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How does Public E-participation Trigger Policy Agenda Setting?——Qualitative Comparative Analysis Based on 40 Events

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<u>Full Research Paper</u>

How does Public E-participation Trigger Policy Agenda Setting?——

Qualitative Comparative Analysis Based on 40 Events

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Abstract: Public e-participation has become the main form of triggering policy agenda setting. Accordingly, revealing the key factors and internal mechanism of a triggering process is conducive to improving the theoretical system of policy agenda setting. This study uses the public e-participation perspective to (1) construct an analysis framework of policy agenda setting based on theory of multiple streams, (2) introduce 40 events from 2015 to 2019, and (3) conduct qualitative comparative analysis to analyze the trigger factors and paths of policy agenda setting. The setting of policy agenda triggered by public e-participation is the result of interaction among social issues, participants, and policy outputs. Formation of public opinion pressure is the main trigger of policy agenda setting; participation of the public, opinion leaders, and media has a positive impact on policy agenda setting; and implementation of policy output plays a decisive role in implementing policy agenda setting. Three types of typical trigger paths can be summarized: (1) from "event-driven" to "government response" of event-driven participation, (2) from "public interaction" to "reaching consensus" of public interaction participation, and (3) from "public issues" to "policy outputs" of public opinion output participation. These paths reflect the main mechanism of e-participation that triggers policy agenda setting.

Keywords: Public e-participation, Policy agenda setting, Qualitative comparative analysis, Theory of Multiple Streams

1.   INTRODUCTION

Policy agenda setting is the first step in transforming social issues into policy issues, and determines which issues can be included in the decision-making scope. Given the extensive application of Internet technology in public participation, theory of policy agenda setting based on the traditional background has undergone corresponding changes[1]. The technological revolution of the Internet has brought unprecedented opportunities for public e-participation. Policy agenda setting is gradually shifting from the traditional mode to that of e-participation[2], which has become the main method for the public to participate in political life and express their opinion[3]. Given that the phenomenon of triggering policy agenda setting through e-participation occurs frequently, internal and external scholars have conducted an increasing number of studies on policy agenda setting. Under a changing network environment, exploring the driving factors and paths that trigger policy agenda setting has become a key issue. At present, domestic policy agenda research has mainly concentrated on theoretical research, model verification, and local experience summary[4]. The majority of scholars are convinced that policy agenda setting means that the government examines and identifies social problems based on the participation of multiple subjects, prioritizes policy issues according to a certain criteria, and eventually forms a list of policy issues to be solved [5]. Empirical studies have shown that the "pressure-response" mode is the most authentic manifestation of China's current policy agenda setting. This mode's essence is that pressure forces the public to form a consensus with the government, and policy agenda setting is gradually shifting from the pressure-response mode to the "consensus building" model[6] [7]. However, existing studies are insufficient in revealing the internal mechanisms and paths of how public e-participation triggers policy agenda setting.

From the perspective of public e-participation, the current study uses theory of multiple streams as basis to (1) construct an analysis framework of the influencing factors of policy agenda setting, (2) select 40 events in China from 2015 to 2019 as research cases, (3) conduct crisp set qualitative comparative analysis to explore the process of public e-participation triggering policy agenda setting, and (4) discover the main factors and internal mechanism of public e-participation triggering policy agenda setting to provide reasonable suggestions for the e-participation mode of policy agenda setting.

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1.1 Main research perspectives of policy agenda setting

Social issues continue to emerge, but resources that can be used to address them are limited. Before making decisions, the government must make choices among various issues and prioritize addressing important social issues. With the extension of public policy in various fields, policy agenda setting has gradually become a research hotspot in communication, society, management, and other disciplines. Research on agenda setting originated from communication, and scholars in this field have divided agenda setting into media, public, and policy agendas. Interaction among the three agendas is inseparable from the role of the environment. Research on policy agenda in communication has mainly focused on the interaction and change among the three. Sociological researchers are convinced of the difficulty for individuals to directly form policy output in policy agenda setting. Instead, the power of social groups and organizations easily attracts the attention of government, which, mainly from the research on the overall social structure and group behavior of policy agenda setting, reflects the interaction among the public, social issues, and government. Research on policy agenda in the management field has considerably focused on the relationship among the key factors affecting policy and overall changing process, with the aim of constructing a systematic analysis framework containing various internal factors.

