

Public perception and effectiveness evaluation of Safe Zhejiang Construction in the new era -- A survey on the sense of security among residents of Cixi City, Zhejiang Province

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Abstract. Reflecting on the construction of Safe Zhejiang under the context of a large-scale society and holistic security is a strong response to the "Two High-Level" construction proposed at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. It also provides a useful reference for co-building a modernized grassroots governance system in the new era. This paper aims to analyze the underlying logic affecting residents' sense of security through four dimensions: safety issues, accidental incidents, types of crimes, and criminal organizations. It further explains the challenges encountered in advancing Safe Zhejiang, including "an increase in the number of criminal cases," "a decline in public security conditions," and "generally low public participation." To address these issues, new models for Safe Zhejiang construction can be explored through strengthening Party-led governance, rational resource allocation, and establishing collaborative governance mechanisms.

Keywords: Safe Zhejiang, public perception, effectiveness evaluation, Residents' sense of security

1. Research background and significance

1.1. Research background

1.1.1. Theoretical background

Modern "risk society" faces unprecedented risks and crises [1]. German scholar Ulrich Beck pointed out: "China may currently be in a phase of widespread urbanization, manifested in issues of urban capacity, unbalanced development, social class divisions, and the increasing contrast between urban and rural areas. All these factors are concentrated in the issue of security risks [2]." The proposal of "Safe Zhejiang" in 2004 served as a "booster shot" for Chinese society. Xiaomei Liu systematically analyzed the "Fengqiao Experience," major challenges, fundamental contents, and practical summaries in the context of Safe Zhejiang, providing a comprehensive reference for security construction research [3]. Fangxia Lu and others, at the "Safe Zhejiang" forum, held discussions under the theme of "The Fengqiao Experience in the New Era and the Modernization of China's Grassroots Social Governance." They identified the modernization of grassroots social governance, led by the Fengqiao Experience, as a key research direction in the field of social governance [4].

Scholars have continuously expanded their research on Safe Zhejiang, with a particular focus on residents' sense of security as a crucial analytical perspective. Abraham H. Maslow's Security and Insecurity Questionnaire operationalized the concept of security perception [5]. Maslow argued that human behavior interacts with the surrounding environment and that security needs emerge only after physiological needs are relatively satisfied [6]. In 1988, a research project by the Ministry of Public Security defined security perception as "residents' subjective feelings and evaluations of public security conditions, representing a comprehensive psychological response to the extent of protection or violation of their personal and property rights in a given period [7]." Current scholars, in exploring the influencing factors of residents' sense of security, not only consider objective social environmental factors but also incorporate subjective personal characteristics. Dawei Wang et al. identified four key subjective personal factors: physiological factors, psychological factors, personal circumstances, and self-defense capability [8]. On the objective social level, they focused on governance control factors and environmental order factors. Jianwen Wei and Mingyang

Ruan examined the impact of subjective personal characteristics, such as gender and age, on social security perception, while also analyzing objective social factors such as residential environment and housing type [9].

1.1.2. Practical background

In 2003, amid rapid economic growth, Zhejiang faced persistent public security threats and frequent mass incidents. In 2004, then Zhejiang Party Secretary Xi Jinping launched the Safe Zhejiang initiative, aiming to enhance social harmony and stability. Zhejiang thus became the first province in China to propose and comprehensively implement the concept of "holistic security." Xi Jinping, leading the 11th Zhejiang Provincial Party Committee, steadily advanced the multi-dimensional and large-scale construction of Safe Zhejiang. Over the past 18 years, successive Zhejiang provincial governments have remained committed to this cause, continuously developing the Fengqiao Experience in the new era. Transitioning from "small-scale security" to "holistic security," Zhejiang has established a three-tier leadership system across provincial, municipal, and county levels, improved security assessment and incentive mechanisms, and actively explored new governance models integrating the Internet with social governance. As a result, Safe Zhejiang has achieved sustained high-level progress. However, with social development, the public's growing demand for a better life extends beyond material and cultural aspirations to increasing expectations for social security. This creates a contradiction with the imbalanced and insufficient development of Safe Zhejiang. Challenges such as governance difficulties in urban-rural fringe areas further hinder its long-term progress. To gain deeper insights into the current state of Safe Zhejiang and enhance residents' sense of security, this study focuses on a sample of urban-rural fringe communities in Cixi, Ningbo. By constructing a demographic profile of these residents, the research aims to analyze their public perception of Safe Zhejiang and evaluate its effectiveness, ultimately providing reasonable recommendations for its further advancement.

