

Exploring Paths to Promote Resident Participation in Community Governance—A Case Study of QF Community in WH City

Jia'ang Chen

Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions, Arizona State University, Phoenix, USA, 85004
jiaangchen2024@163.com

Abstract: Community governance is an important bedstone of national governance and plays a vital role in the socialist governance system with Chinese characteristics. At the same time, resident participation in community governance can mobilize civic enthusiasm and help balance the "dominant power" of neighborhood committees, so that residents can also become participants, which is conducive to the construction of multi-subject governance pattern. Therefore, it is very important to discuss the participation of urban community residents in community governance to promote the process of socialist governance system with Chinese characteristics. This paper selects the Qingfeng (QF) Community in Wuhu (WH) City to investigate and analyze the current situation of residents' participation in governance. The investigation shows that there are some problems in this community, such as unreasonable participants, insufficient motivation for participation and single participation channels. To address this issue, several approaches are proposed, including the rational organization of community activities, the demonstration of exemplary conduct by cadres and other influential members, and the diversification of participation channels.

Keywords: Resident participation; Community governance; Multiple subject

1. The Current State of Resident Participation in Community Governance in QF Community, WH City

1.1 Residents' Willingness to Participate in Governance

According to the survey results in Table 1, the willingness of residents in QF Community, WH City to participate in community governance is generally passive: only 38.6% are willing (or very willing) to participate in community governance activities, which is less than half; 39.3% of residents expressed unwillingness to participate; those who selected "very unwilling" accounted for 13.6%; Finally, 8.5% of residents held an indifferent attitude towards participating in community governance.

Table 1 Survey on Residents' Willingness to Participate in Community Governance in QF Community, WH City

Willingness to Participate	Number of Respondents	Proportion (%)
Very Willing	15	10.7
Willing	39	27.9
Unwilling	55	39.3
Very Unwilling	19	13.6
Indifferent	12	8.5

Data Source: The data in the table were obtained from the survey questionnaire of residents in QF Community, WH City.

1.2 Channels for Resident Participation in Governance

According to Table 2, the channels through which residents of QF Community participate in community governance mainly include five types: Community WeChat Group, Residents' Committee, Residents' Meeting, Community Bulletin Board, and other methods such as the Community Forum. Among these, the Community WeChat Group accounts for the highest proportion at 45.7%, followed by the Residents' Committee at 32.1%. Following these are the Residents' Meeting and the Community Bulletin Board, accounting for 9.3% and 7.1% respectively; finally, the Community Forum and other methods account for 5.8%. Therefore, it is evident that the Community WeChat Group plays an extremely important role among the primary channels for resident participation in the community.

Table 2 Survey on Residents' Participation Channels in QF Community, WH City

Participation Channel	Number of Respondents	Proportion (%)
Community WeChat Group	64	45.7
Residents' Committee	45	32.1
Residents' Meeting	13	9.3
Community Bulletin Board	10	7.1
Community Forum and Other Method	8	5.8

Data Source: The data in the table were obtained from the survey questionnaire of residents in QF Community, WH City.

1.3 Residents' Satisfaction with the Community

As shown in Table 3, only 10 individuals expressed a very satisfied attitude toward the community, accounting for 7.1%; 43 individuals indicated satisfaction with community services, accounting for 30.7%; An additional 60 individuals rated their satisfaction with the community as average, while 27 people expressed dissatisfaction with the related services provided by the community. The survey found that the proportion of residents who were very satisfied or satisfied with the community totaled 37.8%, which is less than half. These data indicate that QF Community services are inadequate and need improvement.

Table 3 Satisfaction Survey of Residents in QF Community, WH City

Participation Results	Number of Respondents	Proportion (%)
Very Satisfied	10	7.1
Satisfied	43	30.7
Average	60	42.9
Somewhat Dissatisfied	22	15.7
Dissatisfied	5	3.6

Data Source: The data in the table were obtained from interviews with residents of QF Community, WH City.

1.4 Proportion of Residents' Repeat Participation

The results shown in Table 4 indicate that repeat participation by residents of QF Community in the past year mainly concentrated below ten times, accounting for 72.1%. The proportion of residents participating more than ten times exhibits a sharp decline, with the total proportion remaining below 30%.

Residents demonstrate limited repeated participation; most engage three to four times before losing the willingness to continue, and some report losing interest after a single participation. Overall, residents' participation lacks sustainability, indicating that the community has not succeeded in attracting sustained resident involvement in community governance.

Table 4 Results of the Survey on Annual Repeat Participation Rates among Residents in QF Community, WH City

Number of Repeat Participations	Number of Respondents	Proportion (%)
Less than five times	56	40
Five to ten times	45	32.1
Ten to fifteen times	25	17.9
Fifteen to twenty times	9	6.4
More than twenty times	5	3.6

Data Source: The data in the table were obtained from the survey questionnaire of residents in QF Community, WH City.