Studies on policy agenda setting in various fields have their respective emphasis. As the primary step of public decision-making, agenda setting plays an important guiding role in public management and decision-making results. Hence, the current study will further explore the research results of the e-participation mode of policy agenda setting and its key driving factors from the management perspective.

1.2 Research on the mode of public e-participation in policy agenda setting

With the enhancement of citizens' consciousness of participation in decision-making, public decision-making is gradually transforming from elite decision-making to participatory decision-making[1]. The popularity and development of the Internet have brought unprecedented opportunities for participatory decision-making, and e-participation has become a means for the public to pressure political decision-making[8]. Professor Shaoguang Wang first proposed six agenda-setting modes: closed-door, mobilization, internal reference, borrowing, application, and external pressure modes[9]. External pressure mode is the most common mode of agenda setting. Zhang Hua used the analysis of e-participation forms as basis in summarizing several existing modes: application, mobilization, and external pressure modes. Among these modes, external pressure mode has the greatest influence on agenda setting. This mode is often caused by negative or catastrophic events, which spread rapidly on the Internet and considerably attract the public's attention, thereby making the pressure reach the peak. Thereafter, the government responds to it under social pressure and eventually forms the policy output[10]. According to the characteristics of political participation in the Internet era, Jiuhao Fei proposed a markedly intuitive mode of netizens' triggering in policy agenda setting. In this mode, focal events will attract the attention of netizens, whoc can reach a common opinion of the issue through online discussions. In the participation process, opinion leaders play a mobilizing role in guiding the right public opinion direction, the media track and report the event, and eventually form policy suggestions or policies with legitimacy. When the preceding factors happen together, policy agenda setting will be triggered. The triggering mode by netizens reflects the commonness of e-participation mode and has markedly distinctive characteristics of the Internet era[11]. Compared with traditional agenda-setting mode, e-participation mode can change the balance of interests between diverse political situations. However, e-participation has a relatively negative impact on agenda setting owing to ideological differences between the public and government [12].

Thus, with the evolution of the policy agenda mode, e-participation has become the core force of policy agenda setting. However, there is a lack of deep discussion on how different trigger factors affect internal agenda setting.

1.3 Research on the driving factors of network participation in policy agenda setting

Qiangbin Li proposed four driving factors of policy agenda setting: events, media, power and rights. He found that the forces driving agenda setting are diversified, and agenda setting, in reality, is often the result of the joint action of multiple forces[13]. From the perspective of event attribute and attention, Yang Huang studied the trigger factors of policy agenda setting, and found that with the superposition effect of focus events, public attention to events, mainstream views, and value orientation presented by media promote the policy agenda setting[14]. Tianyu Jiang believed that pressure is the main trigger factor of policy agenda setting. When the public extensively discusses and focuses on a certain social issue, pressure will be directed at the government, thereby

promoting social issues to transform into policy issues and placed in the decision-making agenda[6]. Guohua Wang et al. found that specific interest demands are the core conditions to trigger policy agenda. The premise for the public and decision makers to reach a consensus depends on the interaction among the focusing ability of the focus event, attribute of the issue itself, and decision makers' belief system, policy agenda setting presented the trend from "pressure response" to "consensus building"[7].

Note that the existing research has made some achievements in the mode and driving factors of triggering policy agenda setting. However, there is lack of deep research on the internal mechanism and paths of e-participation in triggering policy agenda setting, particularly the lack of deep analysis on the internal mechanism of how different trigger factors work together to promote the process of policy agenda setting. Therefore, the current study takes 40 events as research object, conducts qualitative comparison analysis to study the trigger factors and paths of policy agenda setting, and attempts to provide a theoretical basis for the practice of e-participation in public decision-making.