1.2. Research significance

Safe construction, as a key initiative under the Safe China strategy, plays a crucial role in advancing the modernization of the national security system and capabilities, maintaining national security and social stability, improving the public security system, and enhancing the effectiveness of public security governance. It continuously strengthens people's sense of security and well-being, contributing to the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity [10].

1.2.1. Theoretical significance

From an academic perspective, there is currently a significant research gap in the theoretical study of "safe construction." Since the launch of the Safe Zhejiang initiative in 2004, it has undergone 18 years of development, yet there remains a lack of comprehensive academic research on this topic. Therefore, a systematic academic investigation into the development status and challenges of safe construction is necessary. This study aims to deeply analyze the public perception and effectiveness evaluation of Safe Zhejiang, explore the factors influencing grassroots citizens' sense of security, and gain insights into modern citizens' attitudes and cognition regarding Safe Zhejiang. These efforts are essential for the theoretical development of the internal driving force required for the continued advancement of Safe Zhejiang.

1.2.2. Practical significance

In recent years, "safe construction" has gradually gained public attention. However, during the construction of Safe Zhejiang, several issues have emerged, including the lack of significant progress in combating property-related crimes, the limited impact of remediation efforts in key areas, deficiencies in community safety prevention mechanisms, the rapid spread of media information affecting public perception, irregularities in routine law enforcement practices, and inefficiencies in public service delivery. These challenges necessitate a thorough examination of how to leverage on-the-ground research to understand the real attitudes and security needs of grassroots communities. Based on these insights, Safe Zhejiang's policies and measures can be flexibly adjusted to ensure that residents perceive tangible benefits, fostering a stronger sense of security, fulfillment, and happiness. This study adopts a group satisfaction profiling approach under the framework of Safe Zhejiang, using survey data analysis to provide feedback on public sentiment. The findings will contribute to a more comprehensive and precise refinement of Safe Zhejiang's construction strategies and implementation activities. Additionally, they will help enhance the effectiveness of grassroots safety initiatives, identify areas of dissatisfaction among residents, and introduce improvements. Ultimately, the study aims to address the growing public demand for social security in the new era and contribute to the co-construction of a modern grassroots governance system.

2. Research content and methodology

2.1. Research content

This study examines the current development of Safe Zhejiang, focusing on local residents' sense of security and its influencing factors. It aims to explore the structural framework and underlying logic of Safe Zhejiang's construction. Based on these findings, the study investigates the current state of Safe Zhejiang and proposes optimization strategies. The research is structured into three main sections:

First, it profiles group satisfaction under the Safe Zhejiang initiative from a demographic perspective. By comprehensively considering the physiological and psychological factors of surveyed residents, the study conducts a detailed analysis of individual characteristics and behaviors to grasp the overall status of residents' sense of security. It also assesses common issues and individualized differences in the development of Safe Zhejiang, providing valuable references for other regions in China that have yet to implement large-scale safe construction initiatives.

Second, it explores the factors influencing grassroots residents' social security perception and contributes to the theoretical development of the internal driving force behind Safe Zhejiang's construction. This study adopts an innovative resident-centered approach, collecting residents' expressed needs through household interviews and other qualitative methods. By employing localized research methodologies, it delves into how residents of different age groups perceive and evaluate the progress of Safe Zhejiang, ultimately forming a comprehensive theoretical and practical analysis. This research aims to innovate development models for Safe Zhejiang, enhance residents' sense of security, and increase their recognition of the initiative.

Third, it examines the governance and implementation of Safe Zhejiang by combining field surveys with policy analysis to provide recommendations for improving security initiatives. The research team conducts surveys on the current state of Safe Zhejiang, residents' satisfaction levels, and future development directions. The study identifies areas where public satisfaction falls short and proposes targeted improvements. Additionally, it offers comprehensive and precise suggestions for optimizing the content and activities of Safe Zhejiang, identifying key areas for law enforcement agencies to enhance, and improving the coordination between public security departments and government agencies.

2.2. Research methodology

This study explores the construction of Safe Zhejiang and the factors influencing the sense of security among residents of Cixi City. It integrates theoretical analysis with practical security governance strategies implemented by relevant departments. The primary research methods include:

2.2.1. Literature review method

Through systematic literature retrieval, reading, and analysis, this study reviews domestic and international research on Safe Zhejiang and residents' sense of security. Key concepts are clearly defined to establish a solid foundation for subsequent research and investigation.

