prevention and control system and mechanism, further improves the community resilience governance system with effective experience and public service capabilities, and accelerates the reconstruction of the order of community risk governance. At the same time, it guides community residents to speed up operational collaboration, enhances their cohesion and unity, and transforms the emergency mechanism of community resilience governance from a one-way static collaborative system into a dynamic management practice for responding to public emergencies in the community, thereby further enhancing the operational continuity and adaptability of the community in responding to risks.

Third, it helps accelerate the promotion of community resource resilience. Community voluntary service, with its ability to quickly mobilize and integrate resources, assists urban communities in establishing a long-term sharing network of local resources, and guides community residents to form an effective self-rescue mechanism in public emergencies under the unified deployment of the government. Community voluntary service helps embed itself into the community resilience governance system by virtue of its community flexibility, break through the barriers of public service resources, and transform scattered community resources into systematic resilience against risks. With the help of voluntary service activities, community residents can participate in community governance together. By building a resource-sharing network for community resilience governance through trust bonds among community residents, the efficiency of community resource allocation can be improved, and local community resources can be transformed from static reserves to dynamic circulation. At the same time, under the guidance of the government, the resource integration model of voluntary service can strengthen the accessibility of risk control resources for community residents, form a resource linkage mechanism of "government leadership - voluntary collaboration - resident participation", and enhance the resource resilience of the community in responding to public emergencies.

4. Problems Existing in Voluntary Services in Promoting Community Resilience Governance

4.1. Insufficient Endogenous Motivation for Voluntary Services

Currently, the organization and development of voluntary service activities in some urban communities mainly rely on administrative mobilization. Community voluntary services are usually carried out under the guidance of the community's two committees (the Party committee and the neighborhood committee). The nature, number of participants, service hours, and allocation of relevant resources of voluntary service activities are uniformly arranged by the two committees.

Most activities are based on temporary administrative tasks assigned by the government and the two committees, and a normalized mechanism for community voluntary services has not yet been formed. This administratively led operational logic, in essence, incorporates voluntary services into the bureaucratic administrative management framework. Such administrative bureaucratic management can easily lead to a deviation between the goals of voluntary services and the real needs of community residents, making it difficult to arouse residents' psychological identification and directly affecting their initiative to actively participate in community resilience governance. Due to the lack of an endogenous motivation mechanism to unite community residents in participation, community voluntary services often face the short-term dilemma of "aiming at completing specific tasks" and struggle to form a sustainable self-renewal and development mechanism.

4.2. The Collaborative Mechanism of Voluntary Services Needs to Be Strengthened

At present, the professionalization level of community volunteers urgently needs to be improved. The professional quality of community volunteers is an important guarantee for the smooth development of voluntary services. However, in terms of the professionalization level of the current community voluntary service teams, many volunteers have relatively insufficient professional service capabilities, which need to be continuously improved through training and practical skills learning. At the same time, there is a lack of systematic connection between community voluntary services and emergency response plans for public emergencies, which may lead to temporary disconnection of community emergency plans when public emergencies occur, making it impossible for pre-formulated emergency plans to be implemented in a timely and effective manner through community voluntary activities. In addition, the age structure of community voluntary service teams is seriously unbalanced, which exacerbates the structural contradictions in resilience building: the proportion of elderly people among volunteers is relatively high, while the participation rate of young volunteers has always been at a low level. Although the high participation rate of the elderly group can ensure the regularity and stability of daily services to a certain extent, the low participation rate of young people in community voluntary services not only means that community voluntary services may face the risk of lacking innovative thinking and losing vitality factors, but also makes it difficult for community voluntary services to effectively connect with modern governance methods such as digitalization and intelligence in a timely manner, weakening the sustainable supporting role of voluntary services in community resilience governance.

4.3. The Autonomy and Flexibility of Voluntary Services Are Restricted

Voluntary services in some communities mainly rely on the support of external administrative forces such as government departments, social organizations, or enterprises in terms of resource acquisition and organizational coordination. Once these external resources are interrupted, the development of voluntary services will be affected by resource and financial constraints, making it difficult to respond to community public emergencies in a timely, continuous, and effective manner. Since voluntary services are constrained by administrative factors in action decision-making and resource allocation, they often lack autonomy in resource integration and allocation, and it is difficult to take effective response actions according to the actual situation of the community and the special needs of public emergencies. In addition, the traditional organizational management model of community voluntary services is relatively backward, which to a large extent limits the flexibility of voluntary services, making it difficult for volunteer organizations to timely organize corresponding voluntary service activities in the face of complex and changing emergencies, and also affecting the improvement of the ability of voluntary services to participate in community resilience governance. From the perspective of publicness, the failure of the autonomy and flexibility service mechanism of community voluntary services, to a certain extent, means the weakening of the public expression of community residents. At the same time, the rigid organizational management model of community voluntary services makes it difficult to adapt to the needs of the development of dynamically changing public issues. It can neither timely transform scattered public demands into service actions nor quickly gather the strength of community residents to respond to the crisis of public emergencies in sudden public events. This not only weakens the important service function of voluntary services as a community public sphere, but also reduces their resilience support efficiency in linking public resources and activating public participation in community resilience governance.

