Why are Women the Main Forces of Flexible Governance in the Communities?

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Abstract: Under the background of the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity, as a complex grassroots governance field, the existing "hard governance" methods can no longer meet the governance needs of community affairs. The emergence of flexible governance has just filled the gaps of material governance and technical governance.

Keywords: Community governance; Women's roles; Flexible mechanisms.

As the most microscopic unit of social governance, community governance bears the responsibility of consolidating the party and government foundation and promoting the modernization of national governance capacity and governance system. In the implementation of community governance, flexible governance, which has long been marginalized, has entered the field of social governance, breaking through the shackles of rigid governance and achieving coupling and interaction with community governance. As a key force in community governance, female social workers have realized the landing practice of flexible governance in the process of community fine governance, thus stepping towards the stage of "effective governance" in the community.

1. The Feminization of Community Governance

1.1 Community Governance: From "Hard Governance" to "Hard and Soft Combined"

Under the new situation of promoting the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity in China, the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee proposed to "promote the refinement of community governance", further indicating the direction of community governance. The research on community governance refinement mainly focuses on two aspects: governance system and governance technology. In terms of governance system refinement, Wang Wei proposed to differentiate and reorganize the internal structure and management organization of the community, clarify the scope of governance, and shape a new model of community management with benign interaction. In terms of governance technology refinement, Jiang Xiaoping constructed a smart community from three dimensions of technology, content, and mechanism, promoted the development of smart community, and met the diverse needs of residents.

It can be seen that in the process of community governance refinement, there are changes and updates in both system and technology. We can hardly see the presence of "people" as individuals, and the integration of "people" as the subject of community governance participation and evaluation with "hard governance" means still has gaps. Therefore, "people-oriented" flexible governance has entered the stage of community governance and become an indispensable and important means of community fine governance.

2. Women's Participation in Community Governance: A Topic Worthy of Attention

2.1 The Process of Women's Participation in Community Governance.

Under the appearance of women's participation in community governance is the political participation of women's elevated political status.In 1954, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Central People's Government issued a notice on the establishment of street offices and residents' committees, and residents' committees were established in various places, allowing unemployed women to participate in the work of residents' committees. In 2000, the Central Office of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the "Opinions of the Ministry of Civil Affairs on Promoting Urban Community Construction Nationwide," and the community began to show its market-oriented service functions, with women entering community work under the influence of the market economy. In November 2013, the Third Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China passed the "Decision of the Central

Committee of the Communist Party of China on Several Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening Reform," proposing to "innovate the social governance system," shifting the focus of national governance to the grassroots, and women social workers have seen a substantial increase in their voice and welfare as resources flow downward. In grassroots governance, women's value is being maximized to the greatest extent possible, with strong irreplaceability and becoming the norm of social development.

2.2 The Value of Women's Participation in Community Governance

According to the final statistical monitoring report of the "Outline for the Development of Chinese Women (2011-2020)," since the implementation of the "Outline," women have actively participated in grassroots social governance, and the proportion of women in residents' committees has continued to increase. The proportion of women in residents' committees has remained at about half, reaching 52.1% in 2020, an increase of 2.5 percentage points from 2010, achieving the goal of "maintaining around 50%" in the "Outline."Women's understanding, emotional sensitivity, communication skills, and friendly attitude... These personality traits have become unique advantages in community governance work, making them more approachable in daily work, narrowing the distance between residents and workers, and mobilizing the enthusiasm of community residents to successfully complete their work.

3. The Unique Advantages of Women in Flexible Governance in Communities

For the multi-functional governance field that is facing the general public, flexible governance is an indispensable presence. Women social workers' innate language and emotional expression abilities can closely connect with the residents, playing multiple roles in community governance and complementing the governance methods of flexible governance.

3.1 "Middleman": Thinking from the Perspective of Others and Bridging Gaps

Currently, China's community management is mainly a three-level management hierarchy of "city-district-community," with communities undertaking a large number of administrative tasks and becoming the government's grip at the grassroots level. Faced with the rigid requirements and tasks from higher-ups, community workers become the connectors between those above and the residents and gain the understanding of the residents in completing tasks.

As middlemen who link higher-ups and residents, governance policies cannot be imposed rigidly on detailed community services. Community workers need to capture the residents' feelings in a timely manner, perceive the residents' situation, and show an understanding attitude from the perspective of others to promote the effectiveness of governance with the ability to think from others' perspectives. In this process, women social workers start from "emotions," govern with heart, serve with emotions, and cultivate a deep emotional connection with the residents, bridging the gap between national governance rules and residents' emotions, helping to establish a network of mutual trust and promoting the more flexible community governance.

3.2 "Connector": Connecting Channels to Meet Needs

As residents express their opinions more frequently and actively participate in community affairs, community workers need to establish channels for residents to express their opinions and respond to their problems and suggestions in order to improve their satisfaction with the community.

(1)Establishing Diverse Service Channels to Understand Residents' Needs

Residents are important witnesses and participants in community development, and they are more likely to discover the "loopholes" in the community in their daily lives. Therefore, if the community wants to achieve effective governance, community cadres must go deep into the masses to listen to their opinions and understand their needs, establish a list of problems, and provide targeted services for accurate implementation. By relying on the "Internet + grid" platform to receive information from the masses, the demand and service can be zero-error, and the last mile of serving the people can be connected.

