Management of Universities in Shanghai During the New Crown Epidemic from the Perspective of Differential Mode of Association

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Abstract. The global epidemic has entered its fourth round since the Wuhan outbreak of a new coronavirus pneumonia at the end of 2019, and compared to the prior three rounds, the current Omicron strain is more contagious and spreading more quickly. How are local governments managing outbreak prevention and control in light of the current circumstances? And how efficient is their management? In order to conduct our research for this article, we chose a specific type of community at a university in Shanghai. Using in-depth interviews and data analysis, we sorted out the epidemic prevention and control management model for this type of community and enumerated its four key features.

Keywords: The differential mode of association · trust mechanism · collective dilemma

1 Introduction

The worldwide pandemic has reached its fourth round since the unexpected emergence of new coronavirus pneumonia from Wuhan at the end of 2019, and compared to the prior three rounds, the current Omicron strain is more contagious and spreading more quickly. With a population of around 25 million and the scale of a megacity, Shanghai serves as the economic hub of China [1]. It unites other areas and spreads throughout the Yangtze River Delta, spurring the growth of the local economy. Around 720,000 students from all around the country attend higher education, another important urban function in Shanghai [2]. The makeup of higher education institutions is very different from that of regular communities since it is a densely populated and very homogeneous community. This distinction presents new issues for their prevention and management. Despite making up a relatively tiny portion of the overall population, students' mobility between provinces and districts has a significant influence on the prevention of urban epidemics. However, there aren't many studies that have looked specifically at managing pandemic resistance in university communities. This article fills this void by concentrating on the actions taken by a university in Shanghai in response to the Omicron strain outbreak. [Specifically, the Shanghai 2019 Corona virus Disease Aggregate Outbreak that occurred from mid-March to early June 2022 [3]]. We methodically learned

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how 11 students handled everyday prevention and control during the school epidemic through in-depth interviews, and we made an effort to synthesize the characteristics of this community's epidemic prevention and management.

2 A Differential Order Pattern with Student Leaders as the Central Node

The term "the differential mode of association" first appeared in Professor Fei Xiaotong's from the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society [4], a book by Professor Fei Xiaotong. The differential pattern mentioned in the book compares the traditional Chinese social structure with Western society and comes up with the following definition of the differential pattern in China: "The individual is likened to a stone, and society is the surface of the water. The stone is thrown into the water, and the distance of the ripples formed around it is marked as the closeness of social relations." In this paper, we try to draw on its definition and expand it to translate social relationships into the relationships between individual students and various different groups in college communities. Through the preliminary interviews, we initially mapped out the differential order pattern of the college community. In the epidemic prevention and control, the student cadres were the central nodes, forming a basic pattern of guides contacting student cadres, student cadres contacting ministry members, and ministry members contacting students; and with the continuous expansion of the WeChat group, the pattern of information about the epidemic and supplies was disseminated (Fig. 1).

In this pattern, student leaders act as the central node between students and the university. In one university in Shanghai, for example, a more complete management framework was established in late March: each dormitory building was equipped with a resident counselor, and according to the division of the different colleges in the building, the responsible floor manager and floor manager of each college were elected to manage and communicate with the students of their respective colleges. At the peak of the epidemic and in the middle and end of April, due to the fragmentation and complexity of the management division and the lack of volunteers, a mixed management was introduced, which no longer meticulously divided the management scope according to colleges and classes. In this model, the students themselves acted as the management of the student body and were able to better understand the needs of the students, and the epidemic prevention program was proposed in a way that was more reasonable by getting down to the students. In addition, student-to-student communication is easier and trust is more

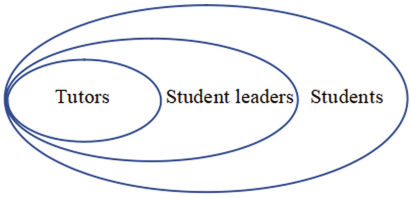

Fig. 1. Schematic diagram of the differential order pattern centered on student leaders. (Owner-drawing)

easily established, thus making communication and implementation of various measures more convenient.

In the interview, student leaders said that under the inherent system of the school, the central node role of floor leaders in each group has been effectively played, and most of the tasks issued by the counselors have been effective. We are all in the same group, so we can find problems together and solve them together, which is a reasonable division of labor and efficient. However, the central node of student leaders is not without flaws. As the intermediary between the school and the students, some students will approach us with their problems and actively communicate with us, but there are also a few who think we are on the same "front" as the school and do not want to communicate with us. (Student interviewee, male, student leader, building X).

