Social Psychological Analysis on the Phenomenon of Whether Helping the Old Who Have Fallen

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Abstract. In recent years, the phenomenon of whether helping the old who have fallen has triggered many social disputes. There are many social psychological reasons can be found to explain its occurrence, such as the weakening of traditional views on “Give and Repay”, the increasing social anxiety, and the problems on system settings etc. With those into consideration, various measures can be taken to solve the problems. We can strengthen the moral education for the public to stimulate their good mind. The government should improve the legal protection to relief people’s worries and fears when helping others. The relevant departments should correctly guide the media opinion to improve social contagion. Then the public’s moral quality can be improved and the traditional concept on helping others can be developed.

1. Introduction

While more and more people have a lingering fear when helping the fainted on the street, under the influence from the case of Peng Yu, a Nanjing resident who in 2006 stopped to help a 65-year-old woman who had fallen, only to be accused by the victim of causing the injury. Then a series of similar cases can be found. For example, three pupils were blackmailed by one granny who had fallen by herself in Dazhou, Sichuan province in 2013. That was why in the same year people were afraid to help one old man who had fallen injured on the street in Jinhua, Zhejiang province. Those cases push the public’ attention and discussion on whether help the old when fell down to a new height. The influence from those incidents not only makes people confused about the ideology of helping others but also changes their traditional moral judgments and behavior standards. This thesis will deeply analyze the social factors and restriction behind the phenomenon of whether help the old when fell down from the perspective of social psychology first and then will put forward the corresponding improvement measures.

2. Social Psychological Analysis on the Phenomenon of Whether Help the Old When Fell Down

The essence of whether to help the old when fell down is a kind of helping behavior. The psychological factors leading people hesitate to and even refuse to help the old who have fallen can be listed below.

2.1 The mentality of disregard

In nowadays, people, under heave pressure from the life and work, pay attention to their own moral uplift without thinking of others. According to the theory of Pluralistic Ignorance and the Diffusion of Responsibility Effect, “Under emergency and a sudden strange situation, people are lack of psychological preparation for behavioral measures and the information data of behavior. So they try to observe the behavior of everyone present to clarify the truth of things and the fuzzy understanding of their own. They tend to find the clues and basis of their own behavior from the actions of others. When seeing no expression on others’ face and finding no action towards the problem, individuals tend to follow a consistent performance. When most people are present, this

508
kind of responsibility is shared by all invisibly leading to responsibility dispersion”. Like the old saying “I will not act and others will” can be produced. The collective indifference phenomenon is its external performance. This will lead people turn a blind eye to those who need help and then the indifference psychology will spread in the crowd. At last, the sense of people’s social responsibility and the willingness to help others will decrease.

2.2 The mentality of alertness: Lack of trust

People, living in the same residence for a long time with low mobility in the past, they mostly contacted with their relatives and acquaintances with high mutual trust and mutual dependence. This kind of life-style based on kin and geographical relationship is changing from the traditional society to modern society. Under the impact of the concept of market economy, some people become venal and benefit themselves at other people’s cost, which violates the principle of good faith seriously. Gradually, the sense of insecurity and mistrust of others will be widely spread in that people become suspicious and tend not to believe in strangers even acquaintances. On the one hand, those who helping others can’t easily believe others and worry about their kindness will be exploited. On the other hand, some recipients are afraid of the rescuers having some ulterior motives with misunderstanding suspicions. What’s more, they frame the rescuers up as the culprit against their conscience because their inability to afford the treatment. Once this kind of social morality, doubting each other, distrusting each other and not aiding others, is formed, it will boost the spread of the fear of “help” and lead the society to the state of “trust maze” and ethical dilemma. Unfortunately, a series of tragic events because of refusing to help those in real trouble can be occurred.

2.3 The mentality of fear: Afraid of shoulder responsibility

According to the Social exchange theory, “people do many things on the basis of the maximization of remuneration and the cost minimization of their behaviors. Helping others has its cost. They only choose to help others when the pay is higher than the cost, otherwise, the helping behaviors will decrease. In the past, it was normal to help the old who had fallen in that the former social consciousness and law said the receiver should repay the rescuer either in material reward or spiritual gratitude. Today, helping the old who have fallen is a king of behavior with high risk and high cost. For example, they should first find the onlookers as the witnesses, or use a mobile phone, camera recording to prove their innocence; after calling, they should wait for the ambulance. If be framed, they should bear the court’s compensation and shoulder the huge psychological pressure and mental pain. Under the cost pressure, more and more people tend to give their kindness and instant justice to hesitation. This reality explains the reason why people want but fear to help the old who have fallen.

