

Study on Public Crisis Management Ability of Local Governments in China under Emergency -- Based on Comparative Analysis of Two Rounds of Epidemic Prevention and Control in Xi'an City

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Abstract: The outbreak of COVID-19 has put governments' ability to manage public crises to great test, which has prompted local governments to think about the management ability in the context of emergencies. Through understanding the current situation of Chinese local governments, it is found that the public crisis management ability of Chinese local governments has been improved, but there are still shortcomings. On this basis, the author introspects, puts forward the countermeasures to optimize the crisis management ability of local governments, and further improves the management level of the government under the sudden public crisis.

Keywords: Public Crisis; Local Government; The COVID-19 Epidemic

1. Introduction

In late 2019, the novel Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) broke out in Wuhan, Hubei Province, and then swept across the country. It was "a major public health emergency with the fastest transmission speed, the widest range of infection, and the greatest difficulty in prevention and control since the founding of the People's Republic of China". In order to better promote the requirements of the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity, it is indeed necessary for local governments, as an important subject of governance under sudden public crises, to think about how to improve their own level of public crisis management.

It is necessary and urgent to discuss the management ability of local government under public crisis from the perspective of government governance. Major public emergencies require the government to achieve collaborative governance, build a regional governance mechanism with the government as the core, break the division between various departments, connect them up and down under the command and dispatch of the government^[1], and use the network to establish a cross-regional crisis management cooperation mechanism. The local government management capacity under the emergency public crisis existing deficiencies

1.1 The government lacks crisis awareness

This was evident in the first outbreak in Xi 'an. In the early stage of sudden public crisis, crisis information sources are insufficient, and it is not easy to identify, and the early warning index system is difficult to establish, which tests the decision-making ability and judgment ability of local governments as the governing body of public crisis. The government needs to take the initiative to identify the potential crisis, judge the development trend of the epidemic, and take effective measures in a timely manner to stop the spread of the epidemic, so as to buy time for the prevention and control work in the future.

At present, the response mechanism of local governments to public crises in China is very passive. In the early stage of epidemic prevention and control, all departments are in accordance with the conventional handling mechanism, daily reporting to their higher level, and then carrying out the orders of the higher level. In the early stage of the most critical epidemic, it has been very passive^[2]. It has not taken any response measures in advance, and it has not tried to establish a complete public crisis emergency plan.

1.2 Lack of precision in epidemic prevention and control

Most cities in China have taken three major measures, namely, tracking investigation, key nucleic acid testing and risk zone designation, when a new case of COVID-19 is suddenly confirmed. The first round of epidemic prevention and control in Xi 'an lacked accuracy in these three tasks, leading to the outbreak out of control. One of the core links of epidemic prevention and control is the flow modulation, which means to trace the patient back to the source of infection in reverse, forming a closed-loop management of the source of infection -- the patient -- the close contact population. With the escalation of epidemic prevention and control, it is increasingly important for local governments to ensure people's livelihood. During the outbreak, when nervous and panicked citizens might snap up supplies, the government did not proactively issue announcements to ensure adequate supplies and stabilize prices.

1.3 Lack of professional emergency management personnel under public crisis events

During the outbreak of the epidemic, the Xi 'an government transferred Party members and cadres from all levels of government as emergency personnel to each community. These Party members and cadres are mainly responsible for the dissemination of community information, supervision and management of people isolated at home, regular and designated elimination, community access management, epidemic prevention and control and other work. Although these cadres have alleviated the shortage of community manpower during the epidemic, they still have some shortcomings due to their large amount of work and weak professionalism. It reflects that except Xi 'an, the emergency management professionals of many urban local governments are in a scarce state. When there is a public crisis. It can only be supplemented by the recruitment of civil servants and social workers.

1.4 Imperfect public crisis information release mechanism

At present, China's epidemic information release mainly relies on the combination of the government's epidemic prevention and control conference and online we-media release. Although such information release is authoritative, it is not timely enough, and there may be omissions. It does not meet the requirements of timeliness of information release in public crisis management, and the subject and channel of information release are single^[3]. Although online we media are timely and efficient, the accuracy of information cannot be guaranteed.

