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# PSYCHOLOGICAL FEATURES AND SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISM OF PARTICIPANTS IN GROUP EVENTS INDUCED BY ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

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## Abstract

*The rapid economic growth in China has led to a decline in environmental quality. The environmental damage has undermined the interests of some people, causing a number of group events. Considering the key factors of environmental damage, this paper explores the psychological features of the participants in the group events induced by environmental damage, and probes deep into the social psychological mechanism of such events. On this basis, the authors put forward a solution to the group events caused by environmental damage. The results show that the participants are mainly attracted to the group events by the unfair distribution of environmental benefits; group psychology, confrontational psychology and negotiation psychology are clearly seen in group events induced by environmental damage; most participants have group psychology, because their interest claims are not satisfied. This paper clarifies the psychological features of participants in group events, shedding new light on how to control such events.*

**Key words:** Environmental Damage, Benefit Distribution, Group Psychology, Confrontational Psychology, Negotiation Psychology.

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## INTRODUCTION

Social transformation and economic restructuring have led to a comprehensive and structural adjustment of the entire social system. The one-sided emphasis on economic growth has resulted in the environmental deterioration and the unsustainable predatory development has seriously violated the sustainable development of the environment (Tasca, 2016). The group event is the result for the accumulation of social contradictions when the society enters into period of social transition. When the social contradictions accumulate to a certain extent, with appropriate incentives, the group event will break out suddenly, leading to mass destruction (Judith &

Andrea, 2016). It can be found in existing literature that common group events are divided into three categories, namely group events based on interest expression, group events based on dissatisfaction and group events based on value pursuit (Kimura, Hashimoto, Niitsu et al., 2015; Rim, Hansen, & Trope, 2013). Unlike other types of group events, the root for environmental destructive group events is not only internal contradictions among the people, but more about environmental protection (Poonai, Antony, Binkley et al., 2001).

The characteristics of environmental destructive group events include severe situation, easy early warning, diversity of organizational participants and demands, and the uncertainty of regions (Karaarslan, Ertepinar, & Sungur, 2013). When the group event occurs, the psychological performance of participants is denial but inner horror. Once the event becomes uncontrollable, the legal intervention will give participants a severe

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punishment (Chan, Chau, & Leung, 2017). The occurrence of environmental destructive group events undermines the nimbyism of the masses and deprives the emotional appeal of the vulnerable. Under the polarized psychology of the vulnerable, individuals become fearless in the group event, which tends to intensify the situation (Jeroen, 2008, Schnall, Kalkstein, Fitchett et al., 2011). Based on environmental damage factors, this paper explores the psychological characteristics of participants in environmental destructive group events and conducts an in-depth analysis of the social psychological mechanism of environmental destructive group events. Finally, the solution for resolving the group event caused environmental damage is given.

### CHARACTERISTICS AND CAUSES OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTIVE GROUP EVENTS

The root for environmental destructive group events is that it hurts the most fundamental interests of the people, and environmental damage affects people's lives and production safety (Okoro, Ezeonwuka, & Onu, 2018). Figure 1 shows the classification of environmental destructive group events. According to existing studies, environmental destructive group events can be divided into preventive and reactive based on the stage of environmental pollution; it can also be divided into pollution-driven and value-driven based on the intention of the event; it can be divided into violent and

non-violent based on the confrontation of the event; it can be divided into rural and urban based on the participant of the event. The problems involved in environmental destructive group events is complex. Except for sudden environmental damage, most environmental damage behaviors have time processes. When environmental damage behavior occurs, it should be curbed in time (Gass, Rogers, & Kinne, 2016).