2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Kingdon believed that the policy agenda setting is the result of the joint action of various conditions and factors under specific situations, rather than the result of some factors acting independently. This joint action means the integration of the problem, policy, and political streams. The intersection of the three streams can promote the opening of the policy window, thereby providing an opportunity for the policy agenda setting. From the e-participation perspective, this study will use theory of multiple streams as basis in analyzing the problem, political, and policy streams in detail; and extract the antecedent conditions of e-participation triggering policy agenda setting.

2.1 Problem stream

Problem stream is the sum of social problems that can attract people's attention and that the government should solve. These social issues are the starting point of agenda-setting, but not all of them can enter the decision-making field. Focal events can immediately expose and focus issues, attract public attention, promote public opinion to reach the peak, and promote the agenda setting process thereafter[7]. Focus events mainly play the role of focusing issues, but not all events can make the public form a common experience, thereby forming public opinion pressure[11]. Public opinion pressure can trigger agenda-setting by forcing decision makers to respond to issues. With the development and popularization of the Internet, the occurrence of focus events is easy to ferment into public opinion issues of public concern on the Internet. Netizens' participation and expression of public opinion has become an important force in triggering social public opinion. Internet public opinion represents the voice of the majority of the people, which is conducive for the government to understand the public's overall needs. Therefore, the majority of citizens are optimistic to express their interest demands through e-participation, enabling the relevant government departments to understand public opinion, thereby promoting the fair solution of relevant social issues. However, there will also be some negative effects owing to the limitation of public e-participation. Therefore, focus events and public opinion pressure will be selected as antecedent conditions in the problem stream to trigger agenda setting.

2.2 Political stream

Political stream involves the interaction of relevant interest groups and participants in agenda setting, among which the key subjects are the public, opinion leaders and the media. Exposure of social issues, participation in discussion, proposal of suggestions, and publication of political opinions are the embodiment of public participation. Formation of public opinion pressure often requires a high degree of public participation. The public is the largest scope and largest number of participants, and the large-scale cluster effect it causes will lead to some extreme and even irrational situations. Meanwhile, the leading role of opinion leaders will help bring the public mood to the rational direction. Opinion leaders are at the center of social networks, have certain professional knowledge, and can express views with correct social value. They are the key force influencing public value and action direction, and their leading role in public decision-making cannot be disregarded. The public's attention to issues is short-term and fragmented, which lacks depth of attention to issues. Anthony Tang once proposed in the "attention cycle of issues" theory[15] that the public's attention to issues will immediately enter the subsequent fading stage after reaching the peak. If issues cannot be followed up continuously, then they will unconsciously fade out of the decision-making horizon. The media can significantly focus on the development process of issues

continuously and deeply, and follow up on these issues.

2.3 Policy stream

The public has a natural tendency to express interest demands, and the Internet provides a platform for the public to express political views and value preferences[15]. When issues involve public interest, the public will actively participate in the decision-making process related to their own vital interests and discover the essential interest issues from the event, thereby having an effective influence on the policy agenda setting[16]. Whether or not social issues can eventually be in the policy agenda setting process often depends on the approval of decision-making authorities. However, whether or not decision-making authorities can form the approval depends on the variety of restrictive factors, such as enforceability of policy suggestions and legitimacy of the network public opinion; when all issues form a consistent answer, policy agenda setting becomes the best choice of the decision-making authorities[11].

In summary, the current study extracts seven factors, namely, focus events, public opinion pressure, public participation, leader mobilization, media follow-up, interest expression, and decision identification, as anemic conditions of the analysis framework (see Figure 1).
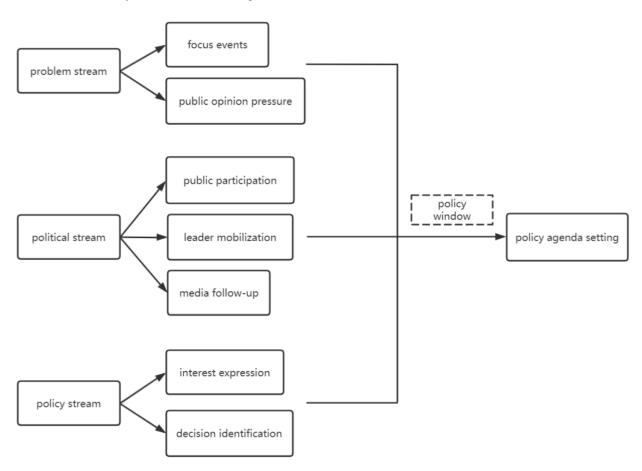