3 Student Teams Have Both Strengths and Weaknesses

Our student volunteers all responded positively to the epidemic prevention work, and we all maintained a high level of enthusiasm and served our students with full spirit. "I know I need not only to play the role of a good screw but also to gather the strength of more students to build the "anti-epidemic wall" of the building." (A volunteer was interviewed.) The volunteers were generally full of responsibility and all thought they were doing a very meaningful job to serve the public. However, many interviewees gave feedback that the student team had mixed results in this epidemic prevention work, such as because the lack of working experience led to some work lagging behind and being detached from the actual situation, some work was well planned but did not take into account the different situations of each building and did not adapt to local conditions, and the management planning part had big problems and did not formulate suitable SOPs, which led to the whole management framework running in disarray and with an unclear division of labor.

When our building first started ordering meals at that time, because it was still possible to go downstairs at that time, student volunteers were downstairs watching others take them, and the management was not perfect at that time, so there were often cases where things were lost and meals ordered were left out. (Interviewed student, female, student leader, building Y). At the same time, there is the free-rider dilemma, where the nature of public goods in collective action dictates that when there is a collective effort to acquire a public good, there are individuals who fish in the water and sit on it [5]. The donated materials during the epidemic were a public good for the entire school community, and everyone was supposed to have the right to access them and enjoy their benefits. However, during the school closure, some people stole the materials from others and sold them for profit in the WeChat group.

At that time, some companies donated supplies to our school, and the number of donations was set according to the number of students, but when they were distributed, there were always people who took more than their fair share, resulting in the buildings behind us not getting their fair share of supplies at all. Secondly, they also increase the price and sell it inside the group. Some people directly contacted bakeries and supermarkets and sold them at a higher price when they bought them as a group, adding 8 yuan for delivery to the dormitory buildings. (Interviewed student, female, managed student, building Z).

In the case of a material shortage during the epidemic, the distribution of materials and the negligence of the distribution staff caused a lot of discontent among students whose interests were damaged, and the university did not directly address the problem, leading to chaos at the end of the closure. For the solution of the hitchhiking dilemma, one way is the "small organization principle," that is, the division of small organizations to supervise the members of the organization [6]. Theoretically, with fewer members in a "small organization," it is easier to know whether a member is participating in a collective action or enjoying unfair behavior that does not belong to him or her, so the collective will be more vigilant in regulating individuals. Although student volunteers have been divided into several "sub-groups" in the school, in practice, some of them do not report each other for fear of "losing face" or retaliation. Therefore, I think the management needs to optimize the organizational structure or set up a more effective system to achieve effective supervision.

The author believes that selective incentives, one of the ways to solve the dilemma proposed in Olson's free rider problem, may be a solution to this problem. According to Olson's theory, the rise in the number of people makes it more difficult to obtain public goods, and during this anti-epidemic period, various public goods are very scarce due to closure control and transportation difficulties, resulting in a relative rise in the number of people compared to the number of public goods, and new incentives should be added to alleviate the collective action dilemma when the existing organizational structure model cannot be better mediated. Feldman and Gamson further divided selective incentives into extrinsic and intrinsic selective incentives. They refer to those selective incentives in Olson's theory that are predicated on organizational size, structure and power distribution as extrinsic selective agitation, while they refer to the sense of solidarity and loyalty that exists within people as intrinsic selective incentives [7]. In the author's opinion, it is more important to increase intrinsic selective motivation in school resistance management. School authorities should cultivate students' collective consciousness and emphasize mutual help during the epidemic to enhance students' sense of solidarity. In addition, appropriate punitive measures should be taken to alleviate the hitchhiking dilemma by punishing or informing and criticizing those who cause serious damage to others.

4 Social Media Software Assumes the Role of Epidemic Prevention and Management

Another very important player in this disorderly pattern is social media. In this epidemic, online social media such as WeChat, QQ, Pinning, and Tencent Meetings played an important role in communicating epidemic prevention measures, implementing epidemic prevention management, and calming students' emotions for the university authorities [8]. The epidemic prevention unit created by colleges and universities based on geo-interactions and teacher-student relationships is a distinctive community with members who are more educated and obedient than those in other communities. And the implementation of social media is made simpler by the very uniform population structure. For instance, in addition to the already-existing class groups, counselor groups, and other assorted group chats, a number of epidemic prevention efforts, including distributing supplies, dissemination of information about epidemic prevention, calming students,

informing them of the nucleic acid news, and setting up a centralized quarantine, relied on the spread of social media. This initiative transformed the closed offline school community into an online virtual community, and through the original class division and dormitory distribution, the students were regimented into different grids and groups, constituting an online interpersonal communication network under the epidemic. This transformation effectively improves the efficiency of information exchange and brings a higher level of epidemic prevention and management efficiency.