Participants in group events are generally the victims of environmental interests. In many cases, only the participants' own interests are harmed, but their fundamental interests are consistent. In many cases, group events are likely to cause greater concern (Stefanidou, Bouros, Livaditis et al., 2015). Figure 2 shows the characteristics of environmental destructive group events. The main manifestations include complex contradictions, high degree of confrontation and regional differences. This kind of event mostly occurs around polluting enterprises and the main appeal of participants in different regional is different; in addition, the occurrence of group events can be predicted so it is easy to perform early warning. However, this kind of event can spread to a wide range within a short period of time. At present, when people's own environmental rights are damaged, they are no longer as silent as before, but to protect their own environmental interests. When political participation channels are blocked, people are forced to resort to group events to protect themselves (Lange, Steinke, & Dewitte, 2018).

Figure 1. Classification of environmental destructive group events

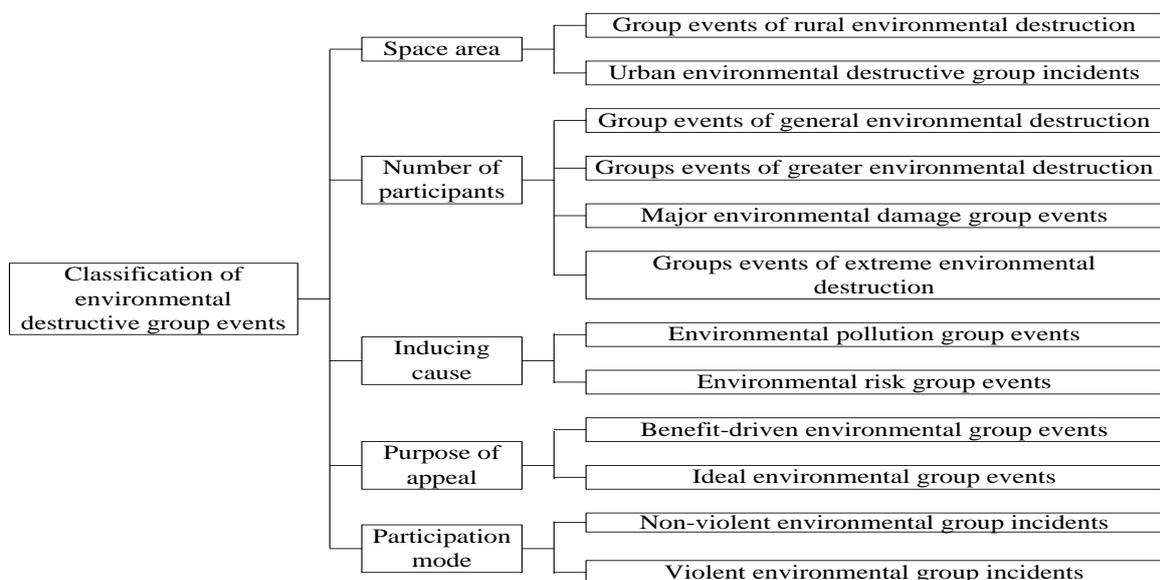
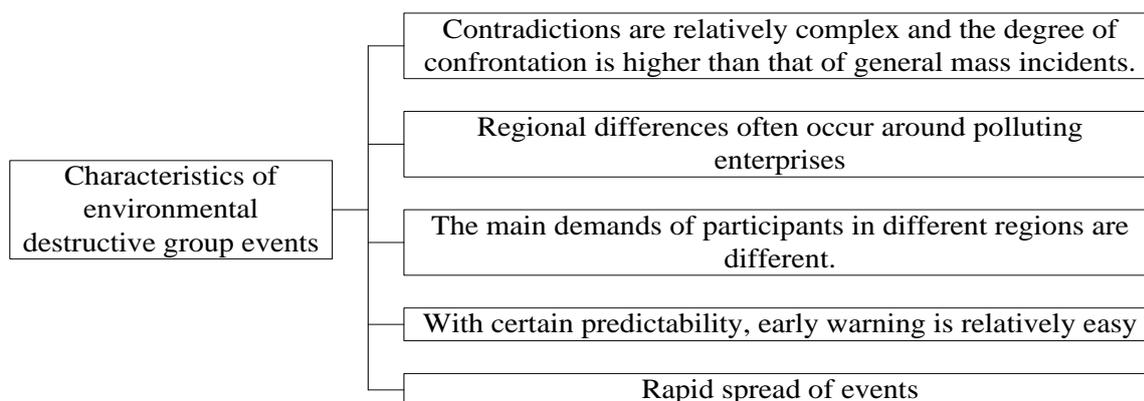


