

# Innovative Research on the Contemporary Social Governance at Grass-Roots Level Based on Mohist Thoughts on Social Administration

—Taking the Innovative Practices of Grass-Roots Social Governance in Chongqing Municipality, China as the Example

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## Abstract

The breadth and difficulty of the social governance tasks have been intensified layer by layer over the past ten years, posing immediate needs to change the concept, reshape the principal roles, improve the methodology and refine the public services of social governance at grass-roots level. This paper, with data analysis by taking the innovative practices of grass-roots social governance in Chongqing Municipality as the example and incorporating Mohist thoughts “Of the multitude of things none is more valuable than righteousness” and “follow the way and benefit the people” [1], holds that the public services of grass-roots social governance need to be transformed for refinement.

## Keywords

Mohist Thoughts on Social Administration, Contemporary Social Governance at Grass-Roots Level, Innovative Research

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## 1. Introduction

A new trend of social governance has appeared in the past twenty years, especially in the last ten years. Taking Chongqing Municipality as the example, the new trend is reflected in the following aspects: When the breadth and difficulty of the social governance tasks in Chongqing Municipality are being intensified layer by layer, the contradictions in the social governance thus become sharper and more salient: firstly, there are more and stronger appeals from Chongqing

citizen for justice in the social governance events; secondly, with the coexistence of multiple social governance forces, the local citizens have put forward new demands on the role orientation of the government, heightening the level of their appeals for autonomy; thirdly, with the arrival of the information era, new information technologies inclusive of the internet, IOT, cloud computing, big data and mobile terminal are deepening the current world pattern, urging the government of Chongqing Municipality to change its conservative style and free itself from fetter in the grass-roots social governance; fourthly, the public is calling for diverse and multi-level grass-roots social governance along with the modernization of the national governance. In this context, the conventional extensive and experience-based practices on social security and administration of Chongqing have failed to respond to the call of the public and era, so the government has to accelerate its transformation for fine administration. As the social development is far more than people's imagination and anticipation, the existing ideas, ways, links and goals of social governance have fallen behind the current pace of social development. In terms of the current administration form, the government of Chongqing carried out its social governance in a conservative and innovation-lacked way. Problems lie in that firstly, the utilization of administrative intervention is excessive; secondly, the coercive measures are more than service ones and there is no mechanism for better communication with the public; and thirdly, the executive ability of grass-roots social administration is poor. The low level of service awareness leads to a low level of service. When formulating policies and rules, the local government does not begin with the public interest appeals but gives greater attention to the benefits of departments and individuals. As a result, many administrative rules exist in mane only and are unenforceable [2]. Taking a broad and long-term view, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council lay emphasis on the importance and necessity of innovative governance over the society and the grass-roots level in particular, and require early planning for the innovation work. From the micro perspective, the innovative governance of grass-roots society is to address various social contradictions and meet the need of building a harmonious and orderly society; from the macro perspective, it constitutes a part of China's reform on its political system. In retrospect, the outbreak of social contradictions often occurs mostly in the midway of social transformation. In order to maintain a social environment and order favorable for economic growth and causes, the social governance must be strengthened and innovated.

## 2. Problem Statement

The current situation of social governance at the grass-roots level in China is developing along with the rapid economic and social development, during which the following problems have arisen: firstly, the concept of social governance at grass-roots level needs to be changed. Under the ideological guidance of "taking economic development as the central task" since the Reform and Opening-up,

China has made tremendous achievements in its economy but also neglected other aspects of development. For instance, the idea of “give priority to efficiency with due consideration to fairness” is not favorable for the harmonious and orderly development of the society. Fairness and justice are a must to build a harmonious and orderly society, and the first step is to change the concept of governance, cultivate the modern service idea and establish a system to protect the fairness and justice [3]. Secondly, the principal roles of social governance at grass-roots need to be reshaped. Based on the multiple-role governance by the governments, market entities, social organizations and individuals, the focus should be shifted from governments to such leading social forces as market entities, social organizations, organizations and institutes in the community and individual citizens. Thirdly, the method of social governance at grass-roots level needs to be improved. The reinforced social mobility, weakened governance system, increased democratic claims for benefit distribution, fairness and justice and well-developed networking communication channels have necessitated a deep reform on the existing method of social governance at grass-roots level. Fourthly, the public services of social governance at grass-roots level need to be refined [4]. The developments of both economy and society and division of labor have led to the refined distribution of social benefits, thus bringing about the demands for diversity and quality. Since the related governance systems have not been rationalized, the building of grass-roots talent teams for social governance has lagged behind the pace of economic and social development. However, the bloating organizations and staffs for social governance result in the initialization and non-differentiation of public services.

