

# Research on Crisis Response Strategies for Police-related Online Public Opinions Based on SCCT

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**Abstract:** In order to cope with the complex situation of police-related online public opinions in China, this work explores suitable crisis response strategies based on the theory of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). This theory can provide new ideas for properly handling of public opinion crises, and can help the police to improve the ability to respond. Through investigation and practice using domestic source data on police-related online public opinions crises, the types of public opinion crisis situations and coping strategies based on SCCT were analyzed and a “crisis situation-crisis response strategy” public opinion management mechanism was proposed. The application of this mechanism was further discussed in real-life situations through case studies. The results from this work can provide useful guidance for the response to public opinion crisis for the police.

**Keywords:** Police-related Online Public Opinion; SCCT (Situational Crisis Communication Theory); Characteristics of Public Opinion; Crisis Situations; Response Strategies

## 1. Introduction

With the widespread popularization of the Internet and the rapid development of science and technology, various social trends and opinions collide and intertwine on the Internet, gradually forming public opinion. Due to their special duties and tasks, public security are very likely to become the center of public attention and be pushed to the tip of public opinion. In this process, the police-related public opinion is focused by the public security due to its suddenness, focus, destructiveness, difficulty in controlling, deviation <sup>[1]</sup>, etc. If the public opinion crisis cannot be dealt within time, it is easy to cause

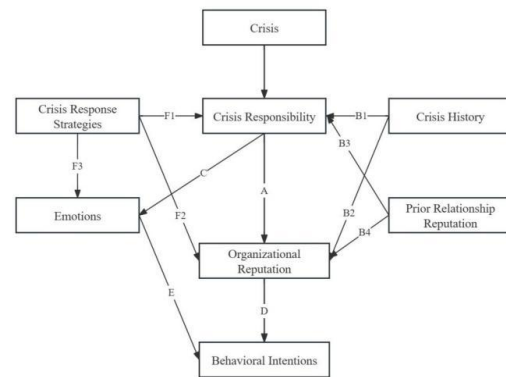
the credibility of the public security to be reduced and the image to be damaged, which affects the development of the police work, and at the same time is not conducive to the harmonious and stable development of the society. With the continuous emergence of negative public opinion, China's public security are facing challenges such as the decline of credibility, lack of scientific public opinion monitoring system and professional response program, which requires public security to improve their ability to respond to public opinion, accurately grasp the characteristics of the law of public opinion dissemination, and do a good job of responding to public opinion. Currently, scholars have conducted research on guiding police-related public opinion based on agenda-setting theory <sup>[2]</sup>, 4R crisis management theory <sup>[3]</sup>, life cycle theory <sup>[4]</sup>, etc, which involves a variety of fields such as public security science and communication science.

To summarize, scholars have conducted many researches on police-related public opinion, but the research on crisis response in different or more specific scenarios lacks a certain degree of relevance and systematicity. Based on this consideration, the present work chooses as case sources the hot events of police-related online public opinion published by the People's Network Public Opinion Detection Office, the public opinion reports released by the People's Network Public Opinion Detection Office, the documents or websites such as Zhiwei Matters See, Baidu Index, and other documents or websites from 2019-2023, and with reference to the indicators used by the People's Public Opinion Monitoring Office as the defining standards<sup>[5]</sup>. 30 classic cases were selected by keyword search and manual screening methods, and based on the SCCT, the characteristics of current police-related online public opinion

will be further analyzed. The types of police-related online public opinion crises will be carefully classified, and the public opinion response strategies of public security for different crisis scenarios will be discussed in order to better identify the crisis scenarios of police-related online public opinion, and to construct a mechanism of police-related online public opinion governance, and finally to provide a new way of thinking for the management of police-related online public opinion.

**2. SCCT**

SCCT (Situational Crisis Communication Theory) was proposed by Coombs based on experimental research<sup>[6]</sup>. Based on attribution theory, he formulated different crisis response and communication strategies for the organization according to different crisis types and scenarios, and its purpose is mainly to protect the reputation of the organization. As a complete theoretical system, SCCT can provide an operational model and specific strategies for the unfolding of crisis communication, which is mainly applied in the research related to crisis communication in governmental organizations, enterprises, and colleges and universities, with less application in the field of public security. The research content of SCCT focuses on the crisis scenarios, the crisis response, and the matching of the two. Coombs divides the crisis scenarios into three categories, namely, the victim cluster, the accidental cluster, the crisis response, and the match between the two. Victim cluster, accident cluster, and preventable cluster, respectively <sup>[6]</sup>. In response to different crisis scenarios, organizations should take certain measures to protect their reputation, so Coombs divided crisis response strategies into primary and secondary crisis response strategies, and then divided primary crisis response strategies into denial, downplaying, and reconstruction strategies, and reinforcing strategies as secondary crisis response strategies. SCCT classifies crisis scenarios to protect an organization's reputation and develops ten different types of crisis response strategies. The SCCT categorizes the scenarios, develops ten coping strategies, and gives matching suggestions to provide new ideas for coping with police-related public opinion crises.