1.5 Duration of Resident Participation in Governance

Table 5 indicates that the average weekly duration of resident participation in community governance in QF Community is generally brief, with the majority of participation occurring within five hours. Specifically, 63 residents—accounting for 45%—reported participating for less than one hour per week; 29.3% of residents participated for one to five hours weekly; 29 residents, or 20.7%, participated for five to ten hours; and only seven residents, representing just 5%, reported participating in governance for more than ten hours per week. The above data show that residents of QF Community lack sufficient attention to community governance, with the majority expressing an indifferent attitude toward participating in community governance.

Table 5 Survey of Average Weekly Hours of Participation in Community Governance by Residents of QF Community, WH City

Participation Duration	Number of Respondents	Proportion (%)
Less than one hour	63	45
One to five hours	41	29.3
Five to ten hours	29	20.7
Ten to fifteen hours	5	3.6
More than fifteen hours	2	1.4

Data Source: The data in the table were obtained from interviews with residents of QF Community, WH City.

2. Problems in Resident Participation in Community Governance in QF Community, WH City

2.1 Low Residents' Participation Enthusiasm

There are two primary reasons for the low enthusiasm of residents' participation: one is the comparatively low education level. Table 6 presents the educational attainment of residents in QF Community. According to the survey results, more than half of the residents in QF Community have a

high school education or below. Owing to the low educational attainment of community residents, their understanding of community governance remains superficial, resulting in an indifference toward community activities.^[1]

Another contributing factor is the fragmented distribution of community households. Numerous individual families resemble isolated islands, with minimal interconnection. Particularly among elderly households, forging collective synergy is often challenging. Nevertheless, community joint construction, collaborative governance, and sharing represent a typical form of collective action that depends on collective synergy. That is, community co-construction, co-governance, and sharing constitute a process of integrating community resources to form collective action or to realize collective synergy. This gives rise to the contradiction whereby the community seeks to mobilize collective strength, yet residents remain reluctant to cooperate, thus making overall community coordination difficult to implement.^[2]

Table 6 Educational Attainment of Residents in QF Community

Educational Attainment	Proportion (%)
Junior High School and Below	25
High School or Technical Secondary School	27.5
Junior College or Undergraduate	35
Postgraduate and Above	12.5

Data Source: The data in the table were obtained from the survey questionnaire of residents in QF Community, WH City.

2.2 Unilateral Community Activities

Unilateral Community Activities primarily refer to the practice whereby community administrators engage residents through work meetings, the establishment of Community Forums, and the setting up of bulletin boards, yet lack in-depth planning to provide robust channels for democratic participation.^[3] The underlying cause of Unilateral Community Activities is that the community has not developed feasible pathways for Resident Participation in Governance based on the actual circumstances; instead, it has continued to rely solely on traditional methods of participation to provide avenues for residents to engage. The limited range of participation channels significantly restricts the ways in which residents can participate and undermines their enthusiasm for involvement. Unilateral community activities not only fail to improve the rate of resident participation, but may further diminish an already low level of engagement, adversely affecting the long-term and healthy development of the community.

2.3 Irregular Residents' Participation System

As a component of the institutional framework, the participation mechanism standardizes the codes of conduct that individuals should observe in participatory behavior. A sound participation mechanism is the fundamental guarantee for community residents' participation in governance. Interview findings indicate that QF Community has not yet established a comprehensive residents' participation system, and the existing rules and regulations lack effective implementation. Functional departments largely exist in name only, often lacking designated personnel and clearly defined responsibilities. As a result, even residents who wish to participate are hindered by an inadequate institutional framework, which fundamentally blocks avenues for Resident Participation.

2.4 Weak Capacity for Resident Participation in Governance

Resident participation is a core element of Community Governance. To achieve optimal governance outcomes, residents must possess the necessary governance capabilities, which places considerable demands upon them. However, in practice, Community Residents generally lack sufficient governance capabilities, making it difficult to meet the requirements of governance; Some residents, although possessing a certain level of governance capacity, are unable to devote attention to community governance due to the demands of their work schedules. There are also residents who seem proficient in governance on the surface, but are unable to fulfill their expected roles in practice. Some residents are willing to participate in governance; however, they encounter numerous challenges when they attempt to

put this into practice. Residents with available time to participate in governance, lacking guidance from the Residents' Committee and unaware of the governance procedures, act in a disorganized manner. Some residents strive to enhance their participation skills with a learning attitude; however, they ultimately abandon their efforts due to a perceived disproportion between input and output.

