

# *Research on the strategy of improving the work capacity of secretaries of urban grassroots government agencies in the post-epidemic era*

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**Abstract:** The secretaries of the grass-roots government agencies use scientific and effective methods to implement the policies of the higher levels and meet the needs of the public in a precise and fast way, which will have a bearing on the efficiency of the grass-roots government's management work and the image of the government. Based on the post epidemic era, this paper scientifically analyzes the duties of secretaries of basic government agencies in government work, which can be divided into routine duties and emergency management duties. The results of the interviews show that the secretaries of grass-roots organizations have insufficient work capacity for emergency management, lack of flexibility in governing, and insufficient application of information technology. Identifying and outlining the causes of the deficiencies in the work capacity of grassroots secretarial personnel, and exploring the improvement initiatives of the secretaries of urban grassroots government agencies in the areas of crisis management awareness, collaborative governance concepts, intelligent information technology, and the construction of the emergency planning system, provide a basis and reference for the development of the theory of emergency response in the grassroots government and the reform of the practice of emergency response work.

## **1. Positioning of responsibilities of secretaries in urban grassroots government agencies in the post-epidemic era**

### **1.1. Definition of the secretary of the grassroots government agencies**

Grassroots government agencies play an important role in dealing with grassroots affairs, and their working patterns and guiding principles directly affect the social and economic development of their regions. <sup>[1]</sup> The definition of secretaries of grassroots government agencies is still vacant in the current academic research. A review of the literature reveals that although there is no clear definition of secretary in the grassroots government, the concept of "grassroots civil servant" is widely mentioned, which is important for the definition of the concept of "secretary in the grassroots government". This is an important reference value for the definition of the concept of "secretary of

the basic government organs". Scholars have many definitions of grassroots civil servants, and the definition widely accepted by the academia compares grassroots government agencies to the nerve end of China's administrative governance system, while grassroots civil servants are the constituent cells, and grassroots civil servants are the closest form of public power to the general public, so grassroots civil servants refer to those who work in the front line of districts, counties and towns and face the people directly. <sup>[2]</sup> According to the above concept, it can be concluded that the secretary of the grassroots government organs refers to the secretarial staff in the party and government organs of districts, counties and townships who work in the front line and directly face the people.

## **1.2. Defining the responsibilities of secretaries of grassroots government agencies in the post-epidemic era**

There is no unified concept of the division of secretary's duties in the academic field. Scholar Yan Hua believes that secretarial functions can be generally summarized as "write", "work", "strategy" and "management". <sup>[3]</sup> In the context of the post-epidemic era, the disharmonious factors in the society are becoming more and more prominent, and sudden events occur frequently. According to the content of crisis management theory and combined with the characteristics of secretarial functions, the specific duties of secretaries in the government emergency management can be divided into three stages according to the chronological order.

In the prevention management stage, the responsibilities of the secretaries of the grassroots government organs mainly include the preparation of emergency plans and unit emergency management systems; summarizing and integrating the hidden information of emergencies for the reference of higher-level leaders; assisting in the development of grassroots emergency exercises and training activities to improve the ability of the masses to save themselves in emergencies, etc. The responsibilities in the mid-event management stage mainly include activating the emergency plan, communicating the relevant information to the higher departments and leaders through reports for their reference and decision making; releasing timely information on the development and emergency treatment, promoting the cooperation of various government departments to form a synergy, coordinating all aspects of human, material and financial resources and making decision adjustments according to the actual changes in the situation. The responsibilities of the post-emergency management phase include assisting leaders in communicating with the public, formulating recovery and reconstruction plans and compensation systems, linking all relevant departments to quickly intervene in the post-emergency recovery work, reviewing the whole process of emergency management, pursuing responsibility for relevant defaulters, summarizing lessons learned and formulating improvement measures to report to higher authorities, etc.

## **1.3. Challenges facing the secretarial work of grassroots government agencies in the post-epidemic era**

### **1.3.1. Traditional scene update, office position shift**

The use of modern office equipment such as computers, printers and fax machines in the office for writing paperwork, processing information, preparing and organizing meetings, and completing various temporary tasks assigned by the leadership are not only the basic duties of secretarial staff, but also the traditional office mode of secretarial work. During the epidemic, the state put forward the policy requirement of reducing gathering and home isolation, which requires the grassroots secretarial departments to break the traditional office mode of secretarial work under the premise of ensuring the smooth and orderly development of related work. <sup>[4]</sup> The online office mode transforms the office scenario and organizational management mode from offline to online and offline, and the

secretarial work position and collaboration form also face the adaptation of the new scenario and new mode. Despite the expansion of the speed and breadth of information received and disseminated in the online office, it also creates a lot of inconvenience, such as reduced trust with the grassroots, departmental approval system is not sound, low efficiency of organizational communication and coordination. Whether acting habits of mind or office skills practical, the learning and adaptation ability of secretaries have raised higher requirements.

