

Original Paper

"Resilience" and "Fatigue" in Grassroots Governance: The Practical Logic of Community Workers in Conflict Mediation Work

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Abstract

In the process of promoting the modernization of grassroots governance, community workers, as the core force in conflict mediation, their "resilience" and "fatigue" states profoundly affect the governance effectiveness. This study adopts a mixed research method. Through field investigations, in-depth interviews and questionnaire surveys in six typical communities in the east, central and western regions, combined with the theories of resilient governance and stress management, it systematically analyzes the practical logic of community workers in conflict mediation. The research finds that workers have demonstrated strong "resilience" through means such as resource integration, relationship network construction, and policy innovation, effectively resolving various conflicts and disputes. However, at the same time, affected by work stressors, resource shortages and institutional deficiencies, 78% of workers suffer from fatigue to varying degrees, manifested as physical overwork, psychological anxiety and job burnout. "Resilience" and "fatigue" present a complex interactive relationship. "Resilience" can alleviate fatigue, while fatigue weakens the exertion of resilience, thereby affecting the effectiveness of grassroots governance. Based on this, this study proposes optimization paths from the three levels of individuals, communities and institutions, providing theoretical and practical references for improving the efficiency of grassroots governance and perfecting the conflict mediation mechanism.

Keywords

Grassroots governance Community worker Conflict mediation Resilience Fatigue Practical logic

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significance

Grassroots governance, as the "nerve endings" of the national governance system, is the "last mile" for the Party and the government to connect with the people, and it undertakes the key function of transforming policies into the well-being of the people. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China clearly states that "we should improve the social governance system, perfect the social governance system featuring joint construction, joint governance and shared benefits, and enhance the effectiveness of social governance." This strategic deployment profoundly reveals the cornerstone role of grassroots governance in promoting the modernization of national governance. At present, with the urbanization rate exceeding 65%, communities have become the convergence point of multiple stakeholders. The complexity of the population structure and the diversity of interest demands have led to frequent problems such as neighborhood disputes, property management conflicts, and family conflicts. According to statistics from the Ministry of Civil Affairs, in 2023, community mediation organizations across the country handled over 12 million cases of conflicts and disputes. Among them, group incidents caused by untimely or improper mediation accounted for 3.2%, and this figure has been on the rise year by year over the past five years, highlighting the urgency of building an efficient conflict mediation mechanism.

Introducing the concepts of "resilience" and "fatigue" into the research of grassroots governance is not only the need for theoretical innovation but also an inevitable response to practical predicaments. From a theoretical perspective, traditional research on grassroots governance mostly focuses on static structural analysis, while "resilience" emphasizes the dynamic adaptation and innovation capabilities of the system, and "fatigue" pays attention to the physical and mental wear and tear of the work subjects. The combination of the two provides a new paradigm for understanding the complexity of grassroots governance. From the practical perspective, community workers, as the direct executors of conflict mediation, their working status directly determines the governance effectiveness. According to the "Report on the Career Development of Community Workers in China", over 70% of the workers suffer from varying degrees of job burnout, and in economically developed regions, this proportion is even as high as 82%. The fatigue of workers not only affects the quality of mediation, but also threatens the sustainability of grassroots governance. For instance, in a certain first-tier city, due to the long-term fatigue work of community mediators, multiple family disputes failed to be mediated, eventually evolving into serious criminal cases, which has drawn widespread social attention. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the practical logic of "resilience" and "fatigue" is of great practical significance for optimizing resource allocation and improving the mediation mechanism.

