

A Study on the Intervention of Case Work in the Emotional Dilemma of Family Letters and Visits from the Perspective of Emotional Governance

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Abstract: Under the background of population aging and the modernization of grassroots governance, the phenomenon of the group losing their only child expressing their demands through letters and visits has become a difficult problem in grassroots governance. Based on the theory of emotional governance, this study uses case analysis to find that the demand for letters and visits has multi-dimensional emotional characteristics. The surface is the demand for material security, and the essence is the deep emotional needs such as psychological trauma repair and social identity reconstruction. However, the existing petition mechanism focuses on procedural norms and administrative efficiency, and it is difficult to effectively respond to the complex emotional needs, resulting in 'the end of the program and the problem is not concluded'. The study proposes a progressive intervention program of "emotional response, guidance, and integration." Practice shows that professional social work services can relieve their emotional pain and guide them from problem respondents to governance participants. The results provide a professional method reference for the petition work of special groups, and have theoretical and practical significance for the modernization transformation of grassroots governance system.

1. Research background

1.1 Under the background of aging, the problem of letters and visits of families bereft of their only child is highlighted

With the gradual aging of China's population, the families who have lost their only child, as a special group left over by historical policies, are suffering from severe survival and development difficulties. Although China's current pension service system is constantly improving, there is a lack of policy supply and emotional attention for such special groups, which further leads to the group's persistent anxiety in medical education, psychological counseling, and pension placement. This structural contradiction naturally evolves into a violent petition conflict in grassroots governance^[1]. Although the "14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of the Aging Industry and the Elderly

Care Service System " in 2022 includes the " care service for the elderly with special difficulties " into the key tasks, the existing policies focus more on material compensation than emotional repair, which leads to the coexistence of economic and emotional appeals in the process of letters and visits by families bereft of their only child. In addition, traditional letters and visits institutions habitually use administrative methods to deal with letters and visits, ignoring emotional comfort. Thus, the petition work falls into the governance dilemma of the end of the procedure and the unsolved heart^[2]. This kind of emotional deposition not only aggravates the psychological crisis of the individual petitioners, but also forms a vicious cycle of repeated petitions in the field of grassroots governance.

1.2 The necessity and value of petition social work intervention

Petition is a communication bridge between the government and citizens, and its core function is to resolve social contradictions. Although the principle of " paying equal attention to prevention and resolution " is clearly put forward in the newly revised " Regulations on the Work of Letters and Visits " in 2022, the traditional mechanism of letters and visits still follows the administrative treatment and ignores its emotional needs. The rigidity of the mechanism cannot pay attention to the inner flexibility of the petitioners^[3]. In this context, social workers have become the key to solving the dilemma of letters and visits with the concept of helping people to help themselves and humanistic values. Social workers can obtain the trust of petitioners as an independent third party, maintain the dignity of the subject injured by administrative treatment for the purpose of emotional repair, and play the role of policy readers, emotional counselors and resource linkers^[4].

2. Theoretical basis and research methods

Although emotional governance has not yet formed a complete theoretical paradigm, it has long been used as a perspective and method of intervention in academic research practice. The concept of " emotion-based governance " proposed by Wang (2018) focuses on the emotional operation logic in Chinese political culture, that is, emotion rises from the personal field to the field of public governance, which lays a foundation for thinking about the emotional governance of the group who has lost their only child^[5]. The multi-level governance framework of He Xuesong (2016) has a pioneering role in theory, but it is necessary to further consider how to balance the relationship between emotional counseling and handling affairs according to law based on the problem of letters and visits of the group who have lost their only child. From the perspective of emotional governance^[6], Yang Mengyun focuses on the identification and emotional support of social work on the emotions of petitioners, and explores the path of social work intervention in petition work at the level of emotional governance^[7]. Ren Wenqi 's (2019) research reveals the key role of social work in the transformation of emotional governance, but it should be pointed out that there are still obvious limitations of social work in emotional practice^[8]. From the perspective of emotional and emotional governance, this paper solves the problem of grassroots petition governance by constructing an analytical framework of ' emotional response-guidance-integration ' in the process of petition. At the level of emotional response, the research focuses on how to establish a dialogue between trauma and system ; at the level of emotional guidance, it focuses on exploring how to transform negative emotions into constructive positive emotions ; at the level of emotional integration, the core lies in endogenous empowerment and external links. This paper adopts the method of qualitative research. By selecting a typical petition case of the family who lost their only child, the subjective experience and meaning construction of the service object are obtained through semi-structured interviews and scale tests.

