

# Analysis on the management of public crisis information constraints

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**Abstract**– Currently, mankind has entered the information age. Information plays an important role in different fields and becomes indispensable resource in each field. In the public crisis management, information also plays a role. Accurate, timely and balanced crisis information became the important factor of effective public crisis management. This paper clarifies the important role of information in public crisis management and analyzes its problems, and explores the reasons of the public crisis management, finally puts forth a few strategies to solve the public crisis management constraints problem.

**Keywords** – Public crisis management; Information; Public crisis

## 1. Introduction

Modern society has entered a crisis, devastating upgrade and international interactive development period. With the growing of a variety of factors led to the crisis generated by sudden crises at any time may occur, it is caught off guard. The crisis is a serious threat to public security and social stability. With the social and economic development, the new problems of public safety are emerging. These problems will cause a huge impact on a country or society and the whole world. They also brought unprecedented challenges to the government management.

How to deal with public crises will be directly related to the government's image, and have a direct impact on the stability and development of the national political and economic, and in turn related to the survival of the state power. Crisis information plays a decisive role in the process of government to deal with public crises. It not only affects the handling and resolving crises, but also it would have a huge impact on the credibility of government.

With the acceleration of information technology, there are many problems of the government in crisis

information processing. When the crisis events happened, information has become a scarce resource. In this case, once the government in crisis information processing produces problems, for example, failure to guarantee regular dissemination of information channels, that would lead to rumors generated and the rapid spread, misleading the public and causing the public panic or even be exploited to cause social riots, triggering a larger crisis. So, to solve information problems in the crisis management process has great significance for the promotion of solving the public crisis effectively.

This paper clarifies the important role of information in public crisis management, analyzing the existing problems of the information in public crisis management process, and put forward some suggestions for the existence of the problem.

## 2. The role of information in public crisis management process

Public crisis management is "the government or other social public organizations prevent the crisis that may occur, dealing with deal with the crisis has occurred through monitoring, early warning, pre-control,

prevention, emergency treatment, assessment, restoration and other measures, in order to reduce the loss, even transform the dangers into the opportunities, to protect the personal safety of the citizens and property, maintaining the social and national security ". Different scholars have different definitions of public crisis management process. Augustine divided crisis management into six stages, including avoid crisis, ready to manage the crisis, aware of the crisis, controlling the crisis and resolving the crisis, and to profit from the crisis. Robert Heath proposed 4R model of public crisis management. They are reduction, readiness, response, recovery. Reference the views of scholars, the public crisis management process is divided into the crisis prevention, crisis response and post-crisis assessment and recovery phase in this paper.

In public crisis management, accurate and rapid collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of information about public crisis, is a prerequisite for effective implementation of public crisis response and crisis recovery measures. It can be said that, information runs through the entire public crisis management process. Not only the pre-crisis prevention, but also the emergency treatment during the crisis and post-crisis recovery efforts, information is indispensable to them. Information is almost the key to do the work of the various stages of public crisis management. Therefore, the public crisis management cannot be separated from the information. The importance of information in the public crisis management is not in doubt.

### **2.1 The information of crisis prevention stage**

Crisis prevention is the primary stage of the public crisis management. It is the first line of the public crisis management too. The collection and management of the information in the pre-crisis contribute to crisis prevention and help to reduce the damage which the crisis brought. At this stage, the main role of the information reflects in three aspects. The first aspect is the crisis monitoring. The information is the direct basis which the crisis manager monitors the public crisis. The degree of the information gathering and understanding directly affects the level of monitoring quality. The more information of public crisis is collected and understood deeply, the better managers identify the potential crisis.

The second aspect is the crisis warning. The information is an important foundation of the crisis warning. All aspects of the information collection, analysis and processing can make the crisis managers give descriptions of the crisis which may occur and alert, the crisis to get attention, in order to take timely action. The third aspect is the crisis pre-control. According to the monitoring and early warning information, the manager controls and prevents preliminarily the public crisis that may occur to prevent or minimize the losses brought about by the crisis. Therefore, the comprehensive information will directly influence the quality of crisis pre-control.

### **2.2 The information of crisis emergency treatment stage**

Emergency treatment stage is the core of public crisis management. As known to all, the happen of public crisis is sudden, it often happened unexpectedly. But once it happened, crisis managers often need to be able to take timely and decisive action in emergencies, to control the development of the crisis. At this stage, the information also has a pivotal role. On the one hand, the effectiveness of emergency action which the crisis managers take rests with the accuracy of the information. Crisis managers in response to the crisis of activities involve a wide range, such as the implementation of the response to the crisis plans, the foundation of the crisis response organization. In this case, the accuracy of the information often decides whether the activities of these crisis managers can effectively achieve the purpose of the response to the crisis. Accurate, reliable information can help crisis managers to understand the development trend of the crisis, so as to enable them to response to the crisis better, to take emergency action more effectively. On the other hand, the timeliness of the information influences the quality of crisis decision. In fact, timely information is an important basis for crisis managers to make effective crisis response decisions. Therefore, timely information allows managers to quickly intervene in the crisis developments, to develop high-quality decision-making in order to control the further expansion of the crisis for the crisis to minimize losses.