Figure 1.   Analysis framework of e-participation triggering policy agenda setting

Table 1.   Case Study

No.	Year	Case names	Related policy agendas
1	2015	Civil servant salary increase	Formulate an implementation plan
2	2015	Fujian Zhangzhou PX project deflagration	—
3	2015	lift the two-child policy across the board	Universal two-child policy
4	2015	Taobao vs. saic	None
5	2015	The proposed death penalty for trafficking in children is controversial	Article 241 of Amendment IX of criminal Law

No.	Year	Case names	Related policy agendas
6	2015	Left-behind children in Bijie commit suicide	《Opinions on Strengthening the Care and Protection of Left-behind Children in Rural Areas》
7	2015	Henan boy lost and starved to death relief station	Establish information linkage mechanism
8	2015	Female college student being blackmailed for helping the elderly	—
9	2015	Tianjin "8.12" explosion	—
10	2015	Qingdao expensive prawns incident	《Circular on Further Regulating and Standardizing the Order of the Tourism Market》
11	2016	Zexi Wei incident	《Provisions on the Administration of Internet Information Search Services》
12	2016	Bullying in Zhongguancun No. 2 Primary School in Beijing	《Law of the People's Republic of China on Administrative Punishments for Public Security》
13	2016	Shenzhen Yixiao Luo incident	《Basic Technical Specifications for Online Public Fundraising Information Platforms for Charitable Organizations》
14	2016	A pediatrician in Shandong province was hacked to death by a patient's family	—
15	2016	A cancer-stricken female teacher in Lanzhou Jiaotong University has been fired	—
16	2016	Liaoning election bribery case	Measures for selecting members of the special Committees of the 12th Liaoning Provincial People's Congress
17	2016	PhD student reports fraud in the National GMO Testing Center	Rectification within 6 months
18	2016	Fengcheng power Plant collapse in Jiangxi province	—
19	2017	Zhejiang Traditional Chinese Medicine hospital infected 5 people with AIDS	《Management Of Nosocomial Infection in outpatient and emergency medical Institutions》
20	2017	Shandong degrading mother murder case	—
21	2017	Ctrip child abuse incident	《Shanghai Standards for Setting up Childcare Institutions for Children Under 3 Years Old (Trial)》
22	2017	Hong Kong graduates disrespecting the national anthem	《National Anthem Act》
23	2017	Child abuse in Red Yellow Blue Kindergarten	《Notice on Further Strengthening the Management of Various Kindergartens》
24	2018	Flight attendant killed in didi taxi late at night	《Notice on Strengthening and Standardizing the Management of The List of Targets of Joint Punishment for Trust-Breaking in The Taxi Industry (Draft for Soliciting Opinions)》
25	2018	Yongyuan Cui exposure star Yin and Yang contract	The Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee and other departments jointly issued a notice to regulate the film and television industry
26	2018	Qingqing bus accident into the river	《Notice on Further Strengthening the Operation Safety of Urban Buses and Trams》
27	2018	Gene editing baby incident	Plan for The Establishment of National Ethics Committee for Science and Technology
28	2018	High-speed railway "seat hog female" incident	《Opinions on Appropriately Restricting Certain Serious Trust-breaking People from taking trains within a Certain Period of time to Promote the Construction of social Credit System》
29	2018	Experts suggest setting up fertility funds	—