5. Effective Countermeasures for Voluntary Services to Promote Community Resilient Governance

5.1. Cultivating public values as the core to activate the endogenous motivation of voluntary services

Urban communities should establish a voluntary service supply mechanism oriented towards promoting community resilient governance, so as to continuously improve the community's response and recovery capabilities in dealing with emergencies, natural disasters, and long-term social issues. Through community councils, public issue collection and other methods, voluntary services are integrated into community public services such as elderly care, environmental governance, and child care, so that residents can realize that voluntary services are an important way to participate in public affairs and safeguard common interests, and gradually build a voluntary service supply mechanism and operation guarantee system.

First, actively promote the transformation of voluntary services from “administrative task-oriented” to “resident demand-centered”, and establish a normalized demand research mechanism for community public emergencies. Through channels such as resident councils and online collection platforms, transform community public issues into specific voluntary service projects that meet the needs of different public emergencies, and strengthen residents' attention and participation in public crisis events.

Second, break through the limitations of traditional administrative commendations and establish a more diversified incentive system. By establishing community voluntary service points, guide community residents to exchange time for public services, establish a service mechanism that adapts the duration of voluntary services to the right to use community public resources, and transform community voluntary services into a community public return mechanism. At the same time, pay attention to the spiritual incentive of community volunteers, tell volunteers' stories through community bulletin boards, official accounts and other carriers, cultivate a community public cultural atmosphere of mutual help and everyone's participation, and strengthen residents' emotional sense of belonging and identity.

5.2. Innovate the governance system and mechanism with the core of building community resilient governance capacity system and optimizing social risk management.

With the help of the multi-dimensional value of voluntary services, continuously strengthen the organization of voluntary services, innovate incentive mechanisms, strengthen resource integration and sharing, and promote residents' participation, so as to strengthen the organizational construction of voluntary services, innovate diversified incentive mechanisms, and better play the important role of voluntary services in promoting community resilient governance.

First, establish a mechanism for cultivating volunteers' professional capabilities, integrate public resources such as universities and public welfare organizations, and carry out basic skills training around public emergencies. For example, add special training courses such as emergency rescue and digital tool application for emergency scenarios, and improve volunteers' professional adaptability in responding to public emergencies through voluntary service theory teaching and crisis simulation drills, so as to lay a solid foundation for the coordinated development of voluntary services participating in community resilient governance.

Second, accelerate the in-depth integration of voluntary services and emergency plans, and gradually incorporate voluntary services into the community's public emergency response system. In the preparation stage of public emergency plans, volunteer representatives should be absorbed to participate in community resilient governance, and the important role of voluntary services in response procedures and resource allocation should be clarified; establish a normalized drill mechanism, and improve the joint collaboration and service connection between voluntary services and the administrative emergency system through joint simulation, so as to ensure the coordinated use of public emergency resources.

Third, establish a coordination and cooperation mechanism for different groups with public interests as the link, and actively build an intergenerational complementary participation ecology for community resilient governance. Relying on community public spaces, set up “voluntary mutual assistance stations” to give full play to the relevant experience of middle-aged and elderly volunteers in imparting community governance. At the same time, actively organize young volunteers to carry out digital skills feedback and participate in technical support. Through role complementarity,

continuously promote the systematicness and sustainability of community voluntary services.

5.3. Establish a dynamic governance system of community multi-empowerment and community residents' autonomous governance

First, cultivate the blood-making mechanism of community endogenous resources, and seek more economic support channels beyond traditional administrative resources. For example, by establishing a community public welfare fund, integrating local resources such as residents' donations and public space operation income, endowing voluntary services with independent allocation rights over these local resources to ensure the sustainability of resources for service development; at the same time, actively build a community resource sharing platform to strengthen the public foundation of voluntary service resource supply.

Second, actively promote the autonomous governance of community residents, reconstruct the flat decision-making mechanism of community services, and promote voluntary service organizations to transform from “administrative-dependent” to “resident-autonomous”. For example, organize a council composed of volunteers and resident representatives, advocate ordinary community residents to participate in some autonomous decision-making service projects oriented to public interests, and ensure their autonomy to quickly adjust community service strategies according to the dynamic needs of the community.

Third, innovate the flexible management model of voluntary service organizations and establish a dynamic service mechanism for public issues. Divide the community service operation mechanism into flexible units such as emergency support, daily life care, and resource connection according to service functions, so as to ensure that resources can be quickly reorganized in the event of public crises. At the same time, realize the real-time linkage between volunteer services and community resilient governance needs through a digital online collaboration platform, transform the form of community voluntary service organizations from traditional bureaucratic to networked, and continuously improve the agile response capability to complex public crises.

Fourth, establish a scientific and reasonable evaluation index system for urban community resilient governance, and evaluate the effect of voluntary services on improving residents' subjective resilience, resource resilience, psychological resilience and risk resistance. For example, in terms of subjective resilience indicators, it includes the investigation of residents' participation, social capital accumulation, leadership and autonomous ability; in terms of resource resilience, it mainly includes the analysis of emergency response, material reserves, infrastructure resilience construction and diversified resource connection, in order to enhance the sustainability and resilience of community development.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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