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**gure 1. Crisis Situation Model Of SCCT**

The SCCT theoretical model <sup>[6]</sup> (e.g., Figure 1) specifies the basic elements in the path of “crisis scenario-crisis response strategy” and shows the relationship between the elements, providing basic theoretical support for organizational managers to respond to crises. In the SCCT theoretical model, crisis responsibility is negatively related to organizational reputation. The greater the attribution of responsibility to the organization, the more negatively the organization is perceived by the public, and the reputation of the organization decreases, thus affecting the behavioral intention of the public. At the same time, the attribution of responsibility for the crisis also affects the mood of the crowd, which in turn triggers different behavioral intentions. In addition, crisis history and historical reputation are important influences on crisis responsibility, and when these two factors are present, the assessment judgment of the crisis event will also be affected. In the model, the farrow indicates the three objectives of the crisis response strategy in protecting the organization's reputation: first, to shape the attribution of responsibility for the crisis. Secondly, to guide the public's view of the organization in the online public opinion crisis and repair its image; and third, to reduce the negative impacts of the public opinion crisis. Based on the above model, the evolution path of the crisis and the influencing factors can be known, which is of some reference value to the subsequent research. In summary, the SCCT can provide a scientific and systematic framework for public security to solve police-related online public opinion crises in order to identify the types of crises, select appropriate communication strategies, and effectively respond to challenges such as

the heterogeneity and dynamics of information, and the diversity and polarization of public emotions. By developing differentiated communication strategies based on the specific context of a crisis, public security authorities can more accurately match the actual situation of a crisis, effectively guide and manage public emotions, and at the same time improve the transparency and authority of information dissemination. This information can help to quickly mitigate the negative impact of the crisis on public security, enhance public trust in public security, and improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of crisis response.

### **3. Characteristics of Current Police-related Online Public Opinion**

The current police-related online public opinion is characterized by high information heterogeneity and dynamics, diversity, polarization of public emotions, and the double-edged sword effect of social media platforms, which puts forward new requirements for public security ' public opinion response-ability. Because of the scientific and systematic nature of SCCT, this study will discuss the countermeasures that can be adopted by public security to face the above problems based on an understanding of SCCT.

#### **3.1 High Degree of Information Heterogeneity And Dynamism**

In the digital era, the information on the network presents complexity and rapid changes, including a large number of unverified news, biased views, and deliberately distorted facts. The heterogeneity and dynamism of such information have put forward higher requirements for information research, judgment ability, and reaction speed of public security. This phenomenon requires public security not only to respond quickly, but also to continuously monitor the evolution of public opinion and adjust their response strategies in time to cope with possible changes.

Based on the SCCT for coping with police-related online public opinion crises, a highly flexible and dynamic crisis response mechanism can be developed, and a professional crisis analysis team can be set up. Real-time monitoring and in-depth analysis of public opinion information can be conducted

using standardized and scientific methods, and a dynamic crisis response framework can be established so that response measures can be adjusted in a timely manner with the development of the situation, thus allowing public security authorities to respond to different online public opinions in a timely manner and to make correct and scientific treatments. As a result, the public security authorities can respond to different online public opinions in a timely manner and make correct and scientific treatments.

#### **3.2 Diversity and Polarization Of Public Emotions**

The internet platform has intensified the diversity and polarization of public emotions<sup>[7]</sup>, making the confrontation between different viewpoints more acute. When dealing with online public opinion crises, public security authorities are faced with the challenge of effectively guiding and managing such diversified and polarized public emotions. Wrong communication strategies not only fail to alleviate the crises, but also may intensify the conflicts. Therefore, the correct guidance and management of public emotions is the major difficulty for public security authorities in coping with police-related online public opinion crises.

The SCCT provides scientific and standardized theoretical guidance for public security authorities to solve police-related online public opinion crises, and public security authorities should adopt more detailed and differentiated communication strategies according to different types of crises and the expected emotions of the public. For example, when facing crises involving victims, they should adopt a more sympathetic and caring language. In contrast, in crises caused by the agency's own mistakes, they should adopt a clear attitude of apology and improvement measures. At the same time, multiple channels and diverse communication methods should be used to effectively guide and balance public sentiment, reduce polarization, and ultimately safeguard the reputation and image of public security.