Figure 2. Characteristics of environmental destructive group events



### PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTIVE GROUP EVENTS

#### Psychological State of Participants in environmental destructive group events

When the environment is damaged, the spread of the group event is not only the spread of information, but also the spread of emotions, which reflects the group psychology of participants. The most important feature of people in the group is that they are susceptible to infection and hint, that is, individuals in this group can be persuaded to accept this behavior using hint instead of direct persuasion. Furthermore, confrontational psychology can also be seen in this group event. When the demands of people cannot be satisfied by themselves or through political channel, they tend to spread the information through group events to expand the impact and take advantage of public opinion, which is, to be more specific, the confrontation psychology of political settlement. Thirdly, the negotiation psychology can also be seen in this process. Participants are hoping that the environmental damage behavior can be resolved and they can be given some compensation.

#### Analysis of the Occurrence Mechanism of environmental destructive group events

From the perspective of social psychology, the group refers to a group of people who have the same background with various forms of interaction. Participants are living in the same area and have collective identity. The main reason for the occurrence of environmental destructive group events is that participants are living in the same area and have the same environmental interests and environmental emotions. In many cases, the occurrence of the group event is transformed from

the cation of decentralized individuals into organized collective action. This process requires a leader with the consciousness of safeguarding environmental rights to organize the activity so as to gather those people whose environmental interests are damaged together quickly. Figure 3 shows the type and development process of the psychology of participants. The whole psychological process will transform from the imbalance at the initial stage to revenge. When the group event occurs, people tend to have follow-up psychology, wait-and-see psychology and group psychology. The whole process of emotional change is calm - restless - agitated - uncontrollable. Figure 4 shows the occurrence mechanism of environmental destructive group events. The environmental damage behavior damages the environmental interests of the public. If the government fails to deal with this problem properly, people will defend their rights by themselves. If their demands cannot be met, this conflict will escalate, which eventually leads to environmental destructive group events. The whole process involves the interests of the government, the environmental destroyers and the masses. The masses will threaten anyone with the group event, but to resort to legitimate channels. Therefore, the government has inescapable responsibility for the outbreak of group events.

### RESEARCH ON THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISM OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTIVE GROUP EVENTS

#### Analysis of the Psychosocial Mechanism of Participants in Environmental Destructive Group Events

Most of environmental disruptive group events are related to the nimbysism in sociology. In this

Figure 3. Psychological types and development process of participants in group events