3. The Analysis on the Causes of Whether Help the Old Who Have Fallen

3.1 Cultural reasons

Helping behavior, a kind of social behavior, is certain subtly influenced and constrained by the rescuers' cultural values and behavior norms. Confucian benevolence thought with “benevolence, righteousness, ritual” as the core, is the mainstream of traditional Chinese culture and the ideological root of philanthropic tradition in our country. The concept of “Give and Repay” from the traditional culture is gradually fading out of people’s ideology. Instead, the ideology of value from the market economy balancing the benefits and cost ratio makes the value orientation of social members tend to be utilitarian and practical and leaves the society full of utilitarian and indifferent concept.

3.2 Social reasons

Along with the rapid development of economy, different classes begin to renew differentiation and combination according to the rapid adjustment of the interests among the whole social structure. Such a changing environment will make a large number of people have a sense of uncertainty and
unpredictable about their future, leading to the sharp reduction on their social responsibilities. The public lacking of responsibility are characterized by the degeneration of people’s moral.

This phenomenon is also influenced by the ethos of our society, a combination of dominant social values and behavior tendency in certain period of time. Social morality will guide the behavior of the public and on the other hand, their behaviors will affect the social climate. The spread of the unhealthy social climate in the commodity economy era affects the social environment and the people who live in this environment hold extreme and partial views towards society. Hence, they doubt about the helping behavior and refuse to help others. The social unhealthy climate will be further deteriorated if the collective public apathy and inaction become widely spread. And then a vicious cycle will be formed.

4. The Analysis on the Measures to Break the Dilemma and Improve the Present Situation

4.1 To strengthen the moral education and activate the public’s kindness

Citizen’s moral standards reflect a nation’s basic qualities and a society’s civilization degree. To a large extent, helping behavior, a kind of inner voluntary behavior, depends on personal moral qualities and moral conscience. The public love is the solution to break the social indifference and it can waken people’s conscience. Therefore, to strengthen moral education, especially the social public’s morality education can motivate the whole society to participate in social moral construction and improve the social member’s personal cultivation and ideological and ethical standards. With this the seeds of love, justice, and good will root and grow in people’s heart and the phenomenon of helping others will be more common in the whole society.

4.2 To improve legal system and safeguard the rescuer’s rights and interests

The rescuer’s psychological doubts and worries can be radically eliminated when helping the old who have fallen if the laws and regulations are really protect the justice. There are legal provisions to regulate the behavior of rescue and protect the rights of rescuers in western countries. The legal regulation about rescue starts late in China and it needs to improve. Fortunately, the first rescuers’ rights and interests protection law, “rescue person rights and interests protection regulations of Shenzhen special economic zone”, has been launched in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. This regulation stipulates the rescuers are not need to prove their innocence, which can ease the concerns, to help or not to help, of the people and support the rescuers with legal system. Therefore, the rights and interests of the rescuers can be well protected. Meanwhile, the related government departments should perfect legislation to establish personal credit system and punishment mechanism within the scope of the whole society. We applaud the atmosphere, honor to have good faith and shameful to be dishonest, can be developed widely in the whole society.

4.3 To guide media opinion and expand social contagion of helping others

Social contagion refers to a wide range of information and emotion transfer process. It can arouse same emotion and behavior among the public through language, expression and action etc. Media should correctly guide the public’s opinion and the mainstream values through newspaper, magazine, TV, radio, Internet and other media propaganda way, sticking to the facts and eliminating the false reports. News and media should keep their social responsibility in mind and give full play to the function of the good. Then the public can feel warm and love among society and the social contagion can be expanded. At last, we can find the helping behavior is a kind of normal phenomenon.

4.4 To popularize medical first aid knowledge and enhance the effect of helping others

Improper rescue might lead to more serious consequences when helping the old who have fallen. Thus it is vital to popularize medical emergency rescue knowledge to enhance the effect of helping others. In the developed countries like Europe and the United States, a national emergency penetration is generally more than 20%. There is a big gap between China and developed countries. So we need advocate the correct rescue knowledge through a variety of media. Schools, community
and hospital should hold lectures to help people master the self-help knowledge and skills. This can enhance the level of public scientific assistance with the technical measures and minimize risk in the process of helping the old and reduce the possible contradictions and disputes.

In the near future, the similar apathy phenomenon of refusing helping the old will be less and less with the improvement of citizens’ moral quality and the perfection of legal system. The dilemma of helping others is certain to be break. The Chinese traditional virtue, taking delight in helping others and respecting the elders and loving the young will be carried forward.

References