#### **3.3 The Double-edged Sword Effect of Social Media Platforms**

The characteristics of social media not only promote the rapid dissemination of

information, but also make the spread of inaccurate information and negative emotions more rapid. This double-edged sword effect requires public security to use social media for effective communication while also guarding against and responding to its possible negative impact.

The SCCT emphasizes accurate judgment of the type of crisis and adopting different solutions for different types of crises. In response to the double-edged sword effect of social media platforms, public security should take advantage of social media platforms to establish official and authoritative information release channels, release accurate information in a timely manner in response to public concerns, and at the same time actively monitor public opinion dynamics to quickly identify and correct inaccurate information, so as to establish and maintain a positive image of the .

### 3.4 Timeliness and Accuracy of Crisis Identification

At the early stage of a crisis, information is often scattered and mixed with a lot of “noise,” and it is very demanding for public security to make quick response without sufficient information, which can easily lead to misjudgment. In addition, public opinion develops rapidly, and if the response is not timely enough, the best time to respond may be missed, leading to the exacerbation of the crisis<sup>[8]</sup>. Using SCCT to analyze and attribute events can quickly and accurately sort out the types of crises, so that public security can have clearer understanding of crises, and then take more targeted approach to solve problems efficiently and enhance the image and trust of public security in the eyes of the public.

### 3.5 Selection and Implementation of Response Strategies

In the absence of scientific and systematic decision-making support tools, public security often rely on empirical judgment to select strategies to cope with crises, which may lead to the selection of strategies that do not match the actual situation of the crisis. Moreover, the effective implementation of strategies is limited by resources, technology, and coordination capacity, which may affect the effectiveness of response.

In the face of different types of crises, SCCT

suggests the use of different communication strategies in order to more accurately match the nature of the crisis and target the existing problems. Therefore, in this context, this work will explore the coping framework for police-related online public opinion crises based on the SCCT, which will help public security authorities to quickly deal with public opinion crisis events, effectively guide the public's emotions, improve the timeliness of crisis identification, and provide a holistic perspective on crisis response.

**Table 1 .Types of Police-related Online Public Opinion Crisis**

Crisis types		Name
Victim cluster		Rumor
		Natural disaster
		Malicious sabotage by external States/organizations
		Misdemeanors/violations by the crowd
Accidental cluster		Challenges
		Equipment issues
Preventable cluster	Personal behavior	Misconduct in law enforcement Misconduct in non-enforcement processes
	Organizational management	Accidents caused by inappropriate behavior/mismanagement of managers

## 4. Research on Crisis Response Strategies for Police-Related Online Public Opinion Crisis Based on SCCT

### 4.1 Crisis Scenarios

In this work, the content of the research sample was refined and analyzed by extracting keywords and labeling them to organize them into nine types of crises (e.g., Table 1) . Then based on the degree of crisis attribution, the source of the crisis, and the negative impact suffered as the criteria, the crisis scenarios of the police-related online public opinion were attributed to three major categories: the victim-type crises, the accidental crises, and the preventable crises.

#### 4.1.1 Victimized Crises

According to SCCT, victim-type crises are those crises that are perceived by the public to be caused primarily by external factors or force majeure and in which the organization is usually seen as a victim, with a smaller attribution of the crisis. Examples include natural disasters, rumors, etc. In such cases, the public tends to hold a sympathetic and understanding attitude towards public security organizations. For victim-based crises, the theoretically most effective communication strategy is usually a denial-based strategy, which means that public security need to find out the truth of the matter in a timely manner, inform the public, and regain public support.

In the study cases, there were a total of seven public opinion crises whose source did not belong to the public security, and the attribution was extremely weak, which belonged to the victim-type crisis. The main source of this type of crisis is external, and the public security belong to the victims of the crisis. The attribution of the crisis is weaker and suffers less of a negative impact.

In this work, victim-type crises are divided into rumors, natural disasters, malicious destruction by external countries/organizations, and misbehavior or illegal behavior of the masses. Rumors that some false information about the public security, damage to the reputation and image of the public security, for example, a rumor that a local traffic police "hit people" circulated on the Internet, and it was later found that the man in the video driving an overloaded truck was stopped by the traffic police, and in order to escape from the crackdown on the processing of their own head against the vehicle, and while cursing the traffic police shouted traffic police "hit people", natural disasters that cause damage to the image of the public security, due to the low number of occurrences of natural disasters, there are no specific incidents, so no examples; malicious damage by external countries/organizations, i.e., external forces attacking the public security through various means to discredit the image of the public security, and the number of malicious sabotages of external state organizations is also less in the available data, so this article does not consider too much. the improper or illegal behavior of the masses refers to the improper protection of the masses' behavior or

the violation of the law leading to the public's misunderstanding of the public security, such as the incident of the woman who assaulted a police officer after she was stopped from breaking through the yellow card to see a doctor in a certain place, in which the father and daughter who broke through the card in yellow belonged to the illegal behavior, and the police officer's stopping was a lawful operation, but the public may think that the police handled the matter improperly thus resulting in damage to the image of the public security.

