

A Study on Information Transfer in Personal Help-Seeking Network Practice

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ABSTRACT. By taking two typical medical cases(Luoyixiao in Shenzhen city, Kelei in Nanjing city) as the samples, we fully analyze information source's processing, selection of information transmission channels, information updating and maintaining, information attenuation during personal network practice of seeking medical help, The behavior of personal network practice of seeking help will impact on help seekers and donors directly, while affecting network media, medical institutions and the public negatively. There are innate defects in personal network help seeking, which are mainly manifested in the aspects of misunderstanding, information asymmetry, difficult supervision and interference with charities. These deficiencies will lead to the anomie of personal network help seeking behavior and the low efficiency of help seeking. Therefore, when the individual has the demand for internet help, the help seeker should actively cooperate with the charitable organizations with the fundraising qualification. In the face of new personal internet help, other participants should be more cautious and rational. It is good for the sound development for personal network practice of seeking help.

KEYWORDS: Personal network practice of seeking help, Information transfer, Inefficiency, Sense

1. Introduction

Information transfer is a process where people transfer such information as pictures, images, and voices by various channels. Personal help-seeking network practice is a way utilized by the network help-seekers to obtain various kinds of helps and supports from the public to whom the help-seeking information has been addressed.

After the Charity Act has been enacted, those network help-seekers have two ways to do it: one is to cooperate with those charity organizations that are entitled to raise funds to collect donations; the other is to seek help for themselves and their immediate relatives via personal help-seeking network practice.

Although the personal help-seeking network practice is usually conducted by

the help-seekers themselves or their immediate relatives, its effect varies from time to time. For example, the amount of money donation differs from one case to another: some help-seekers get much more money than what they need, some would have less than that needed to cover the necessary expenditure; and even some get nothing. Attention should be paid to the factors that influence the varied results.

2. Necessities for the Study

Personal donations exceed that of enterprises the first time in 2008, accounting for 54%. A sample survey report on online donation issued by China Youth Daily in 2015 said among those participating online donations, 27.9% of the surveyed participates donation via WeChat or Weibo, 17% donates for particular kind of disease or certain patients. The great number of the donators has offered us the necessity for the study.

At the same time, this study also explores the present academic research in this field with such findings as follows: these studies regarding to personal help-seeking network practice are mainly centered on the behavior regulation, network platform supervision from the legislative perspective. For example: Lunan Chen (2015) states that the network platform and the subject should be supervised to increase the effectiveness of donation[1]; Xiaosi Zhao (2016) holds that the subject, platform, information release, system of accountabilities for fraudulence should be strictly regulated to resolve the dilemma in donation[2]; Fenggang Shi (2016) elaborates the importance of supervision from the perspective of constructing a supervision system of network donation[3]; Cheng Li (2011) also does study on network donation from the angle of supervision[4]; Yue Yang (2013) puts emphasis on the importance of legal system perfection[5]; Wanteng Pang (2016) also analyzes the rationality for the network donation's existence and its regulation[6].

The study on information transfer in personal help-seeking network practice is completely different from those mentioned before that are generally about behavior regulation, platform management and legislative study.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Definition of Personal Help-Seeking Network Practice

3.1.1 The help-seeker (the recipient or his agent) releases online help-seeking information via personal moments, network media, etc., so that more attention and aids will be attracted.

3.1.2 The help-seeker (the recipient or his agent) releases online help-seeking information on such specific platforms authorized by the Ministry of Civil Affairs as donation platform for public welfare of Tencent, Easy Money-Raising Platform.

3.1.3 The help-seeker (the recipient or his agent) releases online help-seeking information through particular network channels (promotion or marketing), traditional channels (television, radio, newspaper) for help.

As it is known and practiced, the second one has been cooperating with the authorized charity organizations and its behavior has also been regulated by the Charity Act, and the first and the third consist the contents of personal network help-seeking behavior.

3.2 Research Methodology

This study takes two typical medical cases as sample to analyze in detail their information sources, information source's generation, processing, information updating and maintaining and information influences from the perspective of information transmission: one is the case of Yixiao Luo in Shenzhen City, hereinafter referred as to Case 1, the other is Lei Ke in Nanjing City, hereinafter referred as to Case 2 for short. In addition, the effects on the subjects in the course of information transmission caused either directly or indirectly will be explained based on the two cases and naturally a conclusion will be made.

4. Information Transmission Analysis

Generally speaking, there are four stages in a complete transmission of help-seeking information: the processing of information sources, the selection of the information transmission, the updating and maintaining of information and the attenuation of information.