No.	Year	Case names	Related policy agendas
30	2018	Changchun Changsheng vaccine fraud incident	The State Medical Products Administration ordered rectification
31	2018	"Yan Secretary's daughter" incident	—
32	2018	Dying to Survive is controversial	The Drug Administration Law of the People's Republic of China was revised
33	2019	Zhao Yu's justifiable defense case	The "Zhao Yu voluntary felon-fighting case" was written into the Work report of the Supreme People's Procuratorate
34	2019	Throwing objects from high altitude is punishable	《Opinions on Properly Hearing Cases of Throwing and Falling Objects from High Places according to Law》
35	2019	Forty-six key cities across the country tried garbage sorting	《 Regulations of Shanghai Municipality on the Administration of Household Garbage》
36	2019	Kunming University of Science and Technology student Li Xincao drowned	—
37	2019	Chongqing Porsche driver hit incident	—
38	2019	Dalian "magic child" murder case	Draft amendment to the Law on the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency is open to public comment
39	2019	Society appeal for legislation on personal bankruptcy	《Plan for Accelerating the Reform of the Withdrawal System for Market Players》
40	2019	Shaanxi Benz female owner rights disturbance	Xi 'an Market Supervision Administration issued 《The Special Rectification of Automobile Sales Market Operation Behavior》

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research method

Factors that trigger agenda setting by public e-participation are often the result of mutual dependence and joint action. Hence, this study chooses qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) to analyze the influence of different factors and paths of agenda setting. Traditional linear statistical methods can only analyze the influence of independent variables on dependent variables and cannot explain the joint effect of interdependent factors on the results. QCA can combine different factors to conduct research in the form of configuration, integrate the advantages of qualitative and quantitative research, and help answer the complicated research questions of causality[17]. When studying the relationship between antecedent conditions and explained variables, this study does not choose the statistical analysis method with independent variables, but uses the qualitative comparative analysis method with configuration and aggregate thinking. This method emphasizes the aggregate relationship between factor configuration and results and is widely used in the research of agenda setting. QCA can excavate heterogeneity among cases and also analyze commonalities among different cases[17].

QCA research methods include three categories: clear set QCAs (csQCA), fuzzy set QCA (fsQCA), and multivalued QCA (mvQCA). In particular, csQCA is suitable for the analysis of dichotomous assignment type variables. This study will use csQCA for research.

The analysis process of QCA should include two types of interrelated and orderly analysis: conditional necessity and combinatorial adequacy analyses. Some scholars have divided the QCA research steps as follows: selection of conditions and cases, condition coding and calibration, construction of truth table, condition necessity analysis, and condition combination adequacy analysis. This research will use the QCA steps to analyze the factors and paths that trigger policy agenda setting under e-participation.

3.2 Case selection and condition coding

This study analyzes agenda setting from the perspective of public e-participation, and selects cases from network platforms and network resource-base. Social events in the China Internet public opinion analysis report released by people's.com were used as research case base. The cases were verified and supplemented by Yifang software, Xinhua net, CNKI, and other mainstream media websites and databases. A total of 40 typical cases from 2015 to 2019 were selected as research samples (see Table 1) following the principles of comprehensiveness,

typicality, consistency, and diversity of case selection. First, cases in the last five years can relatively reflect the actual situation of the e-participation in policy agenda setting. Second, since the 19th CPC National Congress, the government has been committed to creating a good network environment, constantly enhancing the construction of network platform, maintaining a good network environment, creating a good front for e-participation, and making the selected cases markedly valuable and meaningful for research.

Table 2.   Conditional Coding

	Index names	Coding standards	Case frequency	Index ources
Antecedent conditions	Focus event	Focus event occurs-encoding 1	33	Problem stream
	Public opinion pressure	Form public opinion pressure-encoding 1	25	
	Public participation	High public participation-encoding 1	27	Political stream
	Leader mobilization	Leader mobilization occurs-encoding 1	28	
	Media follow-up	Media follow up process-encoding 1	16	
	Interest expression	Express interest demands-encoding 1	26	Policy stream
	Decision-making identity	Policy and public reach consensus-encoding	25	
Interpreted results	Trigger agenda setting	Trigger agenda setting successfully encoding 1	28	Case

According to the results of case investigation and analysis, antecedent conditions and interpreted results are dichotomously assigned. Antecedent conditions are coded according to the actual occurrence (see Table 2). Coding standard is whether the condition occurs or exists. The occurrence or existence code is "1" and the other codes are "0." Alternatively, the degree of conditional state is taken as the coding standard, and the average state value of 40 events is taken as the critical point. The state higher than the critical value is coded as "1" and the remainder are coded as "0." The interpreted result is the policy agenda setting, and the policy setting often has no official document release or reputation. Referring to the coding methods of Guohua Wang, Yang Huang and others, this study selects the policy introduction result as the standard for coding, and the event that leads to the introduction or change of relevant policies, is coded as "1" and the remainder are "0."