(2)Using Soft Communication Methods to Meet Residents' Needs

In the face of residents' demands, social workers need to listen carefully, understand, distinguish and integrate their suggestions and demands, actively communicate with residents, and respond promptly with appropriate measures. Female social workers, with their gender advantages of being good listeners, gentle and meticulous, can make residents open up and discover useful suggestions from community residents in daily, non-institutionalized dialogues, and respond positively.

3.3 "Server": Caring and Mutual Assistance, Providing Help

As a field space facing complex daily affairs, intertwined power relationships, diverse living styles, and trivial conflicts, the community requires social workers to use various methods, including emotional labor, to take on the role of "server" and provide services to community service targets and residents.

Community services face problems such as single supply, insufficient supply, and low resource utilization efficiency. Services are mainly concentrated in welfare projects and daily life fields such as community security and hygiene, while meeting the needs of the elderly, spiritual needs, and personalized needs are weak. Female social workers can keenly perceive the needs of residents in their daily work, and through flexible guidance and services, they pay attention to vulnerable groups such as family women and the elderly. Female social workers' rich emotional talents demonstrate their caring functions, bringing warmth into the homes of special community residents and providing them with life assistance.

4. The Operational Mechanism of Women's Participation in Flexible Community Governance

The flexible factors demonstrated by women social workers in their roles in the community create an emotional network in the community, thereby building a flexible mechanism that is connected to community building and good governance issues, which deeply conforms to the governance scene and is guided by community harmony.

4.1 Institutional Flexible Governance Mechanism: Trust and Cooperation

In community governance, the tasks assigned by superiors and streets have rigid and institutionalized characteristics, which may not completely match the needs of residents. Women social workers, starting from the perspective of residents, make universal policies precise, aim at residents' personalized needs, and cooperate with public policies to achieve a precise and flexible combination. Community workers achieve fairness and impartiality in institutional arrangements, listen to residents' opinions, absorb residents' discourse in community affairs decision-making, and win residents' recognition and trust. The flexible factors of caring, affinity, meticulousness, communication, and so on, constantly add up the trust foundation of residents in social workers, reach collective consensus on the bridge of trust architecture, and better carry out collective actions for the construction of social communities.

4.2 Situational Flexible Governance Mechanism: Coordination and Accommodation

Situational flexible governance mainly manifests as social workers building emotional connections between subjects in continuous interaction, gaining understanding and trust. Community affairs are complicated and trivial, and neighborhood conflicts and community conflicts often occur, requiring multiple mediations. Community workers urgently need to adjust their own state, maintain a humble and peaceful attitude, and a compatible service style to coordinate residents' demands. Conflicts of personal interests that cause tense relationships among residents and neighborhood disputes are destructive factors in community life. Women social workers' gentle and patient personality traits are their abilities and advantages in handling community disputes. Simply using the approach of "convincing with reason" to solve community affairs within the community sometimes has little effect.

4.3 Relational Flexible Governance Mechanism: Communication and Unity

The most direct function of the relational mechanism is to create a "familiar society" in a community with indifferent interpersonal relationships, to drive residents to participate in community governance and mobilize resources. As one of the main places for residents' daily life, the community faces mobile and heterogeneous groups, complex interpersonal relationships, and a lack of psychological and emotional power to form a community. Community workers need to bridge individual traits and strengthen communication among groups to achieve unity in community affairs. The flexible connection of female social workers promotes trust and mutual benefit among individuals, expands personal networks, and naturally reduces the difficulty of grassroots organizations in achieving shared governance. In this way, once a major community affair arises, residents work together under the influence of the community, and the function of flexible governance realizes the transformation between virtual and reality. The governance effect produced by the relational flexible mechanism bridges the boundary of interests within the community, and then produces new social relationships in the community, which mends the sense of alienation among community residents.

4.4 Self-realizing Flexible Governance Mechanism: Identity and Participation

How to straighten out the relationship between family and community, reshape the residents' sociality, and become a major problem driving residents to participate in community? Emotional belonging and value recognition are the foundation of the community. Female social workers use flexible governance methods and emotionalized ways to awaken residents' participation awareness, construct the subjectivity of residents' interaction, generate self-awareness of "I am a member of the community," enhance their identification and participation willingness, cultivate and incubate residents' self-control power, and then carry out participation behaviors. The continuous

strengthening of residents' participation willingness in the community has produced external efficacy for community residents, and a higher level of external political efficacy for the community, which is an expression of political trust in social workers by residents. This political trust makes residents more willing to carry out voluntary activities for their community at low or even no cost.

5. Conclusion

The complexity and variability of community governance work determine the need for women's participation, making women an important force in community governance. This article emphasizes the coupling between women social workers and flexible governance, which has a "people-oriented" governance concept that highly matches the attitude of women social workers at work. However, women social workers are not perfect in the community, and they may show negative emotions and psychological pressure when facing trivial work. Their existing abilities may not match the rapid development of the community, and their contribution capabilities may not match their self-awareness. The constraints of family responsibilities are also issues to be considered in exploring the power of women in the community and improving the mechanism for women's work, while continuously expanding the proposition of considering the integration of flexible governance.

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