4.1 Analysis of Processing of Information Sources

Case 1: Millions of Shenzhen residents were shocked by the article with a title of Stop, Yixiao Luo in November 2016. They just donated money to the little girl who suffered from leukemia, hoping that they would lend warm hands to the sad family[7].

Case 2: Initiated by Jiang Ke, Lei Ke's father, the article Don't cry, parents! I will be Okay, in his WeChat Moments, has attracted wide attention. Message as "I never publish such posts and I have no idea how I can have more people believe it under the title of help" has also been posted, which narrated the merciless sufferings, the financial difficulties, Jiang Ke's mobile numbers, WeChat account, AliPay account, and savings account[8].

What can be drawn from these articles is that Yixiao Luo suffers from leukemia, Lei Ke's is being from bad to worse because of chordoma, they cannot live through the difficulties, they need a larger sum of money urgently, and indeed, they need aids.

Supported by ID information, designated hospital diagnosis, inpatient evidence, reported news by TV station, the fact is authentic that the two children are seriously sick.

In the two cases, the help-seeking information definitely outweighs such commonly-read titles as “Save My Kid, Please”. It is closely associated with the professional practice experiences of the help-seekers, Er Luo, Yixao’s father, who serves as editor-in-chief of a magazine, New Stories, and Jiang Ke, Lei Kei’s father, an insurance broker whose wife is an employee of a website company. Being never exaggerated, the so-called “processed” help-seeking information attracts more eye-balls from the public.

It is relatively difficult for the authors of the study to obtain the following facts: how much money will be sufficient to cure the child? How is the possibility of being cured? How much on earth do parents spend on medical care for the kids? Can they afford it? Do they possess such properties as houses, vehicles and other high-value assets? Do they try? Is it found true that they have no way out to turn to seek public help via network?

At this all-are-connected age, information has such characteristics: immensity in amount, difficulty in judgement, high speed in transmission, and quick lapse of time. Therefore, the processing of information is critically importance for those help-seekers to materialize the anticipated object, for example, to collect a huge sum of money in a short period of time.

At the preliminary stage of personal help-seeking information transmission, it is typical of being unidirectional, being mostly authentic, being random, and is transmitted uncertainly. Therefore, some key information would be intentionally covered by the help-seekers to maximize the results and the public will be misled.

4.2 Selection of Information Transmission Channels

Since it is personal, network will be primary channels of help-seeking information transmission. Stage by stage, the seekers can transmit the information outwardly through WeChat Moments, QQ with an obvious arbitrariness. Nevertheless, when it is republished by those famous bloggers, network icons, internet celebrities followed by a huge number of fans, the number of the attendants will increase incredibly, rocketing to an unexpected increase in the donation.

These cases mentioned below((table1) are compiled by Easy Money-Raising Platform[9], one that has been included by the charity organization information platform for online money-raising.

Table 1 Three Random Samples in Easy Money-Raising Platform

Serial number	Person surnamed	Object (Thousand Yuan)	Days for collecting	Amount raised (Thousand	Percentage of object
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				Yuan)	
A	Ruan	145	42	18.035	12.44
B	Li	150	30	20.537	13.69
C	Cao	149.9	22	88.765	59.22

While contrary to the Case 1, Er Luo narrated in I admit That I Have Been Stunned that he refused those initiating to donate money but to post information on the P2P Observers Platform for money gaining under the pressure of increased treatment expenditures.

In Case 2, after the release of help-seeking information by Jiang Ke, one correspondent with the Municipal TV Station of Jiangsu Province reported the case, which was also broadcasted by the Station. Within a short period of 20 days (May 21, 2015 to June 10, 2015), RMB ¥4.85 million has been donated to them.

With the comparison between Case 1, Case 2 and the other three cases above-mentioned, the channels to raise money of the formers are widely expanded. Though the latter three cases are posted on officially recognized platforms, the amount of donation and time cost are greatly different. Hence, the selection of information transmission channels does pose great influence on the effect of seeking help in the course of information transmission. At the same time, it is also obviously noticed that the information transmission has unidirectional and one-to-more characteristics at both the stage of information source processing and the stage of selecting information transmission channels.

4.3 Information Updating and Maintaining

Along with the increase of the public attention, more and more relevant information is dug out. The information transmission has become interactive. On both sides of the information, more-to-one mode becomes much evident.

In Case 1, on November 30, 2016, while Er Luo was selling his articles online, information about his properties was unlocked and released publicly, showing that Er Luo owned three apartments and a car. Ironically, Jiang Ke also had four apartments in Case 2.