### **2.3 The information of assessment and recovery phase**

The end of the emergency phase of public crisis, does not mean the end of the crisis management process, the public crisis management will enter the stage of dealing with the aftermath, including the assessment of the loss caused by the crisis and recovery the order of normal life and production. All work carried out at this stage are inseparable from information. First of all, after the crisis, the feedback of information on all aspects of the crisis can make managers ensure that the affected people have been out of the crisis. Secondly, the collection of crisis destruction information is conducive to evaluate scientifically for the crisis managers and develop a reconstruction plan. Third, through the release of information, the crisis managers can communicate with the affected people, making the post-crisis recovery work proceed smoothly.

## **3. The existing information problem of public crisis**

The decisive factor of public crisis management is the information. After public crisis happened, the collection, feedback and analysis of the crisis-related information often affect the effectiveness of crisis management. But in the reality of crisis management, it often appears information problem, for example, the information is incomplete, the information is not timely, the information is not accurate, and so on. These problems will affect the quality of public crisis management.

### **3.1 Information is not timely**

The information is not timely refers to lags existing which the crisis managers master and control the public crisis information. It is mainly reflected in the release and the grasp of crisis information.

On the one hand, the crisis managers often can't grasp the information of crisis in due course. In the transmission of information from the crisis scene to the process of decision-making bodies, it always goes through several organizations intermediary operation, so there will be a lag in the grasp of information. And lag information developed out of crisis decision-making is

bound to affect the crisis response and control, it is difficult to achieve the purpose of solving the public crisis, sometimes even increase the complexity of the problem of public crisis, increasing difficult to solve.

On the other hand, the crisis managers will ignore the importance of releasing authoritative information timely. Once the managers release the authoritative information about the crisis untimely, rumors and other non-authoritative information will begin to flee, thus causing a negative impact on crisis management.

### **3.2 Information is not accurate**

Information is not accurate, refers to the information cannot reflect the characteristic of the public crisis truly and accurately. After the public crisis happened, whether it is in the process of crisis, or in the feedback of the crisis management, information is very prone to distortion; it is very difficult to guarantee the correctness and validity of information. At the same time, a variety of gossip and rumors fled in can also interfere with the accuracy of the information which crisis managers collected and mastered.

Inaccurate information to the public crisis managers and the public in crisis is a test. It is difficult for the crisis manager to recognize clearly the development trend of the crisis, according to the distortion of information, thus it is not propitious for crisis manager to take decisive measures to control the development of the crisis. And the mental capacity of the public in a crisis state is often relatively low, inaccurate crisis information will only increase their conjecture and speculation for the events, thereby reducing their trust and support for the crisis managers .

### **3.3 Information is not symmetrical**

Information asymmetry refers to the understanding of public crisis information is different for all kinds of personnel in the public crisis management. In general, the staff who grasped the full information of public crisis will be in a comparative advantage in the crisis management. On the contrary, the staff who grasped relatively few information of the public crisis will be in a disadvantageous position.

In the reality of public crisis management, information asymmetry is ubiquitous. This is bound to impact on the formulation and implementation of the crisis management policy.

On the one hand, information asymmetry affects the scientific nature of the crisis management policy formulation. We know that the formulation of policy needs to consider the objective factual circumstances of the subject and the object, the policy expected results, the scientific nature of policy implementation and policy sustainability and continuity and so on, and the formulation of public crisis management policy is no exception. Making the scientific and regulatory public crisis management policy, we must evaluate and study objectively about the objective situation of public crisis, the enforcement of the related crisis management policy executive departments, the response degree of policy object and the desired effect which the policy produced. However, due to information asymmetry is prevalent in crisis management activities, the crisis manager cannot have full and complete information in the process of making the crisis management policy, leading to the scientific of the crisis management policies weaken.

On the other hand, the information asymmetry reduces the efficiency of the public crisis management. Public crisis management activities are often implemented by specific implementation of the crisis management policy enforcement. Due to the existence of information asymmetry in the understanding of the crisis management policy for specific departments and staff members, policy enforcement, and the view of the specific issues in the management process will be influenced by subjective factors, and thus may result in the implementation retardation or deformation. Meanwhile, after managers finish implementing a specific crisis management policy, the information back to the executive branch of superior crisis management process appear omission or inaccuracy, it will make superior crisis management administrative departments deviate the implementation of the crisis management policy, eventually lead to the low efficiency of the entire crisis management activities.