### **3. Studies on the Mohist Thoughts on Social Governance**

Many Chinese scholars study the Mohist management thoughts from multiple angles, detailed as follows: at the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, the ideological and cultural circle was extremely active, Mohism gained renaissance and related researches sprang up like mushrooms. In *On the Reasons of the Prosperous Mohism during the Late Qing Dynasty and the Early Republic of China* and *On Several Characteristics of Mohism Research During the Period between the Late Qing Dynasty and the Early Republic of China* Shen Tao points out that Mohism research during these grand studies of Pre-Qin Scholars showed distinctive characteristics of the times: “unprecedented participants, diverse value orientations, strong flavor of pragmatism, addressing Chinese problems with western methods in fashion, specific and systemic research fields”, vividly elaborating the development, importance and vitality of Mohist management thought researches at length [5].

Then, the research of Mohist management thoughts goes more specific and systemic. In the first place, some scholars focus on the general theories of Mohism: like detailed elaborations followed by analysis of significance in social management are made in *Brief Analysis of Mohist Management Thoughts* (by

Fu Jinyang) and *Primary Exploration to Mohist Management Thoughts* (by Qiu Yanxiang) on several Mozi's basic management thoughts including the people-oriented "universal love", "identification with the superior" for centralized organizational management, "exaltation of the virtuous" for personnel management and employment of the capable, "economy of expenditures" for consumption management and "depending on the self and intensifying the work" for production management [6]. In *Mohist Management Philosophy – A Case Study of Traditional Management Philosophy in China III*, Xie Qingmian further confirms Mo-bian collects rich Mohist epistemology and logic thoughts; Mozi advocates "universal love", "condemnation of offensive war", "exaltation of the virtuous", "economy of expenditures", "simplicity in funerals", "condemnation of music", "anti-fatalism", "will of Heaven" and "power of spirits"; advocates "expound with standard" in epistemology, pays attention to practice and perpetual experience, which is the marked feature of empiricism in Materialism. He still treats "universal love" as "the way" for "world order", namely equality and mutual benefit as the general principle for administration of the world, which is the core of Mohist management philosophy and embodied in "universal love", "mutual aid", "exaltation of the virtuous" and "diligence brings about order". Mozi's logic thoughts include "three tests", dialectical theory of "sameness and difference" and "acceptance", "recognition" and "action". Therefore, Xie Qingmian believes they represent "the philosophy of farmers and artisans" in Mohism, which is quite valuable in terms of management philosophy [7].

Secondly, some scholars study the application of Mohism to contemporary management from the perspective of management science: In *Several Problems about Mo Zi's Management Theory*, Zhu Guanglei proposes that "benefiting the people" is the orientation and "picking the items with large profit and small harm" the decision criterion of Mohist management theories and "exaltation of the virtuous and employment of the capable" serves as the core of Mohist personnel management theories [8]. Besides, he extends his study to economical management in *Discussions on Mo Zi's Economics and Economical Management Theory*, where he points out that "he who relies on his own efforts survives" indicates that labor is an honor, "the five grains are the people's mainstay" confirms that agriculture serves as the foundation, "do what you can do" is a principle for labor division, "stop when the needs of the people are satisfied" is a basic principle for "economy of expenditures", the high lords "rob the people of their means of livelihood", in order to have their palaces covered with porches and pavilions in various designs and adorned with paintings and sculpture", "producing wealth according to seasons" means time is money, "what causes extra expense but adds no benefit to the people the sage-kings would not undertake" intends to lessen the people's burden, "for a poor family to imitate the rich families in the extravagance in clothing and food, ruin is assured" warns against blind imitation of high consumption, "the commodity can be sold out when the price is proper" indicates the necessity of business knowledge, and "rewards are

given according to labor spent and emoluments distributed in proportion to achievements” is Mozi’s distribution principle [9]. Xu Xiyan still stresses the necessity of “observing his aim and achievement” to good management effect in *The Research on Mozi’s Management Thoughts* [10].