3. The emotional generation mechanism of the petition dilemma of the families who lost their only child

There is a complex emotional logic behind the letters and visits of the families who have lost their only child. Its generation mechanism mainly includes two levels: the internal emotional experience of the petition subject and the external institutional response^[9]. In terms of the main body, the families who lost their only child show a complex emotional representation. First of all, it is out of the survival anxiety of the future old-age care. The frequent occurrence of the words "nowhere to go" in the petition appeal is the external projection of this anxiety; in addition, the deeper is the traumatic fixation of the pain of bereavement; in addition, under the public opinion, the petitioners who lost their only child are often labeled as "absolute" stigmatized labels. They hope to seek identity and social respect through petitions^[10]. At the institutional level, it is mainly reflected in two mutually reinforcing aspects. On the one hand, the emotional neglect caused by the procedural rigidity of the petition system, and the standard processing process requires that the petition appeal be transformed into a normative expression, which is easy to stimulate the irrational emotional expression of the petitioners. On the other hand, the administrative system naturally has a cold emotional distance, and there is an insurmountable gap between the staff and the petitioners in terms of communication, deepening their feelings of being abandoned by the system^[11]. The technical roadmap of this study is shown in Figure 1. For social workers involved in the intervention process, understanding this complex emotional mechanism—intertwined with personal grief and institutional alienation—is crucial for developing effective intervention strategies.

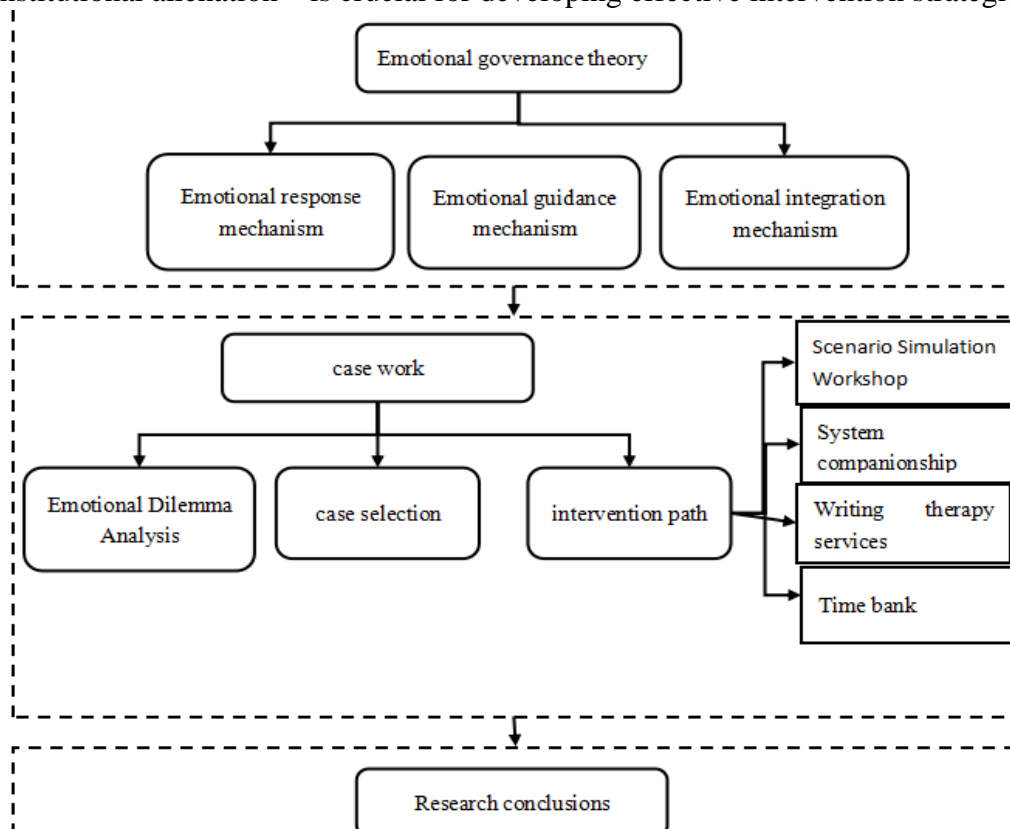


Figure 1 Technology roadmap

4. Analysis of social work intervention in the loss of the only child family petition case

4.1 Case background

Zhang Jianguo (pseudonym), 58 years old, and his wife Li Fang (pseudonym), 56 years old, retired from state-owned enterprises and supermarkets respectively, with a monthly pension of 4000 yuan. In 2020, after the death of the only son Zhang Qiang due to a car accident, the two were deeply saddened. Zhang Jianguo became silent and irritable, often sitting alone in his son's room, with less communication with his wife, and the relationship between husband and wife was tense; Li Fang washed his face with tears, and his body became worse and worse. The handling of his son's affairs and Li Fang's medical expenses increased the family's economic burden. Out of resistance to the sympathetic eyes of others, they gradually alienate their relatives and friends and no longer participate in social interaction. Zhang Jianguo wrote letters and visits to the relevant departments many times emotionally, eager to understand the policies of the families who lost their only child in economic subsidies, medical security, pension services and other aspects, and get help. His fierce words put pressure on the work of the relevant departments.