4.   RESULT ANALYSIS
4.1 Single factor necessity analysis

Consistency and coverage are two important indicators in explaining the correlation between antecedent conditions and interpreted results. Consistency is the sufficient or necessary condition to check whether the antecedent condition is the occurrence of results. If the consistency index determined by QCA is above 0.9, then it can be regarded as a necessary condition for the occurrence of the results. The consistency index is above 0.8, which can be regarded as a sufficient condition for the occurrence of the results. Coverage is the extent to which test conditions cover results. The greater the coverage value, the stronger the explanatory power of the conditions to the results. The calculation formulas of consistency and coverage are as follows:

$$\text{Consistency}(x_i \leq y_i) = \sum [\min x_i, \ y_i] / \sum x_i, \tag{1}$$

$$\text{Coverage}(x_i \leq y_i) = \sum [\min x_i, \ y_i] / \sum y_i. \tag{2}$$

Through the consistency test of antecedent conditions (see Table 3), the consistency index of "forming public opinion pressure" is found to exceed 0.9. This result indicates that "public opinion pressure" is a necessary prerequisite for e-participation in triggering policy agenda setting. The consistency index of "occurrence of focus events" and "decision-making forming identification" exceeds 0.8. This result indicates that "focus events" and "decision identification" are sufficient conditions for triggering policy agenda setting. However, the consistency of other conditions is below 0.8. This result indicates that the other conditions are insufficient to independently affect the policy agenda setting, thereby also verifying that policy agenda setting is often the result of the

convergence of multiple streams rather than of a single factor. Therefore, the combination of conditions should be analyzed and how they work together to trigger policy agenda setting must be explored.

Table 3. Antecedent condition necessity detection

Conditional factors	Consistency	Coverage
Focus event occurs (1)	0.821429	0.696970
Form public opinion pressure (1)	0.928571	0.742857
High public participation (1)	0.714286	0.740741
Leader mobilization occurs (1)	0.750000	0.750000
Media follow up process (1)	0.464286	0.812500
Express interest demands (1)	0.642857	0.692308
Decision forming identity (1)	0.821429	0.920000

4.2 Conditional combination analysis

Three types of results are produced when the QCA method is used to analyze the adequacy of the combination of conditions: complex, intermediate, and reduced solutions. Among them, reduced solution is the solution including all logical remainder whose rationality is not evaluated, intermediate solution is the solution including the logical remainder in line with the theoretical direction expectation and empirical evidence, while the assumption of the logical remainder need to be based on the clear theoretical expectation and conduct appropriate counterfactual analysis, otherwise it will affect the judgment and selection of the result. Complex solution does not include any logical remainder, and only analyzes the condition combinations in actual observation cases,which is the solution obtained by direct analysis according to the actual selected cases and condition results, without the interference of the combination of logical remainder and theoretical existing conditions. Since this study has not conducted in-depth counterfactual analysis, by referring to relevant high-quality literature, the complex solution is selected as the result of combinatorial analysis (see Table 4). Overall coverage of complex solutions is above 0.9, which indicates that the explanatory power of all combination of conditions for the occurrence of the results is over 90%. Moreover, this result indicates that the 40 cases selected have strong empirical research significance. The consistency of each combination of conditions and overall consistency are 1, indicating that all combinations of conditions constitute sufficient conditions for agenda setting. In-depth analysis of 11 conditional combinations displayed by the results of complex solutions indicated that the three conditional combination paths of combinations 1, 5, and 8 are relatively typical, and the cases contained in the combination have strong practical significance. This study selects three typical combination paths for detailed analysis.