Thirdly, still some scholars study and analyze from the perspective of philosophical logic contradiction and law: e.g., Chen Yanqing in *On the Logic Structure and Basic Features of Mohist Management Thoughts* and Li Shaohui in *On Mozi’s Management Thought and Its Characters* etc. studies the contradiction and target characteristics (goal: benefiting the country and people) of “universal love” as the key and core of state, social management, “identification with the superior” as the structural rule for social organizations and “exaltation of the virtuous” embodying standard proposal for personnel employment. This also reflects the diversification and flexibility of method and channel generated by Mohism for fulfilling this goal [11]. In *Mozi’s Harmonious Management Thoughts*, Zhang Jinshan concludes through further analysis that it’s the want of universal love that causes social instability, and people should love each other and “universal love” is established in various social relations in order to bring an end to social unrest and realize harmony. Hence Zhang Jinshan elaborates Mohist’s six basic social relations and puts forward corresponding theories of balance: self-cultivation, for balance of self-relation; simplicity of funerals, for balance of family relation; exaltation of the virtuous, for balance of lord-scholar relation; economy of expenditures, for balance of lord-people relation; identification with the superior, for balance of superior-subordinate relation and condemnation of offensive war, for balance of international relations. Such contradiction and balance analysis has deepened the study perspective of Mohist management thoughts [12].

In the above articles, theoretical exploration is made surrounding the Mohist core thoughts of “universal love, condemnation of offensive war, exaltation of the virtuous and identification with the superior”, based on the special view of philosophical logical thinking and management ethics (mainly interpersonal, and employed and employer), but there is large space for improving the level, depth and scope of research on application of Mohism in management.

#### 4. The Innovation Path

It is found out in the research process of Mohist thoughts that in the idea “Of the multitude of things none is more valuable than righteousness”, diverse services for grass-roots social governance should be provided to the masses, and in line with the idea of “follow the way and benefit the people”, the internet technological progress can help refine the grass-roots social governance services.

##### 1) “Of the multitude of things none is more valuable than righteousness” [13]: providing diverse services for grass-roots social governance to the masses

Mozi said, “Of the multitude of things none is more valuable than righteousness.” Suppose we say to a person: We shall give you a hat and shoes on condi-

tion you let us cut off your hands and feet. Would you agree to this? Of course, you will not agree. Why? It is because hats and shoes are not so valuable as hands and feet. Again, we shall give you the whole world on condition you let us kill you. Would you agree to this? Of course you will not agree. Why? It is because the world is not as valuable as one's life. Yet people have struggled against one another for a single principle [14]. This shows righteousness is even more valuable than one's person." It indicates that "righteousness" is more valuable and people have different demands in different cases [15]. In addition, Mozi considered that "righteousness and benefit" are uniform, and people's pursuit for them is legitimate. As what he said, the "uniformity of righteousness and benefit" includes the uniformity of personal benefits and social benefits, as well as the uniformity of spiritual and material levels [16]. To verify the effect of social governance at grass-roots level, it falls on whether the effect of "righteousness" has been maximized, that is to say, whether the "national benefits", "social benefits" and "public benefits" have been satisfied to the maximum in the current social governance, according to Mozi's words [17]. It requires explicating who is served and for whom the society is managed, thus optimizing and developing the functions of social administration. When it comes to the service of a modern government, how will the "righteousness and benefit" be expressed therein? Of course this is different from the "righteousness and benefit" proposed by Mozi [18], for the connotations have been enriched and advanced. A government should position its role in the governance more accurately, highlight its publicity and deepen the "service-oriented" function. In respect of the public demands increasing with the rapid economic growth, the government has its own strength on the service products, which is incomparably stronger than other non-governmental organizations—such strength should not be "put aside" but should be utilized to perfect the public products that non-governmental organization and other civil organizations are not able and willing to provide, such as: poverty relief and development, educational investment, health protection, environmental protection, old-supporting policy and so forth. These are also related to the contents of current social governance at grass-roots level exercised by a government. Except for the leaders in the multiple governance roles—party and government, citizens and social organizations should be encouraged by taking measures to play their role fully and hence convert their social advantages into benefits of social governance at grass-roots level. "Of the multitude of things none is more valuable than righteousness." It requires the work of social governance at grass-roots level basing on what the public need, want and think, and the rulers have to adapt the way of governance to the need of social development and improve the level of social governance at grass-roots level to provide multiple services to the masses.