2.2.2. Questionnaire survey method

The questionnaire survey method, widely used in social research, is employed in this study. The primary survey target is residents of Cixi City, and the questionnaire is designed in a format combining "core questions" with "rating scales." Data collection includes both pre-surveys and post-survey revisions to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings.

2.2.3. Case study method

This study selects one or two representative subjects for in-depth investigation and analysis, aiming to obtain more typical and illustrative data. This approach helps explain the factors influencing residents' sense of security and the logical framework of Safe Zhejiang. Additionally, it identifies challenges and bottlenecks in the construction of Safe Zhejiang, providing targeted recommendations for its future development.

3. Quantitative analysis of results

The research team conducted a random survey of 440 individuals within the designated research area. After reviewing and filtering the collected responses to exclude invalid questionnaires (e.g., those completed too quickly, with excessive missing answers, containing contradictory responses, or duplications), a total of 404 valid responses were confirmed, accounting for 91.8% of the total questionnaires.

3.1. Descriptive statistics

Geographically, this survey covers the entirety of Cixi City. In terms of demographic characteristics, the surveyed population aligns with the general population structure of Cixi City. Therefore, the results provide a relatively comprehensive reflection of residents' sense of security and its influencing factors, making the findings representative (see Table 1). From the sampled 404 respondents, the survey reveals that the research participants constitute a gender-balanced group, predominantly middle-aged, with stable family conditions, lower education levels, and primarily middle-income earners.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of sample demographics

		Frequency (N)	% of Valid Sample	Dissatisfied (N)	Dissatisfaction Rate (%)
Gender	Male	223	55.2	16	7.2
	Female	181	44.8	15	8.3
Age	Under 18	16	3.9	2	6.5
	18-30	80	19.8	8	25.8
	31-45	137	33.9	10	32.2
	46-60	135	33.5	8	25.8
	Over 60	36	8.9	3	9.7
Education	Middle school or below	109	26.9	16	51.6
	High school (technical school)	162	40.1	13	41.9
	College (undergraduate)	128	31.7	2	6.5
	Master's degree or above	5	1.3	0	0
Monthly Income (RMB)	≤5,000	198	49.0	15	48.4
	5000-10000	145	35.9	11	35.5
	10000-15000	46	11.4	4	12.9
	Over 15000	15	3.7	1	3.2

3.2. Factor analysis

3.2.1. Validity test

To analyze the factors influencing residents' sense of security in safe communities, factor analysis was conducted based on the questionnaire structure. The validity test results are shown in Table 2. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is 0.89, which exceeds the threshold of 0.8. The Bartlett's test of sphericity is highly significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming that factor analysis is a suitable and scientific approach for this study.

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.890
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2855.965
	Df	105
	Significance	0

3.2.2. Reliability test

Before analyzing the questionnaire data, reliability testing was conducted to ensure consistency and stability. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to measure internal consistency. As shown in Table 3, the Cronbach's Alpha value for the standardized items is above 0.9, indicating acceptable reliability.

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha reliability test

Cronbach's Alpha (Standardized)	Number of Items
0.903	15

3.2.3. Factor extraction

As presented in Table 4, principal component analysis was used to extract four factors. After rotation, based on previous research and study objectives, the following factor variables were identified: Safety Issue Factor: Includes environmental safety, waste classification, food safety, drug safety, and pandemic safety, all of which show high loadings on the first factor. Accidental Incident Factor: Includes road traffic, fire hazards, construction safety, electricity safety, and hazardous chemicals, which load significantly onto the second factor. Crime Type Factor: Includes drug-related crimes, juvenile delinquency, and human trafficking, all of which have high loadings on the third factor. Criminal Organization Factor: Includes organized crime and telecom fraud, which load highly onto the fourth factor.

Table 4. Rotated component matrix

Factor Name	Scale Items	Component			
		1	2	3	4
Safety Issue Factor (A)	Environmental safety (A1)	0.743			
	Waste classification (A2)	0.692			
	Food safety (A3)	0.735			
	Drug safety (A4)	0.620			
	Pandemic safety (A5)	0.726			
Accidental Incident Factor (B)	Road traffic (B1)		0.619		
	Fire hazards (B2)		0.647		
	Construction safety (B3)		0.538		
	Electricity safety (B4)		0.771		
	Hazardous chemicals (B5)				
Crime Type Factor (C)	Drug-related crimes (C1)			0.876	
	Juvenile delinquency (C2)			0.548	
	Human trafficking (C3)			0.842	
Criminal Organization Factor (D)	Organized crime (D1)				0.522
	Telecom fraud (D2)				0.697

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Convergence: Achieved after seven iterations.