2. Practical Manifestations of "Resilience" in Community Conflict Mediation Work

2.1 Resource integration and flexible Response

Community workers have demonstrated outstanding resource mobilization and integration capabilities

in conflict mediation. By mobilizing multiple forces, they have constructed an efficient conflict resolution system (Yang, Zhu, & Wan, 2025). Take the dispute over the installation of elevators in an old residential area in Hangzhou as an example. Faced with problems such as significant differences in residents' opinions, difficulties in raising funds, and complex technical coordination, community workers fully leveraged their advantages in resource integration, collaborated with the housing and urban-rural development department to obtain policy support and technical guidance, connected with design institutes for scheme design, and coordinated with construction units to ensure the quality of the project. At the same time, a "mediation think tank" was formed by organizing Party member volunteers, legal workers and resident representatives. Through holding 32 consultation meetings, the demands and concerns of each household were deeply understood, and personalized compensation plans were formulated. Eventually, 18 units were successfully installed with elevators. In this case, the workers also innovatively introduced financial institutions and launched the "low-interest loan for elevator Installation" service to solve the problem of capital shortage, fully demonstrating their ability to integrate resources and innovate.

When dealing with different types of conflicts, workers will flexibly adjust the mediation strategies according to the characteristics of the conflicts and the needs of the parties involved (Journal of Yunnan Agricultural University (Social Sciences), n.d.). When dealing with family disputes, workers often bring in professional forces such as psychological counselors and marriage and family counselors, and adopt the "emotional resonance method". Through patient listening and empathetic understanding, they help the parties involved release their emotions and resolve their mental knots. When mediating a divorce dispute between a couple, the worker, in collaboration with a marriage and family counselor, conducted multiple family interviews and found that the root cause of the conflict lay in the lack of effective communication between the couple. Subsequently, they organized the couple to participate in communication skills training courses, eventually leading to their reconciliation. When resolving property management conflicts, the workers, in collaboration with market supervision departments, sub-district offices and others, apply the "interest analysis method" to guide both parties to clarify their rights and responsibilities and sign the "Property Service Improvement Agreement". For disputes involving economic interests, workers will rely on professionals such as accountants and assessors to provide data support to ensure the fairness and impartiality of the mediation results. When it comes to group disputes, workers usually adopt a "divide and rule" strategy. They first accurately identify key figures, address their core demands, and then gradually promote overall mediation. According to statistics, after adopting differentiated mediation strategies, the success rate of conflict mediation has increased by more than 25% on average (for details, see Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of the Effectiveness of conflict Mediation under Different Mediation Strategies

Mediation Type	Strategy	Application Scenarios	Average Mediation Period	Increase in Success Rate	Typical Case Effect
Resource Integration Strategy		Elevator Installation Disputes in Old Residential Communities	Reduced from 60 days to 32 days	27%	In a Hangzhou community, through coordinating multiple parties, 18 units successfully installed elevators
Differentiated Mediation (Emotional Resonance Method)		Family Disputes	Reduced from 15 days to 7 days	30%	In a divorce dispute, with the intervention of psychological counseling, the mediation success rate reached 90%
Differentiated Mediation (Interest Analysis Method)		Property Management Disputes	Reduced from 22 days to 10 days	25%	In a certain community, by clarifying rights and responsibilities, a <i>Property Service Improvement Agreement</i> was signed
Relationship Network Construction Strategy		Neighborhood Noise Disputes	Reduced from 18 days to 5 days	40%	In a Wuhan community, by inviting mutual friends to participate, the conflict was resolved quickly
Policy Innovation Strategy		Digital Mediation (Smart Mini - Program)	Average online mediation duration: 2 hours	Efficiency increased by 40%	In a Shanghai community, online dispute handling accounted for 65% of the total disputes

2.2 Construction and Repair of Relationship Networks

The community acquaintance social network is an important support for conflict mediation work. Community workers are well aware of it and build and maintain relationship networks through various means, laying a solid foundation for mediation work. In the mediation of a neighborhood noise dispute in a certain community in Wuhan, the workers invited mutual friends and building leaders from both sides to participate in the mediation. By taking advantage of the trust relationship between them, the communication barriers were effectively reduced, gradually calming down the originally tense two sides and eventually reaching a settlement. Workers also proactively build relationship networks through regular visits and organizing activities such as "Neighborhood Festivals" and "Community Council Halls". For instance, a certain community in Chengdu has established a "Resident demand list" system, collecting residents' demands every month and classifying them for handling. As a result, 70% of conflicts have been resolved in their infancy, achieving a transformation from "passive mediation" to "active prevention". The community has also established a "Neighborhood Mutual Aid Team", encouraging residents to help each other and further enhancing the cohesion of the community.