## 2) "Follow the way and benefit the people": the internet technological progress helps people to refine the services of grass-roots social governance

Nowadays the internet technology has penetrated into every aspect of the lives

of common people. To provide and expand the services of social governance at grass-roots level, the rulers should resort to more effective and convenient means to realize the goals of social governance at grass-roots level. In this regard, the Mohist thought of “follow the way and benefit the people” can be referred [19]. First of all, the connotations of “follow the way and benefit the people” and “people-oriented” have to be defined. Since the “righteousness and benefit” are uniform, Mozi regarded “righteousness” as “benefit” [20]. He believes that the core value of “righteousness” is its usefulness, benefit and contribution to the state, society and life. In the respect of social governance at grass-roots level, Mozi’s “righteousness” also serves as a criterion to measure the social administration [21]. Since it has been discussed above that the current grass-roots social governance begins with the fundamental interests of the masses, which are driven by “benefits”, the uniformity should be reached ultimately among the state, society and people in the process of social administration. Only in this way can the interests of all parties be secured. The Mohist thought of “follow the way and benefit the people” are different in approach but equally satisfactory in result with the idea of “people-oriented” [22]. The essence of how to judge and measure the merits and demerits of social governance is whether it starts from public interests and conforms to the fundamental interests of the masses. “Esteem for righteousness” was a demand for the ruling class at that time, but now it seems to be consistent with the fundamental demands of the masses to a certain extent. In the grass-roots social governance of Chongqing, the essence of “people-oriented” is to take the interests of the people as the highest standard. Secondly, Mozi combined his thought of “follow the way and benefit the people” with the “will of Heaven” [23]. He established the Mohism to be the will of Heaven, as if a wheel maker has the ruler to draw a circle and a carpenter has the ruler to draw a rectangle. Only when they have the ruler can they measure everything of the world in a similar way to measure the circle and rectangle. So they come to know that it is right when it conforms while it is wrong when it does not conform [24]. From today’s point of view, the thoughts of “identification with the superior” and “follow the way and benefit the people” should be consistent with the “interests of the masses”, and hence with the Communist Party of China who represents the majority of Chinese people. Nevertheless, in the course of social development, there are inevitably some phenomena or contradictions that are inconsistent with the “interests of the masses”. If they are treated improperly, there will be ostensive factors that isolate the superior from the lower, and there will be outbreak of inducing causes affecting the grass-roots social governance. Therefore, in the process of Chongqing’s grass-roots social governance today, the rulers have to, based on the available resources, make use of the media and network technology which are developing rapidly and humanly to go deep into all aspects of people’s life, and refine the measures for social governance at the grass-roots level to achieve the governance goals; by doing so, the rulers would reach the thoughts of “concerted consensus”, “identification with the superior”

and “follow the way and benefit the people”. As a result, the government credibility and service level can be enhanced, while the public will believe and support more the party and governments [25]. This has begun to appear in the current social governance. Securing the people’s livelihood is to care the fundamental interests of the public. With increasing attention paid to the “livelihood issue” in the current social governance of Chongqing, the government has consciously paid high attention to and solved the issue of the livelihood of the people at the grass-roots level. A series of policies such as the “home appliances going to countryside” and “medical insurance” have been implemented [26]. The ultimate aim of social development is to guarantee the all-round development of human being, and human being is the fundamental aim of development. This is the ultimate goal of grass-roots social governance.

### **3) Analysis on the Satisfaction Degree of Comprehensive Service Demand of Grass-roots Social Governance—Taking Chongqing Municipality as the Example**

First, the error bar chart is used to intuitively judge the acceptance of public services in the grass-roots social governance of Chongqing Municipality [27]. It can be known from the “education” and “age” in the error bar that the center of distribution of service satisfaction in the grass-roots social governance is not high, so it can be learnt that the age and education are not decisive factors to determine the satisfaction degree of cultural services. In contrary, the quality and refined degree of grass-roots social governance services are the decisive factors [28]. In overall view, the difference among individual observations is small, reflecting that the indexes of the center of distribution stand highly for each observed variable.