3. Recommendations for Promoting Resident Participation in Community Governance in QF Community, WH City

3.1 Establishing an Incentive Mechanism to Explore Pathways for Participatory Governance

The incentive mechanism plays an important role in promoting resident participation in community governance. It is essential to embed residents' individual interests within the collective interests of the community, thereby transforming the community into a true community of shared interests and stimulating residents' participation enthusiasm in community governance.^[4] This is consistent with the view that most residents are motivated by personal interests and display characteristics of the 'rational economic man' when participating in community activities; thus, implementing appropriate material incentives is feasible. Firstly, the community should establish an incentive mechanism to enhance residents' participation enthusiasm. This is specifically reflected in the distribution of gifts and commendations to residents who actively participate in community governance. When residents receive rewards or recognition, their enthusiasm is naturally enhanced. Second, it is essential to establish an effective feedback mechanism aligned with the incentive mechanism. The Residents' Committee should provide timely responses to suggestions put forward by residents, value public opinion and the legitimate demands of community residents, and address residents' practical concerns promptly. Demonstrating the community's care and regard for its residents in this way can awaken their initiative to participate in community governance and further stimulate resident participation.^[5]

3.2 Upholding Organizational Leadership and Establishing a Pluralistic Governance Structure

The leadership organization serves as the core force in promoting community governance^[6], and the overarching role of grassroots organizations provides an institutional guarantee for effective local governance. First, it is essential to strengthen the exemplary role of advanced individuals, whose influence can radiate participation and enable others to recognize their contributions to community governance. Second, on the foundation of organizational leadership, it is necessary to construct a pluralistic governance structure characterized by coordinated and synergistic action among government, community, and residents. By employing joint organizational activities as a key leverage point and adhering to the fundamental principles of serving the overall situation, innovating institutional forms, and complementing respective strengths, efforts should be made to consolidate the capacities of government, community, and residents into synergistic governance, thereby invigorating organizational leadership in community governance.^[7]

3.3 Establish and improve the participation mechanism, and effectively implement the participation process.

A well-developed and comprehensive participation mechanism not only ensures the effective functioning of community autonomy, but also provides institutional safeguards for residents' meaningful participation in community governance, the exercise of governance rights, and the fulfillment of corresponding obligations.^[8] First, the community committee should draw on the governance experience of other exemplary communities and formulate detailed and context-specific participation rules and regulations based on local realities. Besides, it also needs to clarify the scope of authority of each functional department and specify the requirements for participants, thereby reducing residents' confusion stemming from unclear departmental responsibilities. Second, the community council should strictly implement the convening of community meetings, avoid perfunctory practices, and ensure residents' equal right to speak at such meetings. As residents participating in meetings come from diverse professional backgrounds, each individual prioritizes different aspects of community governance. It is thus essential to ensure that all residents enjoy equal rights to express their views and to encourage them to articulate their opinions, including divergent perspectives.

3.4 Cultivating Professional Governance Talent to Enhance the Level of Community Governance

The effectiveness of community governance is determined by the professional competence of the governance team. Teams with higher levels of professionalization can swiftly and effectively improve the overall standard of community governance; therefore, it is imperative to strengthen the training of governance personnel. Accordingly, the community may initially convene community staff and residents willing to participate in community governance to form professional governance teams, enabling them to undertake basic initiatives such as waste management and the reduction of noise pollution within the community. Upon achieving certain governance outcomes, the second phase of the plan is to integrate these individuals into an institutionalized governance team, equipping them with relevant professional knowledge and enabling them to apply it in practice to enrich their governance experience. Finally, an evaluation and feedback mechanism should be established to encourage residents to conduct regular reviews of the governance activities undertaken by the governance team and to assess governance effectiveness. Suggestions that contribute to enhancing the community's public interest should be adopted, while unrealistic proposals should be jointly discussed by other residents and the governance team to continuously refine and optimize governance plans.

3.5 Implementing an information disclosure system to eliminate residents' concerns regarding participation

The theory of public participation contends that the content of participation must be disclosed to the public in a timely, comprehensive, and complete manner.^[9] Untimely information disclosure may cause residents to harbor doubts and foster distrust toward the Residents' Committee. Incomplete disclosure of information can easily result in misunderstandings or even conflicts, thereby hindering effective communication between the Residents' Committee and residents. To this end, the following two measures should be implemented: First, ensure the effective enforcement of the information disclosure system. This should be reflected not only in the accuracy and timeliness of information dissemination, but also in guaranteeing that all disclosed information is released in the context of communication with residents, thereby fostering mutual understanding and agreement; second, dispel residents' doubts regarding participation. Community residents may be brought together by holding regular lectures, which facilitate detailed responses to residents' concerns, thereby preventing rumors and misunderstandings, and ensuring the healthy development of resident participation.

4. Conclusion

Resident participation in community governance constitutes an important component of grassroots governance. Focusing on QF Community in WH City, this study investigates the present state of resident participation in governance and identifies issues such as low willingness to participate, unilateral community activities, and a lack of institutional norms in the participation process, while also proposing corresponding recommendations.

The research finds that establishing a pluralistic governance structure is an essential pathway to resolving problems associated with resident participation in governance. The leadership organization serves as the core force in promoting community governance, and the overarching role of grassroots organizations provides an institutional guarantee for effective local governance. First, it is essential to strengthen the exemplary role of advanced individuals, whose influence can radiate participation and enable others to recognize their contributions to community governance. Residents, for their part, should take the initiative to increase participation awareness and acquire relevant professional knowledge in order to strengthen their ability to participate. Community Governance cannot be achieved by a single individual or in a single day; it relies on concerted cooperation and mutual understanding among all stakeholders. Only by exerting Synergistic Governance can Community Governance be truly effective and properly implemented.

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