4.2 Social work intervention in the early emotional assessment

4.2.1 Evaluation methods

During the winter vacation, the author practiced in the petition office, and conducted in-depth interviews with Zhang Jianguo and his wife by means of interview and psychological scale evaluation to understand their inner feelings, emotional state and life status. PANS emotion scale was used to quantitatively evaluate their psychological and emotional status.

4.2.2 Evaluation content and results

Table 1 PANS pre-measurement table

emotional dimension	specific indicators	Zhang Jianguo scores	Li Fang score	critical value	interpretation of results
negative affect	Traumatic grief	82	85	≥ 60	There was a severe traumatic reaction
	Anxiety experience	78	83	≥ 65	Reaching clinical anxiety levels
	Anger	68	59	≥ 55	Significantly higher than the norm
Positive emotion	Sense of hope in life	25	18	≤ 40	Serious lack of life motivation
	Sense of social connection	20	15	≤ 35	There is a significant social withdrawal
	Self-efficacy	28	22	≤ 40	Decision-making ability is significantly impaired
Composite index	Emotional balance index	-177	-190	≤ -50	The overall emotional state is seriously unbalanced
	Emotion regulation ability	35	30	≤ 45	Emotional management ability is obviously insufficient

As shown in Table 1 (PANS Pre-measurement Table), it is evident that both Mr. Zhang Jianguo and his wife exhibited characteristics of emotional imbalance prior to social worker intervention. In terms of negative emotions, the scores of traumatic grief of the two people reached 82 points and 85 points respectively, far exceeding the clinical attention threshold (60 points), showing persistent insomnia and palpitation symptoms. And positive emotions also scored low, only 25 points and 18

points, reflecting the depth of helplessness and despair.

[Some interview records]

Conversation 1 :

SG : ' Uncle Zhang, can you tell me about your mood when you went to the office last time ? '

Zhang Jianguo : ' Every time I walk to that hall... I see the appearance of a strong son (son) lying in a pool of blood... They (staff) asked me to fill in the form, but I kept shaking with my pen... '

SG : ' You don 't need to recall that picture now. You just mentioned ' hand shaking ', when does this body reaction usually appear ? '

Li Fang : (Suddenly) ' He has nightmares every night ! Last month, I went to the Bureau of Letters and Visits and came back. I fell ill on the bus... '

Conversation 2 :

SG : ' Aunt Li, in what way do you ease the emotions of thinking about your child ? '

Li Fang : ' Mitigation ? I went to the grocery market and saw that the lychee-selling... Hadron loves to eat this most... I stood there crying to people 's stalls. Now even the sisters are afraid to answer the phone, their grandsons will play soy sauce... '

SG : ' How long has this social avoidance lasted ? '

Li Fang : ' Since he left... once old colleagues came to send condolences gold, I bang people out, their poor eyes... I can 't stand... '

In summary, the couple lost hope in life, and was shrouded in helplessness and despair all day. They were unable to regulate their negative emotions and re-establish contact with the outside world, so they vented their emotions through letters and visits.

4.3 The process of case work intervention

4.3.1 Emotional Response: Delivering Policies and Adjusting Psychology

After the intervention of social work, a ' policy thermometer ' scenario simulation workshop was carried out, in which policy interpretation experts and representatives of families who lost their only child were invited to participate. Before the start of the workshop, social workers learned in advance about the questions and concerns of the Zhang Jianguo couple on the policy, and communicated with experts to explain the content. By means of scenario simulation, the actual scenes such as policy application and handling are restored on the spot, so that the Zhang Jianguo couple can more intuitively understand the process and requirements of the policy ; at the same time, other representatives who have lost their only child are invited to share the successful experience of applying for policy assistance, so as to enhance their trust and confidence in the policy. Through many workshop activities, Zhang Jianguo and his wife gradually eliminated the conflict and misunderstanding of the policy and clarified the treatment they could enjoy. Anxiety was relieved.

The social workers provided significant emotional support and comfort to Mr. and Mrs. Zhang Jianguo by implementing the "Healing Time" companionship plan, which involved regular home visits and ongoing communication with the couple. In the process of this plan, guide them to express their emotions and pains reasonably, and make them feel understood and accepted by the ethical requirements of non-interruption and non-judgment. In addition, starting from their interests, social workers have carried out some activities such as playing chess, watching drama, walking and so on to help them transfer their attention and relieve their emotions. With the deepening of the companionship plan, Zhang Jianguo and his wife established a trust relationship with social workers, and the communication between husband and wife increased significantly.