### **1.3.2. Emergency risk spillover and intensification of mass conflicts**

The "rush to buy green beans" during the SARS outbreak in 2003, the "sky-high price of masks" at the beginning of the new pneumonia epidemic, and the "rush to buy 63 yuan cabbage in Zhengzhou" triggered by the quarantine of the epidemic are all ripple effects caused by risk externalities. These are all ripple effects caused by the external spillover effects of risk. These are not only related to people's perceptions and inadequate public health prevention mechanisms at the grassroots level, but also to the lack of attention of grassroots governments to other potential risks arising from epidemic risks. <sup>[5]</sup> As a result, there is a failure of decision making in the selection of risk response initiatives, resulting in a "snowball" effect of risk and more complex emergency problems. At the same time, the grassroots people are more likely to be influenced by rumors and act irrationally in the face of risks, and the grassroots government lacks psychological reassurance and concern for the people in emergency risk prevention and control, and the power disparity between the government and the people has led to a tendency of confrontation between the grassroots people and government agencies in crisis management actions, which has increased the resistance to the work of the grassroots secretaries.

### **1.3.3. Frequent data dissemination and increased risk of compromise**

The secretary, as the leader's close staff, is involved in the storage sharing and transmission flow of a large number of documents, data, confidential information, etc. in the office. Under the epidemic, the secretary's office mode has been transformed, releasing the secretary from the cramped office while posing new challenges to confidentiality work. Due to the wide distribution and circulation of the workplace of the grassroots secretarial staff, the complexity of contact with people, the randomness of time away from home, the frequency of information release and other factors easily lead to system attacks, virus invasion, data leakage, data theft and other problems, bringing threats to the organization's data privacy and healthy development. At the same time, it also provides a breeding ground for violations of confidentiality principles such as bringing out confidential documents privately, using personal social software to disseminate and handle confidential matters, copying and scanning confidential documents in private places, etc. The act of leaking unit secrets in an invisible way increases the risk of secret leaks by secretaries. Data and privacy security issues have become a longstanding pain point of the online office, which also gives the grassroots secretaries of the confidentiality work sounded the security protection alarm.

## **2. Analysis of the problems of secretarial work capacity of grassroots government agencies in the post-epidemic era**

### **2.1. Insufficient emergency response capability and lack of experience in early warning work**

In an interview with the secretary staff of the grassroots government, interviewee A said, "The first time I knew about the new crown pneumonia epidemic was when I brushed up on Weibo, and many sources of news about the situation in other areas were online social platforms of all kinds, and sometimes I would see some information released by the central government, and I hardly saw the

latest news from the grassroots government here." This shows that some grassroots governments are still relying on the higher or central government for emergency early warning, and lack overall planning and guidance, resulting in insufficient emergency early warning capability of the grassroots governments themselves. Although some grassroots governments are able to quickly organize government administrators to take emergency management actions after a public health emergency, their ability to frontload emergency management work is lacking, for one thing, because of the lack of training on emergency management plans for grassroots government administrators due to obstructed resources, resulting in a lack of understanding of emergency management work contents and processes among basic government administrators, who have to spend time arranging for government administration work in the emergency situation after a public emergency. In case of emergency after a public emergency, it takes time to arrange emergency management for government administrators, which reduces the efficiency of emergency management. Second, there is a lack of regular management of public health emergencies and failure to prepare adequate supplies for public health emergencies before the occurrence of a new crown pneumonia outbreak, and medical supplies such as masks, alcohol, and disinfectant solutions were not available to meet public demand for a long time after the outbreak of the new crown pneumonia outbreak.

## **2.2. Lack of resilient governing capacity and rigid collaborative governance system**

In the past, urban grassroots governments faced a relatively single type of emergencies, which naturally corresponded to the management functions of relevant business departments, and then combined with the coordinating and operating agencies of higher administrative organs, they were able to tote the risks in a relatively smooth manner. However, according to the current development situation in the post-epidemic era, with the continuous adjustment and enrichment of the functions of the grassroots emergency agencies and the deepening importance of society for public health emergencies, the current public health organization and management system of the urban grassroots government alone has failed to keep up with the requirements of the development of the times. The process of epidemic prevention and control governance transcends the administrative capacity of the street level, breaking the boundaries of jurisdiction, departmental boundaries, and organizational nature, which is no longer a matter for the urban grassroots government itself. The street has limited capacity to deal with the new epidemic, and the shortcomings are obvious, requiring the coordination of all relevant functional departments and some social entities. The situation is that the action lags behind the development of the epidemic. Urban grassroots are trapped by the old organizational management system, and because the responsibilities of grassroots government secretaries were scattered in the past, they could not immediately coordinate from the emergency management model, showing that the flexible coordination ability needs to be improved, and in the process of work there are difficulties in coordination, some information interaction is obstructed, and problems are more difficult to deal with.