2. To the public crisis under the local government management ability optimization countermeasures

2.1 Raise the awareness of local governments on public crisis management

In view of the characteristics of large population, fast flow and complex epidemic prevention and control in big cities, it is urgent for local governments to improve their awareness of public crisis management. First of all, it is necessary to improve the monitoring mechanism of public crisis, control the key links of public crisis management, formulate comprehensive and corresponding emergency plans, and strive to achieve early prevention, early detection, early report, early treatment and early control. Secondly, strengthen the investigation and judgment in the initial stage of public crisis. Once there is a precursor, all departments and regions will immediately focus on human and material resources to make scientific and accurate judgment and preparation, predict the future development trend of public crisis by combining big data, and make scientific decisions. The prediction results should be timely reported. Once a public crisis occurs, cross-level reporting of epidemic information can be attempted and directly transmitted to experts, so as to gain advantages for the next step of epidemic prevention and control upgrade. Finally, the dynamic nature of emergency plans should be improved. As public crises are highly variable, the timeliness of emergency plans is highly required^[4]. Therefore, local governments are required to adjust the focus of emergency plans in light of the development of the epidemic and improve and revise them in a timely manner.

2.2 Further improve the livelihood protection mechanism and strive for precision in epidemic prevention and control

First of all, it is necessary to enhance the ability of special local governments to guarantee people's livelihood issues, and improve the livelihood material guarantee mechanism by using big data, Internet plus and other means. The material support system should be informationized to realize the information sharing among all units and organizations, so as to achieve the effective allocation of resources in special periods. At the same time, the address government should cooperate with the civil affairs department to unify the materials and determine the type, scale and other information, which is conducive to the formation of a unified material management system and improve the management ability of emergency materials.

Secondly, the prevention and control work of local governments during the epidemic should be accurate, and the original management concepts and methods should be changed. The improvement of the precision of local government's prevention and control work depends on the refinement of epidemic prevention and control policy objectives and policy instruments, as well as the support of infrastructure and technical tools.

2.3 Strengthen professional personnel training and multi-party collaborative governance

According to the particularity of emergency management, the state should train emergency management talents from various angles, such as emergency management talents in the public sector, emergency professionals who play the role of experts, emergency management talents in social work, emergency management talents in higher education and so on. As mentioned above, to improve the precision of epidemic prevention and control, communities will be given more and more functions to realize the "last mile" of collaborative governance. We can encourage social forces to participate in public crisis management through financial subsidies and policy support. Let them use their civilian advantages to develop their potential in places where the government is not available or has insufficient power. The strength of the people in the epidemic prevention and control has been invaluable. They have participated in community public services and made active contributions in some places that are closely related to residents' lives.

2.4 Improving public crisis policies and information release mechanisms

We can learn from Japan and set up an information interchange and sharing mechanism at The State Council level, in which specialized institutes are responsible for information collection, sorting out, analysis and release, while local governments are only responsible for information management. In this way, more governance bodies can enter the information collection and sorting network, and then the national level can carry out unified coordination and planning. The participation of epidemic prevention departments at all levels, agricultural departments, emergency management departments, meteorological monitoring departments, civil affairs departments and the private sector is conducive to the better play of their own professional advantages, and the horizontal and vertical integration among departments. The whole information release chain of the epidemic has been lengthened longitudinally to realize public crisis monitoring and prevention in peacetime. Horizontally, the original single information system with information and policy promulgation is transformed into a comprehensive information release system with multi-angle, dynamic and static combination, which is also more conducive to the next fine management.

Combined with the actual situation in China, we can start from the top-level design, imitate the foreign epidemic information system, to design a set of comprehensive management system, which is managed and led by the National Health Commission, co-governed by the health commission of each province and city, involving a wider and more comprehensive scope, and combining dynamic information and static information monitoring^[6]. As the main body of public crisis management, local governments should not only take the initiative to integrate and report information, but also timely disclose it to the public.

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