In terms of repairing damaged relationships, workers adopt a variety of innovative approaches. In response to the intense conflicts in a certain community caused by the problem of pets disturbing residents, workers organized pet owners and affected residents to jointly participate in pet training courses. During the process of cooperative learning, they enhanced mutual understanding and repaired the relationship. In addition, community workers are also adept at leveraging the influence of "opinion leaders", such as retired cadres and community celebrities, to assist in the implementation of mediation work. These "opinion leaders", relying on their own prestige and credibility, can play a key role in the mediation of conflicts. When a certain community was mediating a dispute over a shop's occupation of the street, it invited a respected retired cadre from the local area to participate. Under his persuasion, the shop operator voluntarily rectified the situation, and the surrounding residents also expressed their understanding. The conflict was thus properly resolved.

2.3 Policy Application and Innovative Practice

Policies and regulations are important bases for mediation work, and community workers need to accurately grasp and flexibly apply them. In a demolition dispute in a certain urban village in Xi 'an, workers, based on legal provisions such as the Land Administration Law and the Civil Code, clearly defined the standards for demolition compensation. At the same time, they formulated a "monetary compensation + property rights exchange" plan in combination with local policies to ensure that the mediation was legal and compliant. During the mediation process, the workers also organized policy briefings to explain the relevant policies in detail to the residents and eliminate their doubts. When handling labor disputes, workers need to be familiar with regulations such as the "Labor Contract Law" and the "Law on Mediation and Arbitration of Labor Disputes". When mediating disputes over marriage and family, it is necessary to follow the relevant provisions of the Marriage and Family Chapter of the Civil Code, ensuring that the law is the basis and reason is used to convince people. In

grassroots practice, community workers have also been actively exploring policy innovations to enhance the quality and efficiency of mediation work. A community in Shanghai has developed a "Smart Mediation" mini-program, integrating functions such as online consultation, evidence submission, and remote mediation, which has increased the mediation efficiency by 40%. This model has been promoted throughout the city. The mini-program also sets up a "Policy and Regulation Database", making it convenient for workers and parties involved to consult relevant policies at any time. A certain community in Zhengzhou has established a "Mediation case library", converting typical cases into standardized mediation processes for workers to refer to and learn from. The case library covers multiple fields such as neighborhood disputes, property management conflicts, and family disputes. Through the study and analysis of the cases, the mediation ability of the workers has been significantly improved. In addition, some communities have also explored a "mediation point system", linking residents' enthusiasm for participating in mediation with community welfare to stimulate the vitality of self-governance among the masses. Each time residents successfully participate in mediation, they can earn corresponding points. These points can be exchanged for daily necessities or community services. After the implementation of this system, the enthusiasm of community residents to participate in mediation has greatly increased, creating a favorable atmosphere of "everyone participating in mediation and jointly building a harmonious community".

3. Analysis of the "Fatigue" Phenomenon in Community Conflict Mediation Work

3.1 Specific Manifestations of "Fatigue"

Physically, research shows that 78% of workers work an average of more than 10 hours a day, 42% suffer from occupational diseases such as cervical spondylosis and lumbar intervertebral disc protrusion, and 35% experience symptoms such as insomnia and anxiety due to long-term staying up late. During periods with a high incidence of conflicts, such as the heating season and holidays, it becomes the norm for workers to work overtime continuously. Psychologically, in the face of accusations and abuse from the parties involved, workers generally bear tremendous psychological pressure. A community worker admitted, "When mediating family disputes, I often become the target for both sides to vent their emotions. I even received threatening text messages and couldn't sleep all night." Under long-term high-pressure conditions, some workers have experienced problems such as emotional outbursts and memory decline.

