

Reflections on the Role and Practical Approaches of News Propaganda in Grassroots Governance

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ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of deepening reforms in the grassroots governance system in the new era, news publicity serves as a critical channel for policy dissemination and public sentiment consolidation. This paper examines the contradictions within current grassroots publicity efforts, including the mismatch between single-channel dissemination and diverse public information consumption patterns, the disconnect between formalistic policy interpretation and actual public needs, and the conflict between fragmented multi-agency management and the demand for governance coordination. These contradictions lead to ineffective policy implementation and low public engagement. The paper then proposes targeted optimization pathways, aiming to provide insights and methodological references for overcoming the "last mile" challenges in grassroots governance.

KEYWORDS

Grassroots governance; News publicity; Communication matrix; Demand-oriented approach

1 Introduction

In the development of urban and rural grassroots governance in China, the introduction of various people-oriented policies has placed higher demands on the speed of information dissemination. In this regard, news publicity plays a vital role, undertaking tasks such as interpreting legal documents, shaping public opinion, and mobilizing public participation. However, in practice, specific social assistance policies concerning elderly services, healthcare, and education—which directly impact citizens' livelihoods—face misinterpretation at the community level. Some individuals struggle to access public services due to limited information channels, while management conflicts sometimes escalate into mass incidents because of unclear policy explanations. Thus, optimizing grassroots news publicity holds practical significance. This paper aims to address the disconnect between current communication channels and residents' daily lives, the gap between policy interpretation and public understanding, and the waste of resources due to fragmented departmental collaboration. It seeks targeted solutions to activate the public's role as key participants in governance practices, elevate the level of grassroots governance, and enhance its effectiveness.

2 The core role of news publicity in grassroots governance

2.1 Bridging governance policies and public understanding

Grassroots governance policies often contain specialized terminology that ordinary citizens struggle to grasp directly. News publicity simplifies these concepts, transforming them into accessible, practical guides for daily life. Take the new rural medical insurance policy as an example: publicity teams used data visualization to clearly illustrate changes in reimbursement rates and produced dialect-based radio dramas that explained concepts such as deductibles and drug directories. Groups like the elderly, migrant workers, and people with disabilities often face gaps in policy communication. To address this, outreach teams set up policy translation stations at community activity centers. Community grid managers break down the smart bracelet application steps into eight sets of real-life photos, from scanning ID QR codes to filling in emergency contacts. Each step corresponds to a specific interface screenshot with handwritten annotations^[1]. For migrant workers, laborers were hired to act out policy scenarios using props like hard hats and toolkits to visually demonstrate the entire workers' compensation claims process, making policy services tangible and accessible to the public.

2.2 Establishing two-way communication channels in grassroots governance

In grassroots governance, one-way policy dissemination often becomes a monologue. Journalists from county-level media convergence centers documented community grid managers inspecting dilapidated houses during a rainstorm and captured scenes of a septuagenarian Party member voluntarily clearing icy roads. These moments were compiled

into a 3-minute documentary micro-video. After circulating on community electronic screens, it motivated more residents to participate actively in self-governance. In conflict mediation, short videos filmed by villagers themselves show how neighbors resolve homestead disputes with guidance from elder mediators. This makes governance outcomes tangible and perceptible, transforming residents from passive recipients into active participants. Each community established neighborhood observation points, staffed by retired teachers and property managers, which submitted monthly lists of resident needs. In urban-rural fringe zones, publicity departments partnered with delivery stations to establish mobile neighborhood service points, where couriers collected needs from new urban residents during package deliveries ^[2]. Policy information thus ceased being unidirectionally disseminated, instead becoming co-created and validated with the public. This further consolidated community consensus and energized residents to proactively engage in governance, oversight, and innovation.