Secondly, the number of persons constituting the organization of grass-root social governance is taken as the fixed variable for the partial correlation analysis on the service and demand satisfaction. A table is hence worked out:

A conclusion can be drawn from the partial correlation analysis table that: when “Q28 How many people are forming the neighborhood/village committee where you live?” is taken as the control variable and an partial correlation analysis is conducted for Q32, Q29, Q30, Q31 and Q32, it turns out that  $P < 0.001$  (in grey background color), indicating a high significance. It can be inferred that the work efficiency of grass-roots social governance organizations, implementation of work outcomes, the satisfaction on the work and benefits, and participation in the major decisions have a significantly positive correlation with the satisfaction on the demands of grass-roots social governance service [29].

From the above study, it can be concluded that the public service of social governance at grass-roots level should be transformed for refinement. The developments of both economy and society and division of labor have led to the refined distribution of social benefits, thus bringing about the demands for diversity and quality [30]. Since the related governance systems have not been rationalized, the building of talent teams for grass-roots social governance in Chongqing



		Correlation						
Control Variable		Q34 Does the public service provided by your community/village committee meets your demands?	Q29 What do you think of the efficiency of your neighborhood/village committee?	Q30 Do you realize that the work results of your neighborhood/village committee have been implemented to you or your family?	Q31 Do you think the work of your neighborhood/village committee satisfies your interests?	Q32 Does your neighborhood/village committee call everyone or representatives to consult before making major decisions each time?		
Q28 How many people are forming the neighborhood/village committee where you live?	Q34 Does the public service provided by your community/village committee meets your demands?	Correlation	1.000	0.348	0.356	0.476	0.443	
		Significance (bilateral)	0.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
		df	0	396	396	396	396	
		Q29 What do you think of the efficiency of your neighborhood/village committee?	Correlation	0.348	1.000	0.590	0.470	0.188
		Significance (bilateral)	0.000	0.	0.000	0.000	0.000	
		df	396	0	396	396	396	
		Q30 Do you realize that the work results of your neighborhood/village committee have been implemented to you or your family?	Correlation	0.356	0.590	1.000	0.551	0.187
		Significance (bilateral)	0.000	0.000	0.	0.000	0.000	
		df	396	396	0	396	396	
		Q31 Do you think the work of your neighborhood/village committee satisfies your interests?	Correlation	0.476	0.470	0.551	1.000	0.469
		Significance (bilateral)	0.000	0.000	0.000	.	0.000	
		df	396	396	396	0	396	
		Q32 Does your neighborhood/village committee call everyone or representatives to consult before making major decisions each time?	Correlation	0.443	0.188	0.187	0.469	1.000
		Significance (bilateral)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	.	
		df	396	396	396	396	0	

has lagged behind the pace of economic and social development. However, the bloating organizations and staffs for social governance result in the initialization and non-differentiation of public services.

## 5. Conclusion

On the whole, reviewing this research on the innovation path of contemporary grass-roots social governance, four research results are obtained through analysis on Mohist thoughts: the thinking innovation comes first. By setting the goals of grass-roots social governance from thinking, the principles of governance can

be determined and the guarantee (etiquette) of governance can be put into practices [31]; the diversification of rulers comes second. By taking the “Exaltation of the Virtuous” as the ideological guidance, the rulers at grass-roots level can be diversified and the talents can be trained [32]; the methodological innovation comes third. As Mozi said, “there was order in the empire because the emperor could unify the standards in the empire”, and “when the administration of the ruler answers to the desires of the people, there will be order”. The thoughts should be incorporated into the party’s leadership, into the participation of citizens, autonomous organizations and social workers, and into the rule of law, virtue and collegiality [33]; the public service innovation comes fourth. According to Mohist thought of “esteem for righteousness”, the services of social governance at grass-roots level should be targeted and diverse. And the internet technological progress can help refine the grass-roots social governance services [34]. These four research results may serve as an innovation path and provide new theoretical supports to the development of the contemporary social governance at grass-roots level.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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