At the professional level, 42% of the respondents indicated that they "lost enthusiasm for work" and believed that their own value had not been recognized. 28% have a clear intention to resign. The main reasons include high work intensity (65%), low sense of achievement (53%), and limited promotion opportunities (41%). In the past three years, the turnover rate of newly recruited community workers in a certain street has been as high as 35%, and most of those who left are young talents with professional backgrounds, which has seriously affected the stability of the grassroots governance team. (See Table 2 for details)

Table 2. Investigation and Statistics on the Fatigue Status of Community Workers

Fatigue Dimension	Specific Manifestations	Proportion	Illustrative Case
Physical Fatigue	Working over 10 hours per day on average	78%	During the peak heating season dispute period, a community worker worked 14 hours a day for 30 consecutive days
Physical Fatigue	Suffering from occupational diseases such as cervical spondylosis and lumbar disc herniation	42%	Long - term exposure to handling dispute documents at a desk and frequent field visits led to physical strain
Physical Fatigue	Experiencing insomnia, anxiety, etc. due to long - term staying up late	35%	Inability to return to normal sleep patterns after handling emergency incidents at night
Psychological Fatigue	Encountering accusations and verbal abuse from parties involved	100% (experienced by all respondents)	Becoming the target of emotional outbursts during family dispute mediation and receiving threatening text messages
Psychological Fatigue	Developing issues such as emotional outbursts and memory decline	28%	Experiencing chaotic communication logic due to excessive stress when handling complex disputes
Occupational Burnout	Losing enthusiasm for work	42%	Senior employees with over 5 years of experience stating, "Repeated labor without seeing value"
Occupational Burnout	Having a clear intention to resign	28%	Young workers choosing to leave due to limited promotion prospects and low salary

3.2 Analysis of the Causes of "Fatigue"

In terms of the sources of work pressure, the mediation of conflicts is characterized by suddenness, complexity and repetition. Research shows that each worker handles 3 to 5 disputes per day on average, and major conflicts need to be followed up continuously for several weeks or even months. For instance, a property dispute involved hundreds of households. The mediator had to communicate and coordinate repeatedly, which took as long as half a year. Insufficient resource support has exacerbated the workload. Over 60% of the communities have only 1-2 full-time mediators, lacking professional support such as psychological counselors and legal advisors. Training resources are scarce, and 63% of the workers have not received systematic mediation skills training. A community mediator said, "When encountering complex legal issues, I can only search for information online by myself and feel unsure." In terms of the institutional environment, the assessment overly focuses on the quantity rather than the quality of mediation, and the filling of formal reports takes up 30% of the working time. A certain community worker needs to fill in more than 20 kinds of reports every month. The contents are repetitive and lack practical significance. The problem of unequal rights and responsibilities is prominent. For instance, a community worker was held accountable for failed mediation but had no right to access law enforcement resources, leading to a predicament of "having responsibilities but no authority". Furthermore, social cognitive biases (such as considering mediation "merely to break up a fight") further weaken the professional identity of workers. Some residents were uncooperative with the mediation work and even questioned the fairness of the mediators, which intensified the psychological pressure on the workers.

4. The Interrelationship and Influence between "Toughness" and "Fatigue"

4.1 Interaction Mechanism

"Resilience" and "fatigue" present a complex interactive relationship, and the two form a dynamic interaction in the practice of conflict mediation among community workers. From the perspective of the alleviating effect of "resilience" on "fatigue", flexible adjustment strategies are the key factors in reducing the workload. Taking the dispute over parking space allocation in an old residential area of a certain second-tier city as an example, community workers used the "demand stratification analysis method" to classify residents based on dimensions such as usage frequency and special needs, and formulated a stepped parking plan. This not only shortened the mediation period from an average of 20 days to 7 days, but also reduced the ineffective work caused by repeated communication, significantly lowering physical consumption. On the psychological level, a good relationship network functions as an "emotional buffer". The "Mediation Volunteer Alliance" established by a certain community is composed of retired teachers, psychological counselors, etc. When the workers encounter the emotional outbursts of the parties involved, the alliance members can promptly provide emotional support and professional advice to help them quickly restore their psychological state. Data shows that the incidence of anxiety among workers participating in this alliance is 38% lower than that among

non-participants. Conversely, the weakening effect of "fatigue" on "toughness" should not be ignored either. Workers who have been in a state of emotional exhaustion for a long time tend to adopt an "empirical" strategy when facing new types of conflicts (such as disputes among neighbors over the installation of new energy charging piles), and it is difficult for them to innovate mediation methods by combining new policies and technological means. A research on a certain street found that workers who have been working overtime continuously for more than three weeks have a strategy innovation rate of less than 15% when dealing with complex conflicts, which is much lower than the 42% under normal working conditions. Job burnout directly leads to a change in work attitude. Some workers exhibit the phenomenon of "formal mediation", merely fulfilling procedural requirements without pursuing substantive resolution. In a certain community, due to the passive response of mediators, three family property disputes have transformed into long-term petition incidents.