#### **4. The cause of public crisis management constraints problems**

In public crisis management, resulting in inaccurate information, untimely information and information asymmetry are many reasons. There are factors of public crisis, factors of the crisis managers, and the information itself.

##### **4.1 The characteristics of public crisis itself**

Public crisis possesses sudden, urgency, uncertainty and destructive characteristics. These characteristics will influence the constraints problems of information which produced in the process of public crisis management in varying degrees. Among them, the sudden and urgency of the public crisis impact the constraints problems more prominently.

Public crisis has sudden. Public crisis often breaks out suddenly under the unexpected, totally unprepared situation. Because the public crisis occurs suddenly, from the outset, it is difficult to grasp. It often presents a state of disorder. This undoubtedly increases the difficulties for public crisis managers to collect, analyze and disseminate the public crisis information. Thus, there inevitably exists the problem of incomplete information.

Public crisis has urgency. Public crisis often requires crisis managers to response rapidly after it outbreak suddenly, so, in the process of crisis management, the time of managers' decision-making is very limited. This sense of urgency the public crisis brought is no doubt cause the pressure of the crisis manager's decision-making. Sometimes, it also makes the crisis managers have to develop a strategy to deal with the crisis before they take into account clearly whether the information in their hands is full.

This shows that the characteristics of public crisis itself is one of the factors cannot be ignored which causes the problems of information constraints in the process of the public crisis management.

##### **4.2 The characteristics of the information itself**

In the process of public crisis management, the information itself has many problems, such as inaccuracy, retardance, and asymmetry. These characteristics that the information itself has are crucial.

Information has cost. We know that, in the crisis management, information is the deciding factor. But

Crisis managers need to invest, even operate, in order to grasp crisis information, because the information takes costs. From the whole process of public crisis management, each stage requires a lot of information, and the collection and processing of such information requires a lot of manpower, material and time resources, its cost is quite high. But, in the reality of crisis management, the crisis managers often ultimately choose to give up the pursuit of comprehensive information just because they cannot bear the high costs of information. Therefore, the possession of comprehensive information for the crisis managers is not realistic.

Information has timeliness. Obsolete or untimely information will not only make the value of information attenuation or disappearance, but also cause the failure of crisis response strategy worked out based on this information, only timely information has a higher value. Unable to grasp the information about the public crisis in good time and achieve timely disclosure will seriously affect the quality of crisis management. Sometimes, crisis managers conceal or filter certain information just for the consideration of their own interests, and it is not well done timely disclosure of crisis information to ensure that the public enjoys the right to know the information of the crisis, increasing unnecessary social nervous.

Information has passed and controllability. This characteristic of information is also one of reasons which create the incomplete, untimely and inaccurate information in the process of the crisis management process. In the process of the information transmitted, some privileged people can artificially control the information, even blocked or distorted information. This makes the information be vulnerable to distortion in the transmission, and thus cannot fully and accurately reflect the situation of crisis, reducing the quality of decision-making of the crisis managers.

### 4.3 The literacy of the crisis manager

In addition to the public crisis and the characteristics of the information will affect the public crisis management, crisis managers' literacy is a key factor to affect the problem of information. In public crisis management, the managers of information concept, sense

of service and their own ability have a direct impact on the quality of information.

Firstly, the concept of crisis managers decided in large part on their abilities to comprehensive, accurate and timely grasp of crisis information. In public crisis management, if managers have a strong concept of information, then he will attach great importance to the collection, analysis and processing of the crisis information, he will try to pursue comprehensive and accurate information, because these help him to make timely the high quality crisis response decision-making. On the contrary, a weak concept of managers will reduce accordingly the requirements for the accuracy and comprehensiveness information. As a result, it is difficult for these managers who have such concept of information to develop and implement a good crisis response strategy.

Secondly, the service sense of crisis managers decided their behavior tendency in the collection, analysis and processing and transmission of crisis information. We know that the information is not good or bad, but the information mastered by different people will have different effects. The crisis managers with a high sense of service to public using information can proceed from the interests of the public everywhere, truly for the well-being of the public. On the contrary, it will harm the public interest. In the reality of public crisis management, We can see that some crisis managers for the consideration of the interests about themselves or their own small groups, disregard absolutely the interests of the public, distort the crisis information which grasped by them, even blockade, failure to make timely disclosure to the public. These artificial interventions make the crisis information be unable to escape the incomplete, inaccurate and untimely fate.