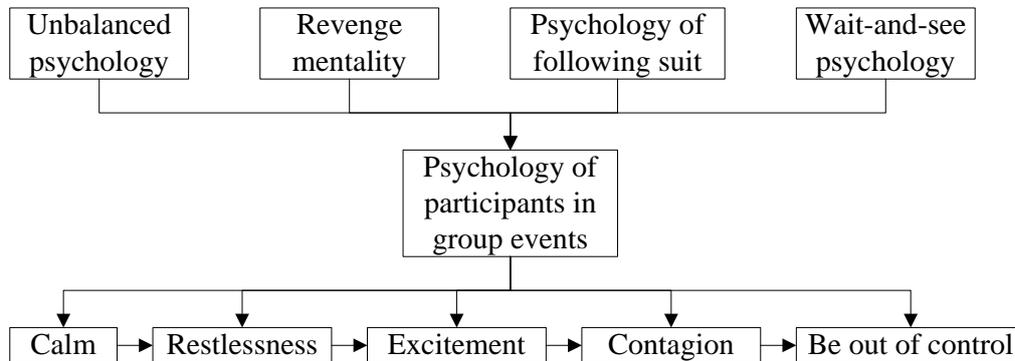


Figure 4. Occurrence mechanism of environmental destructive group events

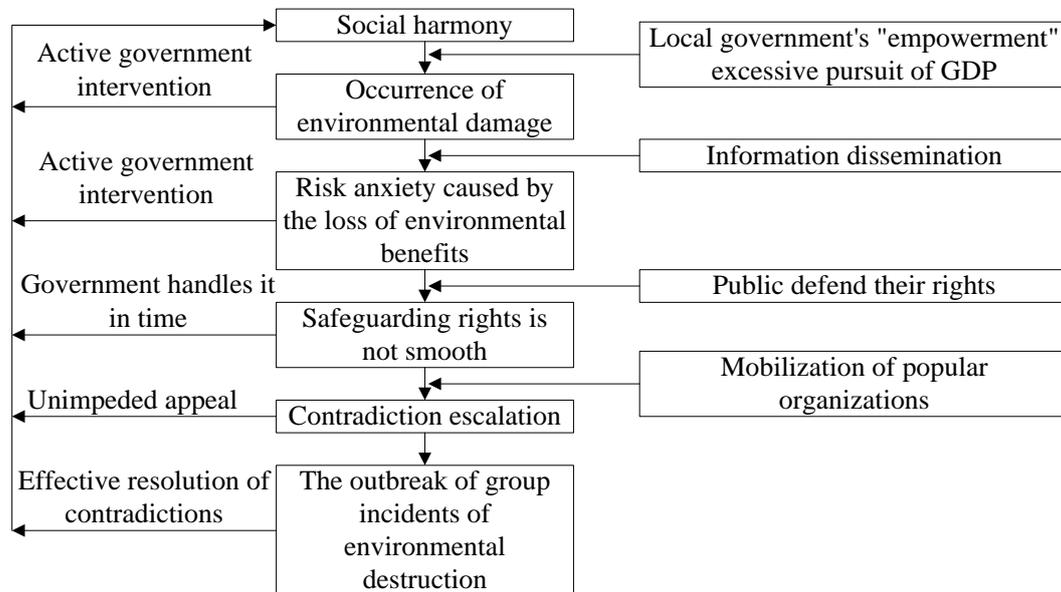
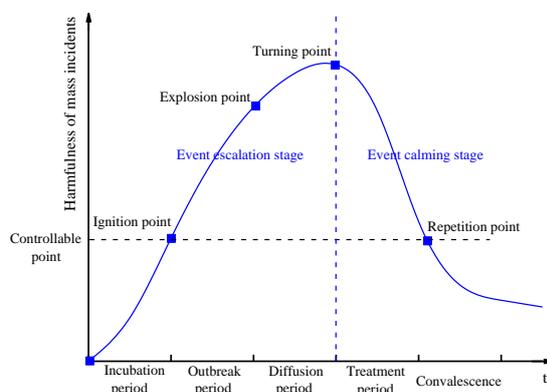


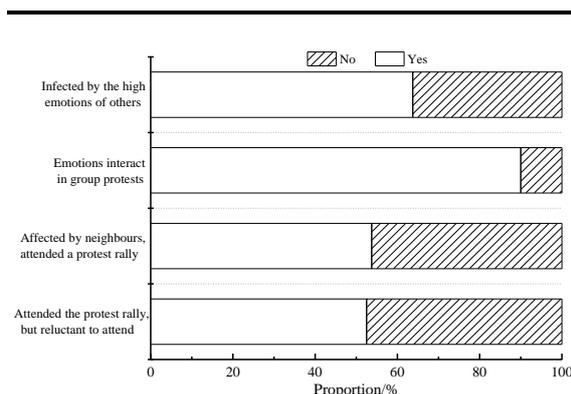
Figure 5. Life cycle of environmental destructive group events