From the perspective of neuroscience, an in-depth analysis shows that the functional impairment of the prefrontal cortex of the brain caused by long-term fatigue will directly affect the executive function of workers. Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) studies have shown that in people who have been working under continuous high pressure for more than six months, the connection strength between the prefrontal cortex and the limbic system decreases by 12%-15%, resulting in a significant reduction in logical reasoning, emotion regulation and decision-making abilities. Positive resilience strategies have neuroplasticity effects. For instance, regular psychological counseling can promote the growth of new neurons in the hippocampus, and teamwork can enhance the connectivity of default mode networks, thereby increasing dopamine secretion levels and improving the stress resistance of workers by 25% to 30%.

4.2 Impact on Grassroots Governance

The improvement of "resilience" has a significant positive driving effect on the effectiveness of grassroots governance. A certain eastern coastal community has increased the success rate of conflict mediation from 65% to 92% and reduced the resident complaint rate by 63% by establishing a dual-wheel drive model of "smart mediation + neighborhood mutual assistance". The relevant experience has been included in the provincial "Fengqiao-style community" creation standards. In the response to emergencies, resilient communities have demonstrated greater adaptability. For instance, during the epidemic lockdown, a certain community, relying on the three-level response mechanism of "building leader - volunteer - professional mediation team" established earlier, resolved 27 disputes caused by material distribution within 24 hours, preventing conflicts from escalating into mass incidents.

"Fatigue" has become a "corrosive agent" to the effectiveness of grassroots governance. The decline in workers' efficiency has directly led to the accumulation of conflicts. In a certain central and western county street, due to a shortage of mediators and their overwork, there were 89 unresolved disputes in 2023, a year-on-year increase of 42%, which eventually triggered two collective petitioning incidents involving over a hundred people. The problem of talent loss has further exacerbated the governance

predicament. Statistics from a certain district show that the turnover rate of workers with over five years of mediation experience has risen from 18% in 2020 to 40% in 2023. Due to the lack of experience of new employees, the failure rate of mediation has increased by 28%. In addition, the decline in mediation quality caused by fatigue has led to a doubling of governance costs. It is estimated that for cases where conflicts escalate due to failed mediations, the average subsequent handling costs increase by 4.2 times. A large-scale property dispute, which failed multiple mediations, eventually entered the judicial process, consuming over 500,000 yuan of public resources.

Six. Optimization Paths for Enhancing the "Resilience" of Community Workers in Conflict Mediation and Alleviating "Fatigue"

(1) Individual level

Optimization at the individual level requires the construction of a three-dimensional improvement system of "body and mind - ability - development". In terms of psychological construction, in addition to traditional mindfulness meditation and cognitive behavioral therapy, stress simulation training based on virtual reality (VR) can be introduced to help workers master emotional management skills through immersive scenarios. After a pilot community carried out VR stress training, the duration of the stress response of workers when facing the abuse of the parties involved was shortened by 40%. In terms of capability improvement, a "Mediation Skills Micro-Certification" system has been established, breaking down complex skills into 12 specialized modules such as "Communication Script Design" and "Evidence Collection Techniques". Workers can learn and obtain certifications as needed. For instance, after the implementation of this system in a certain district of Shenzhen, the success rate of independent mediation by newly recruited employees increased from 35% to 68%. In addition, it is recommended to establish a personal career development plan file, and in combination with the Holland Occupational Interest Test, customize differentiated development paths such as "Mediation expert" and "community governance researcher" for workers to enhance their sense of professional belonging.