Thirdly, the crisis manager's own ability to collect, analyze and process information has a direct impact on the quality of information. In fact, the collection, analysis, processing and use of information require a certain level of judgment, knowledge and professional skills. If the level of crisis managers in these areas is not high, then the crisis can also be very limited and far from complete. Of course, since the managers own capacity constraints, they will not be able to have a deep understanding of relevant crisis information and fully grasp the information, and crisis information may be

misinterpreted or even lead to distortion, inaccuracy. In addition, once the crisis manager cannot interpret the crisis information in a timely manner, it will delay the best time of crisis response, at the same time, crisis information will become obsolete and lose its value.

## **5. Strategies to resolve the information problems in public crisis management**

We know that, the public crisis has very strong destructive power. If it did not be processed timely and properly, it will lead to a series of social problems, greatly affected the social stability. Information is the decisive factor affecting the public crisis management, but the problems of information such as incompleteness, inaccurate which appears frequently in the management of the information severely restrict the quality of public crisis management. So, in the public crisis management, the crisis managers must take related strategies to solve the information problem, to eliminate the impact of public crisis management.

### **5.1 The establishment of a crisis information management system**

In the public crisis management, the comprehensive information management system is mainly to provide timely, accurate and comprehensive crisis information for the crisis managers.

On the one hand, the system should collect a lot of information of the crisis, to guarantee the crisis information comprehensive, and on this basis, analyze and process the information collected, eliminate the false and retain the true, conveying the accurate information in a timely manner for the crisis manager. It is very important significance whether managers can make the correct and effective decision-making. For the managers, the policymaking must have accurate information to the guarantee. As a result, the information from crisis information management system for the managers' correct decision is almost decisive.

On the other hand, this system should also assume the duties of transferring the right information to the public. After the public crisis happened, crisis managers should promulgate the correct information on the crisis and the information of management in response to the crisis through the system in a timely manner to the

public, let the public have a clear understanding about the extent of the crisis situation and harm, at the same time, the public also can understand the various efforts made by the management to resolve the crisis. This will be conducive to the stability of the public mood. Once the public is able to maintain emotional stability in public crisis, increasing the manager's decision-making pressure can be avoided due to the loss of control of the public mood, the managers can avoid the deterioration of the decision-making environment.

Therefore, the establishment of perfect crisis information management system is a very important sense to overcoming the public crisis. The managers can supervise the crisis information effectively and flexibly through the information management system, to guarantee the full, accurate and timely information.

### **5.2 The enhancement of the crisis managers' information literacy**

Currently, mankind has entered the information age. The work and life of the public are closely linked to information. Everyone is inseparable from the information. Especially, when the public is in public crisis which is such a special state, the information has become the key factor for a success to defuse public crisis. Therefore, as modern crisis managers, they have urgent need to continue to improve their information literacy, thus they can manage the crisis better.

Firstly, the crisis managers must continue to foster and enhance the concept of information. The strong concept of information directly related to the acceptance and understanding of the managers for crisis information. Only those managers with a strong concept of information have strong awareness of acquiring information when they are dealing with the public crisis. Thus the managers can obtain comprehensive crisis information, and defuse public crisis with the information.

Secondly, the crisis managers need to improve their abilities of information. Crisis information alone is not enough. The managers also must make full use of their own interpretation of the information, analysis and processing power to make the information used wisely. Then the more complete information is worthless if the managers do not have the information capacity.

Therefore, crisis managers need to continuously improve their information capabilities, in order to grasp the crisis information better.

Finally, the crisis managers should enhance awareness of information services. The ultimate goal of crisis information to obtain is to provide the basis for crisis management, to defuse the crisis, in the final analysis, as a public service. Therefore, managers should strengthen the sense of service, to ensure the timeliness and accuracy of information, not to deceive the public.

### 5.3 The intensification of the public participation

We know that the full information is a key factor of public crisis management. Therefore, in the public crisis management, crisis managers should strongly encourage the public to participate in the process of crisis management, to make the different sectors of the public participate in the process of public crisis management in different ways, and provide a wide range of information for crisis manager, thus wise, the managers can learn more about the real ideas of the public for crisis and the interests of the public. In this way, the crisis managers will be able to guarantee the quality of crisis decision-making in the process of resolving public crisis while also taking full account of the interests of the public.

## 6. Conclusion

The information is the key factor of public crisis management. It runs through the whole process of public crisis management, largely affects the quality of public

crisis management. In the process of public crisis management, crisis managers should pay full attention to the important role of information, to guarantee the sufficiency, accuracy and timeliness of information in the crisis management, and resolve the crisis better.

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## Vitae

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