3 Practical challenges in news publicity practices for grassroots governance

3.1 Mismatch between communication channels and public reception habits

Currently, a disconnect exists between grassroots information dissemination channels and the public's actual methods of information reception. Publicity efforts still heavily rely on bulletin boards, community broadcast stations, paper notices, and government WeChat official accounts. These channels struggle to reach diverse social groups effectively. The elderly population is accustomed to traditional paper notices and broadcasts; however, these methods have limited timeliness and information capacity, and many seniors experience declining visual and auditory abilities. Migrant workers and laborers face intense workloads and irregular schedules, requiring them to access information in fragmented time slots through new media formats, such as short videos. Although short videos, livestreams, and information feeds are now widespread across society, most grassroots publicity entities fail to create tailored content for different age groups, occupational types, and knowledge structures ^[3]. Simultaneously, information access channels are shifting across demographics: older people are increasingly relying on WeChat groups, while migrant workers and youth are turning to short video and livestreaming platforms. Grassroots communication channels, however, lag in responsiveness. Support for specialized audiences remains inadequate—voice-announcement systems for the visually impaired lack widespread adoption, and sign-language videos for deaf people remain scarce, directly reducing the reach of public policy.

3.2 Weak alignment between publicity content and grassroots governance needs

During grassroots governance policy promotion, vast amounts of publicity materials mechanically replicate the original text of higher-level documents. Complex legal concepts, lengthy professional terminology, and cumbersome procedural descriptions from policy texts are disseminated directly into public communication channels without adaptation. Ordinary citizens must sift through dense texts to identify clauses relevant to their interests. Simultaneously, campaigns overemphasize workflow reporting and achievement displays while downplaying critical implementation details—such as target beneficiaries, application requirements, and document checklists—leaving citizens unable to derive actionable guidance from policy communications. Updates to public service information addressing high-frequency community needs lag severely. This is particularly evident for long-standing governance issues—such as disputes over elevator maintenance responsibility in aging residential complexes, conflicts over funding plans for elevator installations, and disordered oversight of property service standards—which frequently trigger disputes. Rarely do publicity materials provide in-depth policy interpretations or strategic guidance on these matters, exacerbating trust crises in grassroots governance. Furthermore, daily rights protection areas remain equally weak. Legal knowledge urgently needing dissemination—such as shelter procedures for domestic violence victims, legal avenues for migrant workers to claim unpaid wages, and key evidence preservation for consumer rights protection—rarely receives specialized communication. Public awareness efforts struggle to provide support when citizens need informational backing the most ^[4].

3.3 Insufficient coordination among communication entities and resource integration

Grassroots governance often employs parallel, multi-headed management structures. Multiple entities—including subdistrict Party-mass service centers, neighborhood committees, property management offices, and functional department outposts—all require publicity efforts. Yet these entities lack both joint consultation mechanisms for planning campaigns and resource-sharing platforms for content creation. During the same period, overlapping publicity tasks from different departments compound the issue: while the health system promotes the family doctor enrollment program, law enforcement organizes briefings on illegal construction demolition policies; environmental agencies conduct waste sorting training; and cultural education departments push intangible cultural heritage outreach. This

dense publicity schedule overwhelms residents with information overload, fostering resistance ^[5]. Regarding news publicity resource allocation, identical anti-fraud flyers are separately printed by the police, banks, and communities. Party-building exhibition boards underwent repeated updates to meet the demands of the Party Office, the Organization Department, and the Discipline Inspection Commission. The severe shortage of dedicated publicity positions at the grassroots level, coupled with staffing restrictions that prevent the deployment of professionals skilled in omnichannel content production, data analysis, and visual design, undermines efforts to elevate grassroots governance capabilities. Furthermore, flawed assessment and incentive mechanisms further entrenched collaboration barriers. Current evaluation standards remain dominated by quantitative metrics, with the number of information releases, click-through rates, and event frequency serving as core assessment dimensions. Under this system, grassroots governance work has been devolved into a mechanistic pursuit of quantitative metrics. Performance feedback lacks closed-loop management, and key validity indicators—such as the public's genuine sense of fulfillment, the accuracy of policy interpretation, and the contribution rate to conflict resolution—carry insufficient weight. This makes it challenging to motivate grassroots personnel in governance, resulting in slow overall improvements in efficiency.