Typical path 1: Focus events occurs * Form public opinion pressure * High public participation * Leader mobilization occurs * Decision-making forming identity

The original coverage of this path is 46%, indicating that this combination of conditions is the most common and representative action path of policy agenda setting, which is manifested as event-driven participation from "event driven" to "government response." This type of e-participation is generally triggered by network focus events, and public opinions are formed through the rapid spread of the network. The government will make different policy responses according to the ferment degree of the event, thereby forming the mode of "network issue-policy issues" of e-participation. In this process, opinion leaders, as representatives of the public, play a mobilizing role in participation and lead the issue in the right direction. Hidden social problems behind network events form strong public opinion pressure in e-participation, in which network subjects are highly involved and form high-quality policy output. When the policy scheme in the policy stream is reasonable and executable, decision-making identification can be reached and policy agenda setting can be triggered. The most representative case in this path is the "Zexi Wei incident." Wei's post on ZhiHu was his experience of being cheated by Baidu in search and treatment, which attracted public attention and was shared on Sina Weibo and other online platforms. Opinion leaders issued microblogs to call attention to Baidu's bidding ranking problem, and revealed the hidden problems behind the incident. The media's real-time tracking reports triggered a continuous hot debate among the

public, and relevant departments immediately issued relevant laws and regulations.

Table 4.   Analysis results of the combination of conditions

Nos.	Antecedent condition combinations	Original coverage	Net coverage	Consistency
1	Focus events * Public opinion pressure * Public participation * Leader mobilization * Decision identity	0.464286	0.0714285	1
2	Focus events * Public opinion pressure * Leader mobilization * Media follow-up * Decision identity	0.25	0.0357143	1
3	Public opinion pressure * Public participation * Leader mobilization * Media follow-up *~ Interest expression *~ Decision identity	0.0714286	0.0714285	1
4	Focus events * Public opinion pressure *~ Public participation * Media follow-up *~ Interest expression * Decision identity	0.0714286	0.0357143	1
5	Focus events *~ Public participation * Leader mobilization * Media follow-up *~ Interest expression * Decision identity	0.0714286	0.0357143	1
6	Focus events * Public opinion pressure * Public participation *~ Media follow-up * Interest expression * Decision identity	0.285714	0.0714285	1
7	~ Focus events *~ Public opinion pressure *~ Public participation *~ Leader mobilization *~ Media follow-up *~ Interest expression *~ Decision identity	0.0357143	0.0357143	1
8	~ Focus events *~ Public opinion pressure * Public participation *~ ;Leader mobilization *~ Media follow-up * Interest expression * Decision identity	0.0357143	0.0357143	1
9	Focus events * Public opinion pressure *~ Public participation * Leader mobilization *~ Media follow-up * Interest expression *~ Decision identity	0.0357143	0.0357143	1
10	~ Focus events * Public opinion pressure * Public participation *~ leader mobilization * Media follow-up *~ Interest expression * Decision identity	0.0357143	0.0357143	1
11	Focus events * Public opinion pressure * Public participation *~ Leader mobilization * Media follow-up * Interest expression *~ Decision identity	0.0357143	0.0357143	1

Coverage: 0.928571   Consistency: 1

Typical path 2: Forming public opinion pressure *~ Public participation * Leader mobilization * Media's continuous follow-up *~ Interest expression * Forming decision-making identity.