In fact, it is necessary for the beneficiaries to update and maintain information timely with the development of things. The updating and maintaining of information should cover the patient's current condition, the amount of money donated, the current expenditure and purpose, the immediate respond to the questions raised by the public.

At the very beginning of the information transmission, the help-seeker can have a good control of the information source processing and channel selecting. While at the stage of information transmission stage, the help-seeker must be active in updating and maintaining information. The information processing and selecting is a course in which the help-seeker interacts with those who offer help, including the donators. This interaction should be not passive, irrational, late, but timely, voluntary, and favorable on the help-seeker's own initiative. It is not enough to

release the information of the patient's condition and its development. The beneficiary must also make it clear the balance of the receipts and expenses and respond actively to public questionings. The beneficiary should take his own initiatives to declare publicly in time that additional future donation will be stopped because the expected donation is already sufficient. It is often the case that the money still goes in due to the deferred information.

4.4 Information Attenuation

People would not pay attention to any information continuously. When the personal help-seeking information comes to the stage of attenuation, the results of the two cases can be evaluated:

In Case 1, Er Luo returned the exceeding money under the heavy pressure of public opinion. As is pointed out by Lin Guo, dean of Social Law Office attached to the Working Committee of the Standing Committee of National People's Congress, it is an illegal money-raising in disguise[10] Er Luo was not punished accordingly except returning the exceeding money. In Case 2, along with the continuously popping news, the public pays no more attention to it without new reports: either it is deceiving, or it is a kind of donation. The disputes over and the thoughts caused by the information attenuation calms down with other hot spot issues arising.

5. Analysis of Participant in the Information Link

If the information link can be vertically divided into different stages, those participants involved in the up-mentioned two cases include the help-seeker himself or his agent, the media, the medical institutions, the donators, the public and the bureau in charge of real estates from the horizontal perspective. They can be grouped into direct participants and indirect participants against different criteria of the length of time, the depth to which they are involved and the influence upon whom the case caused.

5.1 The Help-Seekers

Other than other difficulties encountered by individuals, the precarious medical situation is usually one that cannot be dealt with easily independently. It is often urgent, acute, heavy, unpredictable and unavoidable. It also costs heavily, which goes beyond the household's capability.

It is generally accepted that it costs more time, undergoes more complicated procedures, and collects less amount of money when the participant decides to do it in an official way. Therefore, the help-seeker hopes to collect medical donation online. When it comes to seeking public donation, an implied prerequisite has been established: the public questionings must be responded to accordingly.

In the process of personal online help-seeking, information concerning news release, balance of expenses and receipts completely relies on the beneficiary at present. Without any check, any entry limit, any access system, any frontend professional service and any background technical support, the online personal help-seeking is completely different from the legal network platforms that are responsible for online donations. In the whole process, it is undoubted that the help-seeker is the one who is involved in most deeply, influenced most for the longest time.

5.2 Donators

The donators' willingness and the ability decide how much the help-seeker will get in the personal network help-seeking.

In the practice of personal network help-seeking, as the information recipient at one side of the information link, he is of good intention and unselfish. It is not possible for all the donators to check the information released online. In this sense, the donator takes donation action upon the receipt of the information without any hesitation.

What cannot be denied is that the donators are entitled to the knowledge of expenses and costs, especially when more information about the help-seeker is released. Their rights to information must be materialized first. The donators' willingness and ability must be protected, respected and cherished since it is limited.

5.3 Network Media

Other than the three traditional mass media as radio, TV and newspapers, more and more information transmission channels based on network are available for the public, for example, WeChat, Moments, Bogs, Forum, Clients, BBS, and Broadcasting Live. The information publishers differ from the information recipients.

As far as the traditional channels are concerned, they contain less information and the resources are simple but reliable. Individual recipients are passive lacking in interaction with the information publisher.

As to the modern information channels, they are typical of immense information, wide sources and lower creditability. Therefore, individuals choose to accept information and have apparent interaction with the information publishers. People choose the information appealing to them with due interaction.

As to the personal online help-seeking, such points should be taken into consideration: first, network media provide help-seekers with more channels to choose; second, the retransmission by network media is not based on the comprehensive check of the case, and third, the nature of network media hunting for hot spot issues leads to the lack of continuous attention.

In both above-studied cases, information source can be tracked back to the Moments, and it attracts extensive attention after the involvement of TV station and network media. While the information recipients trust deeply the traditional media, it cannot be denied that the information recipients' trust in present network media apparently declines based on the analysis of the two typical cases.