4.3.2 Emotional guidance: Reshaping cognition and stimulating hope

To carry out the 'life reexamination' writing therapy service, social workers guided the Zhang Jianguo couple to review their life experiences through writing, especially the good times with their sons. Social workers discuss the content with them, guide them to look at the death of their son from different perspectives, and help them realize that although their son has left, the good memories of the past are still valuable, and the existence of life is also meaningful. In the process of writing, the Zhang Jianguo couple gradually began to experience their own life, had expectations for the future, and the negative cognition was changed to a certain extent.

4.3.3 Emotional integration: building a social capital support network

The social workers established a "Skills for Companionship" Time Bank, encouraging Mr. and Mrs. Zhang Jianguo to utilize their skills. For example, Zhang Jianguo is good at repairing home appliances, and Li Fang is good at cooking. They provide corresponding services for community residents and can obtain time points and corresponding subsidies. These points can be used to redeem the accompanying services provided by other residents, such as chatting with them, shopping, medical treatment, etc. In terms of link resources, social workers coordinate the social security department to calculate the pension gap, suggest supplementing commercial pension insurance, contacting charitable foundations (such as the China Population Welfare Foundation's 'Help for Families Lost Their Only Child'), and applying for special relief or living materials (such as rice, flour, grain and oil, and daily necessities). Thanks to the capital support network established by the social workers, Mr. and Mrs. Zhang Jianguo experienced enhanced life confidence and well-being.

Table 2 table PANS post-measurement table

Emotional dimension	Specific indicators	Score before intervention	Score after intervention	Change value	Rate of change	Clinical significance
Negative emotions	Traumatic grief	78.2	49.1	↓29.1	↓37.2%	To achieve a significant improvement threshold
	Anxiety experience	65.4	42.3	↓23.1	↓35.3%	Reduce to the normal range
	Anger	58.7	39.5	↓19.2	↓32.7%	Impulsive behavior risk reduction
Positive emotion	Sense of hope in life	32.5	56.8	↑24.3	↑74.8%	Building Positive LifeExpectations
	Sense of social connection	28.9	51.2	↑22.3	↑77.2%	The reduction of social avoidance behavior
	Self-efficacy	35.1	53.7	↑18.6	↑53.0%	Improve the ability of independent decision-making
Composite index Positive emotion	Emotional balance index	-45.7	+7.6	↑53.3	-	To achieve a negative to positive change
	Emotion regulation ability	41.3	59.8	↑18.5	↑44.8%	Significant improvement in coping strategies

4.3.4 Effect Evaluation and Case Closure

This intervention constructs a composite evaluation system, and verifies the effect of social work intervention from three dimensions: short-term emotional change, medium-term petition behavior and long-term social integration. In the short-term effect level, the PANS scale was still used to compare the post-test of the service objects. The results of Table 2 (PANS Post-measurement Table) indicate that Zhang Jianguo and his wife exhibited a positive transformation in their emotional energy, among which the traumatic grief index decreased by 37.2 %, and the sense of hope in life increased by 28.6 %. The company of social work made the two sides establish a safe attachment relationship. The frequency of Zhang Jianguo's expression of sad memory decreased from 3-4 times a week to 1-2 times a month, and the effect was obvious. The mid-term evaluation level focused on the improvement of petition behavior. The frequency of repeated petitions by Zhang Jianguo showed a downward trend, from 2.3 times a month before the intervention to 0.2 times after the intervention, and the petition appeals changed from the initial emotional accusations and complaints to rational discussion of policies. The long-term effect evaluation was carried out by participatory observation. In the follow-up visit after 1 year of intervention, it was found that the participation of Zhang Jianguo's couple in community activities was significantly improved. This change confirms the dual value of the emotional integration mechanism: not only to repair the individual social function, but also to reconstruct the interactive mode of grassroots governance.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the background of population aging, this study observes and intervenes in case studies from the perspective of emotional governance, aiming at the realistic dilemma of ignoring emotional appeals and rigid contradictions in letters and visits of families bereft of their only child, and reveals the structural defects of traditional letters and visits mechanism in dealing with letters and visits of families bereft of their only child. The study found that there are complex emotions such as survival anxiety, trauma fixation, trust crisis and social integration in the petition behavior of families who have lost their only child, and the rigid administrative procedures have exacerbated the governance dilemma of "unfinished business." At the intervention level, social workers employed scenario-based workshops, companionship programs, therapeutic writing, and time banking to address the emotional needs of the petitioners, guiding and integrating their experiences. These practices helped improve the clients' emotional well-being and rebuild their social support networks.

The research confirms that social work intervention can transform the negative emotions of the families who have lost their only child into positive motivation, and realize the shift from passive petition to active participation. This not only provides a reference for other special groups of social work intervention in petition, but also provides a new path for the effective integration of policy temperature and emotional dimension in grassroots governance.

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