The combination of conditions in this path is the subject interactive participation from "subject interaction" to "reaching consensus." In this type of participation mode, the government generally presents the public issues and, after certain guiding effect, promotes multi-subjects to participate in the discussion of issues and forms the situation of interaction and consensus among the multi-subjects. When some social problems exist for a long time and need to be changed, the government will take the initiative to guide Internet participants to actively inquire about politics, forming the "public issues to public issues" mode of e-participation. In the participation, the public gives relatively minimal attention to the issue, and opinion leaders and the media play leading roles. Opinion leaders can play a mobilizing role and lead the direction of issues, and the media's continuous coverage and follow-up promote the policy agenda setting. Although the public gives extensive attention and exerts relative pressure after a problem emerges, their short-term participation could not lead to a sustained driving force, and their published content is mostly emotional catharsis rather than irrational participation. Media and opinion leaders can steer issues on the right track and facilitate policy agenda setting through the interaction of multiple actors. "Fully liberalizing the two-child policy" is a representative event of this model. The universal two-child policy is a social problem caused by the current reality of aging population and low fertility rate, and should be solved urgently. In the guidance process of such public issues, the government continuously promotes the process of e-participation, attaches importance to and recognizes the role of network participants, and promotes interaction

among multiple subjects. Participants focus on their respective strengths to promote the continuous improvement of public issues and trigger the policy agenda setting.

Typical path 3: ~ Focus events occurs*~ Form public opinion pressure * High public participation *~ Leader mobilization occurs *~ Media's continuous follow-up * Interest expression * Decision-making forming identity

This path shows public opinion output participation from "social issues" to "policy output." The focus effect of real emergencies pushes social problems to the peak of public opinion. Moreover, e-participants actively express their interest demands, and propose reasonable policies for the realization of public interests and form decision-making recognition. The most representative case is the "high-altitude parabolic incident." There have been constant incidents of casualties caused by high-altitude parabolic incidents. In 2019, numerous high-altitude parabolic casualties were reported in China. The focus effect of numerous events makes this issue the focus of public attention, and public opinion pressure forces the policy window to open. This social issue involved the interests of numerous groups. The public expressed their interest demands from an individual perspective. Experts and scholars also proposed representative suggestions on this issue. Government departments responded quickly and promoted the development of the event. When a social problem exists for a long time and involves the interests of social groups, it shows that the problem has certain decision-making significance. Given the reasonable policy suggestions and schemes, the best choice of the government is to place the problem on the agenda for decision-making.

5. CONCLUSION

From the e-participation perspective combined with theory of multiple streams, this study constructs the analysis framework of e-participation triggering policy agenda setting, uses the clear set QCA to analyze the trigger factors in the process of e-participation, and finds the typical paths and participation modes of public e-participation triggering agenda setting. The main conclusions are as follows.

First, public e-participation has become the key to trigger agenda setting. Its essence is to promote the interaction among social issues, participants and policy output. "Public opinion pressure" is a necessary condition to trigger agenda setting. Moreover, "focus event" and "decision-making recognition" are sufficient conditions to trigger agenda setting.

Second, event-driven participation from "event driven" to "government response" is the most common and representative trigger path for the current e-participation policy agenda setting. Network focus events are the most direct factor causing the exposure of social issues. These events can immediately receive public attention and form strong public opinion pressure. Multiple participants express their demands in e-participation and eventually urge the government to respond to it and form decision-making recognition.

Third, subject interactive participation from "subject interaction" to "reaching consensus" highlights the characteristics of the current participants and the results of the interaction between subjects. The government guides the participation and interaction of multiple subjects. The extensive participation of the public has brought strong public opinion pressure to the agenda setting. Opinion leaders guide public decision-making to the correct value orientation. The media compensate for the fragmentation of public attention and provides sufficient power for the policy agenda setting. Interaction among multiple subjects continues to promote the problem into the policy agenda setting.

Fourth, public opinion output participation from "social problems" to "policy output" shows the public's attention to issues related to their own interests and the importance of policy output. When social issues involve the interests of most groups, hidden emergencies can immediately attract the attention and participation of stakeholders, promote the participants to produce reasonable and feasible policy suggestions, and strong interest appeal expression and policy output can maximize the expression of network public opinion.

This study also has some limitations. First, the cases selected have the characteristics of heterogeneity, and the scope of case selection can still be expanded. Second, the collected cases and data are network second-hand data, and the accuracy of research variable measurement should be improved. Lastly, research on policy agenda setting in this study mostly starts from the e-participation perspective. However, public decision-making is the process of interaction between the public and government. Thus, future research should be conducted from the perspective of government–people interaction.

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