5.4 Others

In Case 1, as the public raise more and more doubts and questions, the hospital director was interviewed by journalist from the National Business Daily, saying that the hospital has nothing to do with the public concern since its main duty is to treat patients, which has the hospital deeply involved. In Case 2, the bureau in charge of the real estates certifies that Jiang Ke's family has four apartments to clear the public doubts and clarify the questions; another nongovernmental public welfare institution located in Pukou District of Nanjing is also involved.

By reviewing the cases, along with the rising attention paid to the cases, the hospital, the bureau and the nongovernmental public welfare institution are all involved with their daily jobs influenced to different degrees, which originally provide professional service for the public.

5.5 The Public and Charity Environment

As is analyzed in the two typical medical treatment cases of online help-seeking, the donation based on benevolence does not end in a win-win situation or a victory situation for many sides.

The public pay close attention to the cases and even heated debate arises from them. A conclusion has been naturally drawn that the information can be processed, the information transmission channels can be chosen, the information updating and maintaining completely relies on the help-seekers themselves, the violation cost is relatively low, and it is difficult for donators to claims their rights.

Although people are not in position to assess the specific effect on the public caused by the two cases, the consequences originated from key events in charity field cannot be neglected. Studies conducted by Phycologist William McGuire found that 12 physiological filter processes have been inserted in the course of receiving information from being in touch with information to decision-making to acceptance into the receiver's value system[11]. Some of the 12 filter processes might make response within less than one second in the course of information transmission though the daily information is so immense. Though people are willing and able to make donation, it is still difficult for them to decide whether it is true or not. Therefore, the experience and lessons will have impact upon the upcoming decision for sure and the public will vote by feet. At the end of the day, it is those in need and the charity environment that are most hurt.

6. Conclusion and Countermeasures

6.1 Conclusion

The market rule still applies to the personal online help-seeking. It has demand and supply, seeking efficiency and effectiveness. The effectiveness of the precedents definitely influences the future demands and supplies. Meanwhile, in the practice of personal online help-seeking, the seekers have made great efforts just like the eight immortals soaring over the ocean to maximize their results. This can be attributed to the inherent deficiencies of personal online help-seeking.

6.1.1 Cognitive Deviation

Though both demand and supply has share the same object as to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of relief, they do have different anticipation. Emphasis has been put on the loose donation environment, less limit, speedy process, and satisfactory result from the perspective of the demanders while the suppliers satisfy themselves with a transparent process as well as a satisfactory result. Therefore, there does exist a heavy cognitive deviation between the two sides.

6.1.2 Unsymmetrical Information

Viewed from the two Cases, and situated at either side of the information link, both the help-seeker and the donator have been encountered by a situation of unsymmetrical information from the very beginning. Even after more information has been explored and released by other participants such as hospital and real estates bureau, the information asymmetry has not been fundamentally changed.

6.1.3 Difficult Supervision

Though personal online help-seeking behaviors have been governed by the Contract Law and other civil regulations and rules, to safeguard rights is still a big problem due to the huge number of donators, random donation quantity, wide-scattering donators, etc. At the same time, the Charity Act is not entitled to govern the personal online help-seeking behaviors.

6.1.4 Disturbance to Charity

Charity is one kind of the non-institutionalized public welfare businesses and a kind of privately-run social security businesses that has been founded upon the social donation[12].

Tremendous use has been made of the donators' willingness and ability in the above-mentioned two cases. It is necessary and helpful to guide the donators' willingness and ability that is not limitless. The negative events do result in harmful consequences to the charity career.

There is no sense in blaming or criticizing those concerned who seek online help because of disease. Measures should be taken to regulate those behaviors because of its nature being help-seeking. Viewed from an individual perspective, it is closely related to the donators' interests, and viewed from a collective perspective it is for the healthy sustainable development of charity career.

6.2 Countermeasures

Many channels are available for those in need to choose in China nowadays. They can ask help from their units, communities and government branches and agencies. The Interim Measures for Social Assistance also provides clearly that citizens in need can seek help from those listed here.

As far as the personal online help-seeking is concerned, the help-seekers should first give up the obsolete traditional mentality to actively cooperate with the charity organizations. The procedures are not complicated and it is highly reliable. This is also what the Charity Law advocates since the combination between network and charity is a general trend. This trend leads to a situation where the help-seekers and donators can match well on the donation network platform, cost reduces and efficiency improves. Contrary to this, the inherent deficiencies of personal online help-seeking behaviors cannot be eliminated, which definitely cause many problems. Therefore, all participants concerned should keep cautious and prudent while doing with personal online help-seeking behaviors.

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