## **2.3. Insufficient application of information technology and single means of data delivery**

The greatest characteristic of grass-roots government information governance lies in the integration of digital information technology with the means model of grass-roots management, the construction of an information platform suitable for the development of grass-roots management with the help of digital technology, and then the integration of resources and manpower allocation with the help of the platform to finally realize the situation of common governance and sharing. However, the problem in the process of grassroots secretary work is the lack of information technology mastery, resulting in the effect that information cannot be shared and effectively processed in a timely manner, and the effectiveness of epidemic network governance is not obvious enough. In addition, in the

process of fighting the new crown pneumonia epidemic, the information communication channels between the grassroots government and the residents of the district and the various joint prevention and control departments are crucial, not only to the credibility of the government, but also directly determine the success of the fight against the epidemic. However, in practice, because of the sudden outbreak of the epidemic, the secretarial staff communicated more with departments and units that did not originally dovetail with each other, and business that was not handled on a daily basis had to be carried out as required. The unfamiliarity of the cooperative units with each other and the lack of relevant experience in coordination and cooperation could easily expose problems, for example, in the early stage of vaccination for the new crown, the secretarial staff was asked to report the basic information of residents in each district and village area for statistical vaccination. However, when it came to the actual vaccination, some communities and village houses could not provide the list, which led to the discrepancy between the registration of the preliminary vaccination data and the actual number of people.<sup>[6]</sup>

### **3. Research on the path of improving the work ability of secretaries in grassroots government agencies**

#### **3.1. Establish emergency management awareness and enhance the concept of public service**

As a secretary, in the emergency management, first of all, through foresight, prediction and prevention of scientific thinking and effective means, the occurrence of emergencies to analyze and judge in advance, to reduce the chance of emergencies or reduce the damage caused by emergencies, so as to achieve "prevention before it is too late". Here, in view of the current problem of weak crisis awareness among secretaries in China, we propose two requirements to be done in the work of "prevention-oriented": First, we should cultivate crisis awareness and introduce crisis awareness into the daily management of the government. From a long-term perspective, it is important to take the mindset of encountering and coping with emergencies in a stable period, to consider and predict in advance the various emergency situations that the government may face, to deal with information and intelligence during the latency period of emergencies, and to make scientific predictions and judgments, and to analyze the probability of emergencies and the possible negative effects after they occur; secondly, to ensure that the interests of the grassroots are responded to, as emergencies bring about a lot of damage to people and property. Because emergencies bring harm to people's lives and property, in the response to emergencies, grass-roots government secretaries must always uphold the concept of "people-oriented", must ensure the safety of victims and affected people as the basic premise, to reduce casualty losses in the first place.

#### **3.2. Cultivate the concept of collaborative governance and build a "line of defense" between the government and the people**

How to deal with public health emergencies in the post-epidemic era is a major issue in front of us, and it has also become a problem that the grassroots government, which communicates directly with the people, must face directly. Grassroots secretaries and community committees are often the most direct "mouthpieces" of grassroots government, acting as a bridge between the government and the public. The consciousness of social subjects from all walks of life to manage public health emergencies, and to promote the responsibility of social subjects from passive performance to active responsibility, is an important manifestation of the benign interaction of contemporary urban grassroots democracy. The open crisis emergency management system has already been practiced within the EU organizations. Both the civil defense front and the government level should share and transfer information without barriers, and improve the overall crisis management and business

sustainability capacity by improving the techniques and functions of different subjects and organizations. [7] With the joint capability to deal with public emergencies, the secretary of the grassroots government can not only provide the organizational leaders of the grassroots sector with a strong implementation guarantee for decision-making, but also make adjustments and changes in the operational strategy according to the actual situation based on the information available to all parties.

### 3.3. Mastering intelligent information technology and strengthening the ability to use data

In the process of post-epidemic era, digital technologies are mostly used to grasp and track all kinds of unexpected information and personnel flow in a timely manner. On the one hand, secretaries need to build a comprehensive governance service platform for government agencies with artificial intelligence, cloud computing and other technologies to reach an efficient information sharing mechanism, effectively allocate and reorganize resources, and build a fullcoverage information network. On the other hand, in response to the normal development of epidemics, secretarial staff need to build a processing system for public emergencies, to ensure that communities and streets can promptly link grassroots government and residents closely, respond to emergencies in a timely manner and effectively build feedback and processing channels, and ensure that grassroots government can rely on intelligent information platforms to arrange tasks and guide community residents to participate in work related to community management.

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