process, interest-related groups have emotional resonance and emotional mutual infection, and even find a great sense of identity in group activities. Figure 5 shows the life cycle of environmental destructive group events, which can be divided into two stages: escalation and subsidence. When the event explodes, it will quickly subside with time, and the participants will show group psychology and negotiation psychology in the whole process. Due to the lack of public opinion expression mechanism, the occurrence of environmental destructive group events is closely related to the nimbyism of local people. Moreover, participants will have the sense of imbalance due to the unfairness of the burden of environmental benefits. In the face of different individual interests, different people will have

different attitudes towards the group event. Under the impact of group behavior, it is very likely for people to have group psychology. Also, the regulation of group interests will invisibly affect the behavior of every member in the group so that most people in the group will have consistent values.

**Figure 6. Survey results of participants' herd psychology and emotional infections**



In order to explore the group psychology of participants, this paper conducts a questionnaire survey. The sample of the survey is shown in Table 1. Figure 6 shows the survey result of the group psychology and emotional contagion of participants. More than 50% of the masses have participated in the protest, but they are actually reluctant to

participate in the event. Most people have expressed the idea that the emotional interaction in the group protest makes it easier for them to achieve their goals, and more than 60% people have shown group psychology, which, as they claim, is infected by the high emotions of others in the group. Table 2 illustrates the psychological effect of the sense of identity of participants in the group event. The results show that individuals tend to become fearless in group activities and they have expressed the idea that the group event can solve the problems in a quicker and better way. Some people also have the wrong idea. Nearly 50% of people think that they can express whatever dissatisfaction by participating in the group event, and the law cannot be enforced when everyone is an offender.

**Countermeasures for Environmental Destructive Group Events**

The root cause for group events is the imbalance of interests, and it is necessary to find the main contradiction when seeking solutions. Figure 7 shows the countermeasures for environmental destructive group events. Firstly, it is necessary to accurately grasp the social mentality of the masses, protect people's livelihood, coordinate the interests of all parties, strengthen the mass work, safeguard the interests of the masses, improve the expression mechanism and respond to the demands of the

**Table 1. Characterization of basic samples for investigation and research**

Type	Category	Quantity	Percentage
Gender	Male	63	63%
	Female	37	37%
Participation in rally protests	Yes	92	92%
	No	8	8%
Age	18-30	29	29%
	31-50	42	42%
	51-60	23	23%
	>60	6	6%
Identity in cluster	Organizer	7	7%
	Compliant	38	38%
	Blind followers	12	12%
	Follower	6	6%
	Bystander	37	37%