3.3. Correlation analysis

To more intuitively present the intrinsic relationships between key factors, a selection of representative variables was chosen for correlation analysis. All factors were standardized in a positive direction, with larger values indicating a stronger correlation. The specific analysis results are shown in Table 5:

Table 5. Correlation test data table

	Age	Length of Residence	Education	Income
Safety Issues	0.166**	-0.134**	-0.198**	0.122*
Accidental Incidents	0.102*	-0.296**	-0.230**	0.157**

Significance levels:

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed);

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

The table indicates that concerns about safety issues and accidental incidents show a significant positive correlation with respondents' age and income, while exhibiting a significant negative correlation with length of residence and education level. This

suggests that local residents' overall sense of security is inversely proportional to their age and income but directly proportional to their length of residence and education level.

Based on field research and discussion, the following explanations are proposed for these correlations: Age Factor: As respondents age, a significant portion of the elderly population experiences heightened anxiety and fear regarding social safety. This is attributed to both declining physical and psychological resilience, making them more vulnerable to various risks such as food and drug safety, pandemic safety, and telecom fraud. Additionally, older individuals may struggle to keep pace with rapid societal changes, leading to uncertainty and concern about new developments. Length of Residence: This factor primarily applies to non-local residents. As their length of residence increases, they become more accustomed to local lifestyles and environments, which gradually enhances their sense of security. Education Level: Respondents with higher education levels generally possess stronger cognitive abilities and risk management skills, enabling them to better navigate societal risks. As a result, they tend to feel more secure in daily life. Income Level: Higher-income respondents tend to experience greater concerns about security issues, particularly as their needs and expectations increase. As their standard of living rises, they become more aware of potential safety threats, leading to heightened vigilance regarding various security concerns.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

The research findings indicate that the construction of Safe Zhejiang has achieved significant progress. However, some residents still express concerns about the current public security environment. The key conclusions and implications are as follows:

1. Insufficient Coordination in Grassroots Development

Some grassroots units have not fully integrated public security issues into their high-quality development agendas and lack a clear understanding of what and how to address residents' public safety concerns. Therefore, all levels of government departments should adopt Party leadership as the guiding principle to strengthen team development and fully leverage the role of Party members in grassroots social governance. Party members and cadres should be deeply engaged in local Party branches, proactively connecting with residents, enhancing Party-mass service efforts, and ensuring organizational work, focus, resources, and services are all extended to the grassroots level. By embedding social governance and public services into every community, the government can provide "zero-distance" and "refined" services, effectively bridging the "last mile" in serving the public.

2. Imbalanced Allocation of Responsibilities and Authority

In the current Safe Zhejiang accountability framework, work responsibilities are primarily concentrated at the county and township levels, and accountability for major issues is also largely borne by these two levels. However, China's administrative power distribution follows an inverted pyramid structure across the central, provincial, municipal, county, and township levels, leading to a "heavy top, weak bottom" imbalance. As a result, grassroots officials frequently express frustration over the centralization of power and decentralization of responsibility. To address this, the government must adhere to the principle of macro-level central oversight, meso-level local implementation, and micro-level grassroots execution. It is essential to streamline the division of responsibilities between central and local authorities, rationally allocate resources, and ensure that the responsibility lists of different departments are complementary and coherent to mitigate conflicts and eliminate accountability gaps [11].

3. Weak Community-Based Security Governance

The decline of traditional communities and the rise of new residential communities have disrupted previous social structures, reducing the influence of community committees and weakening grassroots security organizations. This has led to difficulties in implementing community-based crime prevention and hindered the progress of Safe Zhejiang. To overcome these challenges, the construction of Safe Zhejiang must not only rely on government leadership but also actively involve social organizations and urban residents. A collaborative governance model should be established, where the government plays a central role while social organizations and community residents participate in co-governance [12]. Special attention should be given to those "marginalized from decision-making processes", ensuring that they have opportunities to express their views on public security policies and safety affairs [13].

In summary, this study examines Safe Zhejiang from a macro-level perspective, using residents' sense of security as a focal point. By analyzing the correlation between safety concerns, accidental incidents, crime types, and criminal organizations with residents' perceived security, the study provides targeted policy recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of Safe Zhejiang. The findings offer practical insights for improving the service capabilities and quality of government and public security agencies, fostering stronger collaboration between law enforcement and local governance, and ultimately enhancing overall public security outcomes.

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