4 Practical pathways for optimizing the role of news propaganda in grassroots governance

4.1 Building an integrated online-offline publicity matrix

To achieve adequate coverage in grassroots governance, news publicity must leverage the information-dissemination capabilities of short-video platforms. Establish official accounts on channels like Douyin and WeChat Video Accounts. Targeting the fragmented commuting time of migrant workers, produce a practical policy interpretation series with episodes under 90 seconds. Break down the Social Security transfer process into three distinct steps: eligibility verification, document preparation, and online application. For elderly audiences, weekly live Q&A sessions at fixed times should feature full-screen, large subtitles and slow-paced explanations of hot topics, such as new medical insurance reimbursement regulations. For physical infrastructure, each community service station should be equipped with terminals that support remote video consultations to alleviate travel burdens for vulnerable groups. For families with left-behind children, digital assistance corners in community libraries should be established, with volunteers helping elderly guardians access school notifications via family accounts. Mobile information booths at rural markets broadcast dialect-specific recordings of industrial support policies during peak trading hours ^[6]. Additionally, accessible communication channels are established, allowing visually impaired individuals to receive automated voice navigation when calling community hotlines. In contrast, deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals can text to obtain illustrated policy guides—ensuring all groups promptly access updated policy information.

4.2 Establishing demand-driven content generation mechanisms

To effectively address the disconnect between media publicity content and grassroots governance needs, establish year-round feedback collection stations in each community. Add WeChat QR codes for submitting requests and hold monthly demand review meetings at the end of each month. Categorize public feedback into policy inquiries, service requests, and complaints/suggestions, maintaining detailed records. For high-frequency needs, such as employment, healthcare, and education, form specialized research teams to conduct in-depth household interviews in collaboration with university groups. For major policy interpretations, publish illustrated guides alongside demonstration videos highlighting common mistakes. For public service announcements, integrate electronic screens into community health center registration systems to update clinic schedules and automatically notify residents with contracted family doctors of schedule changes. Additionally, launch a case-sharing platform inviting residents who obtained residence permits that month to share their experiences through video testimonials. For recurring consultation hotspots, such as public parking fee rules, department heads participated in live Q&A sessions to directly address concerns, enabling the continuous refinement of promotional materials.

4.3 Building a party committee-led, multi-stakeholder participation system for publicity

Optimizing the role of news publicity in grassroots governance requires strengthening the Party Committee's unified leadership over publicity work. Specifically, a quarterly joint meeting system led by subdistrict Party committees should be established, implementing a "single collection, multi-channel dissemination" operational mechanism for cross-cutting tasks, such as sanitation campaigns and legal education initiatives ^[7]. Multi-stakeholder participation channels require a clear delineation of responsibilities. For instance, volunteer teams could be entrusted to operate policy guidance stations for families with vulnerable children. At the same time, judicial mediators could be specifically invited to review domestic violence rights protection guides, thereby meeting diverse public needs for policy information.

Furthermore, evaluation metrics must be reformed to incorporate core weightings, such as "public sense of fulfillment," "accuracy of policy interpretation," and "contribution rate to conflict resolution." Quality-based indicators should inform dedicated reward systems and promotion pathways, moving beyond mere output metrics to foster a quality-oriented mindset. This approach will enhance grassroots staff engagement in management and elevate overall governance standards at the community level.

5 Conclusion

Grassroots news publicity serves as a vital bridge connecting policies with the public. Current challenges—including mismatched communication channels, misaligned content supply and demand, and inadequate coordination mechanisms—have diminished the effectiveness of policy delivery. To address these issues, this paper proposes constructing an integrated online-offline communication matrix targeting elderly populations and migrant workers, establishing a demand-driven content production mechanism to enhance the practicality of policy interpretation, and strengthening multi-party collaboration under Party committee coordination. Future efforts may explore leveraging artificial intelligence to achieve intelligent matching and targeted delivery of policy information, thereby transforming news publicity into a catalyst for consolidating grassroots governance efforts.

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