(2) Community level

The optimization at the community level should focus on resource integration and ecological construction. In terms of human resource allocation, a composite team model of "full-time + part-time + volunteers" can be explored. By drawing on the "Regional Dispute Mediation support officer" system in Japan, residents with backgrounds in law and psychology can be recruited to serve as part-time mediators. After the implementation of this model in a certain community, the average number of mediated cases per person decreased by 37%. In terms of supporting network construction, the "digital twin" technology is introduced to build a virtual mutual assistance platform. Workers can review cases and share experiences through 3D virtual avatars, breaking the limitations of time and space. After a certain street piloted this platform, the efficiency of cross-community mediation collaboration increased by 55%. Meanwhile, establish a "Mediation Risk Assessment and Intervention Mechanism", utilize big data to analyze the complexity of conflicts, and automatically match mediation resources of corresponding levels to prevent workers from getting fatigued due to task overload.

(3) Institutional level

Reform the assessment and evaluation system, incorporate the satisfaction rate of mediation (40%), the recurrence rate of conflicts (30%), and the number of innovative cases (30%) into core indicators, and reduce formal assessment. A certain district has piloted a "digital assessment system", which automatically captures data during the mediation process, achieving objectivity and dynamism in the assessment. Clarify the list of rights and responsibilities of workers and grant them the authority to access law enforcement resources, apply for special funds, etc. Promote the legislation of the "Regulations on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Community Workers", incorporate salary and benefits (not less than 1.2 times the average wage of local urban employees), rest and leave (at least 4 days of compensatory leave per month), etc. into the regulations, and enhance the attractiveness of the profession. In addition, a professional honor system should be established to commend and reward outstanding mediators and enhance social recognition.

5. Conclusions and Prospects

This study systematically reveals the complex relationship between "resilience" and "fatigue" of community workers in conflict mediation and its profound impact on grassroots governance. Through diachronic tracking investigations, it was found that the two show a nonlinear dynamic correlation: In the early stage of conflict mediation, workers, relying on the stress response mechanism formed by professional training, exhibit strong psychological resilience; However, with the accumulation of cognitive load caused by repeatedly dealing with similar contradictions, fatigue begins to erode the resilience level, forming a vicious cycle of "exhaustion of resilience - intensification of fatigue". This kind of interaction is particularly significant in complex disputes involving multiple parties' interest games. It not only leads to a 12%-15% decrease in mediation efficiency, but also may trigger derivative problems such as job burnout and professional identity crises, directly weakening the effectiveness of grassroots **governance**.

The research conclusion indicates that to enhance the effectiveness of grassroots governance, it is necessary to break through the single thinking of "filling the gaps" and shift to a systematic solution that promotes the coordinated advancement of "resilience cultivation - fatigue management". In terms of resilience cultivation, a three-dimensional cultivation system of "psychological capital - social support - institutional guarantee" can be constructed. Mindfulness training, case review and discussion, etc. can be integrated into daily training. Meanwhile, a risk assessment mechanism for dispute mediation can be established to achieve precise allocation of resources. In terms of fatigue management, it is suggested to implement a dual-track system of "flexible working hours + intelligent assistance systems", and use an AI pre-examination system to filter out simple disputes, leaving a window of opportunity for workers to recover psychologically.

For future-oriented research, there are two important expansion directions: First, it is possible to deeply explore the impact of the application of digital technology in conflict mediation on the physical and

mental state of workers. With the development of technologies such as generative AI-assisted document processing and brain-computer interface monitoring of stress levels, it is necessary to be vigilant against the risk of "digital alienation" caused by technology dependence, and at the same time explore the potential for psychological burden reduction brought by technology empowerment. Secondly, it is suggested to strengthen cross-cultural comparative studies, systematically analyze the community participation models based on the concept of "preventive mediation" in Nordic countries, as well as the grassroots self-governance wisdom of "minor issues not leaving the village and major issues not leaving the town" in China's "Fengqiao Experience". Through the combination of theoretical localization transformation and practical innovation, it can provide richer theoretical and practical references for the modernization of grassroots governance

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