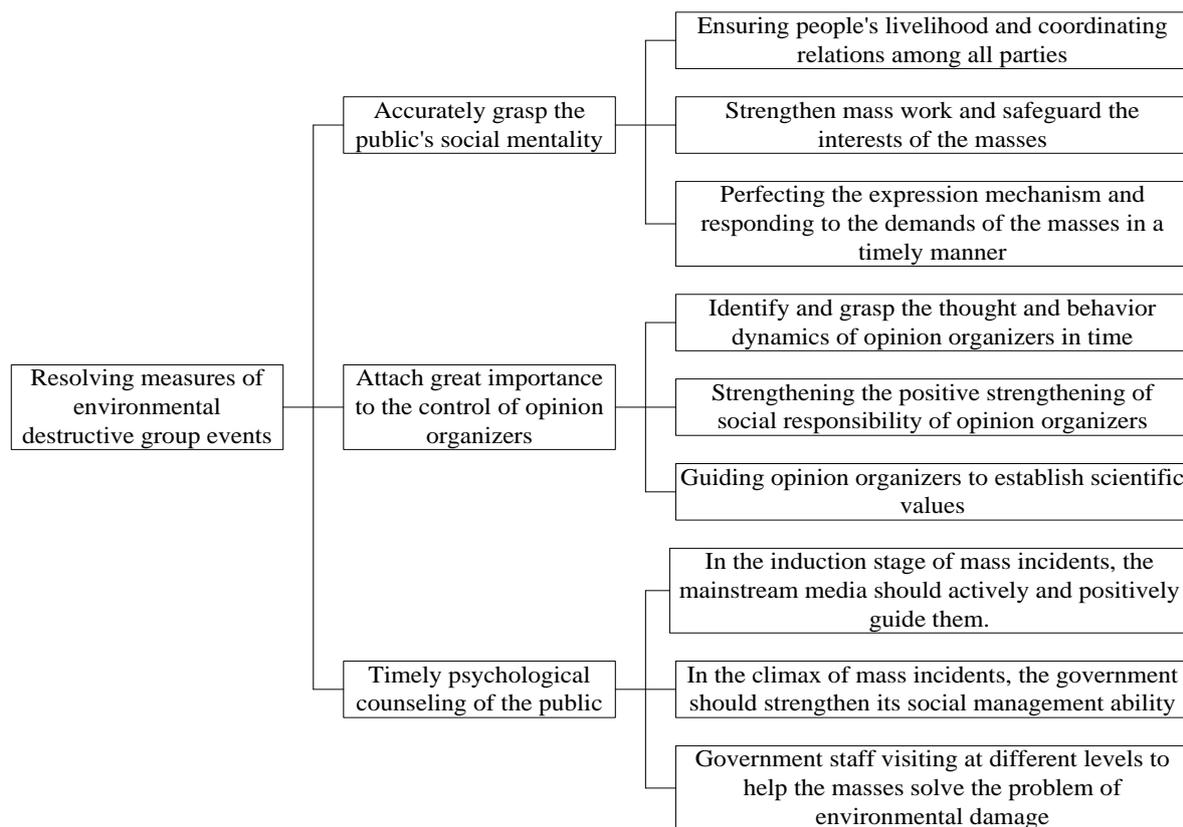
**Table 2. Cognitive psychological role of participants in group events**

	Yes	No
In group protests, individuals become more courageous	72.5%	27.5%
Cluster protests can solve the problem	77.5%	22.5%
Intuitive participation in cluster activities	57.5%	42.5%
Participating in group protests can express dissatisfaction, and the law does not blame the public	52.5%	47.5%
See others participate and follow blindly	12.5%	87.5%

masses in a timely manner. Secondly, it is necessary to attach great importance to understand and control the opinion of the organizer, timely identify and control the thoughts and behaviors of the organizer, follow up the ideological guidance, strengthen the positive reinforcement of the social responsibility of the organizer, and guide the organizer to establish scientific values; finally, it is

necessary to do the psychological counseling of people and pacify their emotions. In the induction stage of group events, the mainstream media should positively guide public opinion; in the climax stage of group events, the government should strengthen its social management capability. The government should regularly organize staff to visit the masses and help them to solve problems.

Figure 7. Resolving measures of environmental destructive group events



## CONCLUSION

Based on the environmental damage factors, this paper explores the psychological characteristics of participants in environmental destructive group events, and then deeply analyzes the social psychological mechanism of this kind of event. Finally, the countermeasures for resolving the environmental destructive group events are given. The specific conclusions are as follows:

(1) The characteristics of environmental destructive group events include relatively complicated contradictions, higher level of confrontation than other group event and regional difference. It mainly occurs around polluting enterprises and people in different regions have different appeals; moreover, the group event is

predictable, so it is easy to perform early-warning. However, the event can spread to a wide range within a short period of time.

(2) When environmental damage occurs, participants will show group psychology, confrontation psychology and negotiation psychology in the whole group event. This psychological process is complicated, but group psychology is the most significant.

(3) The unfairness of the burden of environmental benefits induces the psychological imbalance of participants. The survey shows that more than 60% of the masses show group psychology.

(4) The root cause for group events is the imbalance of interests, and it is necessary to find the

main contradiction when seeking solutions. It is necessary to accurately grasp the social mentality of the masses, attach great significance to understanding and controlling the opinion of the organizer and timely perform the psychological counseling of people and pacify their emotions.

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