Social media becomes the main communication tool between students, between students and school authorities, and between students and contractors on campus, forming a link to the grid in the context of the epidemic, connecting all parties and forming a common whole to fight the epidemic with the school as the unit. The disruption of the natural rhythm of life, the decline in social interactions, and the elimination of leisurely outings in the context of an epidemic have all been demonstrated in certain studies to result in negative emotions. Shanghai institutions collaborate to give students online psychological counseling using social media and Tencent meetups. In order to help students who are confined to their dorm rooms defuse their emotions and aid in the recovery of their mental health, online activities such as online sports festivals, online book clubs, and online singing parties are also carried out [9].

5 The Logic Behind the Differential Order Pattern: The Construction of Trust Mechanisms Between the University and the Student Body and Students

According to studies on interpersonal interactions and trust processes, interpersonal trust is then decomposed into three common variables, namely inner, middle, and outward trust, where the inner layer is still made up of friends, colleagues, or classmates, the middle layer is made up of acquaintances, and the outer layer is made up of strangers. It is clear that in contemporary society, inhabitants' interpersonal interactions, interpersonal happiness, and interpersonal trust all exhibit features of circles [10]. From this perspective, colleges and universities are special communities where the trust mechanism among students and the circle of trust between students and schools belong to the middle layer, and the overall trust mechanism is easier to build compared with other communities. The on-campus groups all use semi-open and semi-anonymous social platforms, and they are familiar with each other; the school authorities have the authenticity of personal information; and college students are generally better qualified and better educated, so the establishment of trust relationships is faster and more favorable than that of other communities.

The student cadre side and the controlled student side are the two fundamental divisions of the many opinions that have evolved about the building of trust mechanisms. Because the student cadre has greater interaction with the school administration and more direct access to the most recent information and the steps the school is doing to stop the pandemic, they have more faith in it. When the issues in the battle against the pandemic are not represented in the positive comments, the managed students, who represent the general public, will progressively lose faith in the system. From this perspective, the student leaders got more information and trusted the school more; the managed

student group got less information and distrusted the school. This difference leads to the gradual disintegration of the trust mechanism, making it difficult for other measures to be effective, even at a later stage, without sufficient trust.

Second, the trust mechanism between the school and the student body also disintegrated from a better-built foundation in the early stages. At the beginning of the epidemic, we knew that the distribution pressure was high, but in the case of the delayed distribution of meals, it was found that the quantity of meals for boys and girls was far different, and the girls simply could not get enough. Second, the school supermarket sold girls' supplies far beyond the floating market price.

Like sanitary napkins and other hygiene products are just what girls need and are actually sold at an increased price. To the late-closing management, you can deliver things and make a group purchase in the school supermarket group for 200 yuan to send; the school did not directly intervene, resulting in the students who cannot find a single together not being able to buy things; the distribution of supplies is very uneven. (Interviewed student, female, managed student, building Y).

The lack of direct university intervention in these issues is to blame, and the compromised interests of the student public further contribute to the breakdown of the trust mechanism between the university and the students as well as the harm to the relationship of mutual trust that was once very strong. Second, in an effort to appease emotions and quell student unrest, the university decided to withhold some information, such as the chain of positive case dissemination in the school, which obstructed students' ability to learn about the instant message. As a result, students became confused and dissatisfied with the university, and the trust relationship gradually broke down.

6 Conclusion

In the context of today's epidemic, colleges and universities should have adequate contingency plans for public health emergencies and be prepared to respond to epidemics at any time. For example, in other regions of Shanghai, when the epidemic broke out, universities that had not yet had an epidemic organized students to teach offline in their buildings even though they were generally teaching online (in this time, most school asked students to study online [11]), resulting in several majors becoming temporal concomitants and subclassifiers and posing a greater risk to the school as a whole.

Furthermore, there was a delay in building the school's anti-epidemic management system, and the pre-epidemic management was confusing, the division of labor was unclear, and the manpower needed was not what was expected, leaving a few volunteers under heavy pressure and delaying their normal schooling. The confusion in the division of labor and the complexity of the work also put a lot of pressure on the limited number of staff, resulting in a busy "nothingness." The school administration always listened to students' opinions only when they could not be delayed any longer, and many anti-epidemic measures were suspended on the surface without really working to solve the problem. In the third year of fighting the epidemic, universities should have a better emergency response mechanism for such public health events and be prepared with a set of SOPs to deal with emergencies and be ready to fight the epidemic.

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