Based on the analysis of the sample case data, the frequency of rumor-based crisis scenarios in public security operations is high, while the frequency of natural disasters and malicious damage by external countries/organizations is low. When responding to police-related online public opinion crises, it is necessary to combat and control rumor-type crises.

#### 4.1.2 Accidental Crisis

According to the SCCT, accidental crises are triggered by unforeseen events or accidents that are usually unrelated to the public security. These crises are often caused by external factors or force majeure, such as equipment failure. In accidental crises, the public tends to hold a tolerant and understanding attitude toward the public security, as they believe that the public security police did not intentionally cause the situation. Theoretically, the most effective communication strategy for accidental crises is usually a weakening strategy, in which the public security authority explains to the public and optimizes its law enforcement practices to show the public that it is taking measures to solve the problem and prevent similar incidents from happening again. By conveying the message that they are actively responding to the crisis and trying to restore normalcy, public security police can alleviate public concern and dissatisfaction.

A total of four crises in the study sample showed moderate crisis attribution, with one crisis originating from within the public security and three from outside the public security. These crises are generally unintentional crises caused by public security, with moderate attribution and moderate negative impacts, and belong to the accidental type of crises.

Accidental crises are categorized into two

types, namely, challenges and equipment problems. Challenges are those that are caused by certain people who believe that the public security authorities are operating unreasonably or irregularly enforcing the law, and thus question them online, resulting in an online public opinion crisis involving the police, or public opinion incidents caused by certain people who do not cooperate with the police in enforcing the law; and technical/equipment problems are those that are caused by accidents due to problems in the equipment. In reality, the frequency of these two types of crisis scenarios is not high, but they still need to be emphasized by public security authorities.

4.1.3 Preventable Crisis

As mentioned in SCCT, preventable crises generally refer to those crises caused by mismanagement within the organization, decision-making errors or employee misconduct. These crises usually have direct responsibility with the public safety authorities because they can be avoided through reasonable preventive measures. In preventable crises, the public tends to hold a harsher and more critical attitude toward the public security police, due to the public's belief that the public security police should have foreseen and avoided such crises. The theoretically most effective communication strategy for preventable crises is usually the reconstruction strategy. This strategy emphasizes the need for public security authorities to take responsibility for actively demonstrating to the public what they are doing to prevent the crisis from expanding by conveying the message that they are actively responding to the crisis.

4.2 Response Strategies

After categorizing the types of crises, public security should formulate and select appropriate crisis response strategies to respond on time. This work collects the occurrence of police-related online public

opinion crises and the coping strategies adopted by public security in recent years, and summarizes them by refining and summarizing them, and summarizes the coping strategies for police-related public opinions into two categories, namely, direct coping strategies and auxiliary coping strategies, and refines them into eight coping strategies. Subsequently, regarding the SCCT, this work summarizes and categorizes these 8 strategies into denial, dilution, reconstruction and reinforcement(e.g., Table 2) .

This work categorizes 30 samples of police-related online public opinion crises and finds that the coping strategies used by each sample are not unique. Among the study samples, seven public security used denial strategies, six downplayed strategies, ten reconstruction strategies, three used reinforcement strategies, and eight samples did not fall into the above categories. After analyzing and summarizing, the common point of these eight samples is that the public security responded to the crisis, but none of them clarified the responsibility of the public security in the crisis. Therefore, this work refers to the “hybrid strategy” proposed by Liu Zhen and Yan Hongyan <sup>[9]</sup>, which puts this type of crisis-coping strategy into the hybrid strategy and adds it to the police-related public opinion. This type of crisis response strategy is categorized as a hybrid strategy and is added to the direct response strategy of police-related public opinion crises to increase the classification of “hybrid” so as to better cope with more complex police-related online public opinion crises. In this work, the public security authorities' response to the crisis without attributing responsibility for the crisis is called “non-positive response”, which mainly means that the public security authorities do not immediately respond positively to the question of whether or not they should take responsibility for the crisis, but first make a vague response to calm the public's emotions.

**Table 2. Police-related Public Opinion Crisis Response Strategies**

Type of strategy	Name	Concrete meaning
Direct Response Strategy	Deny crisis	Refute rumors
	response strategies	Divert attention
	Diminish crisis	Excuse
		Clarification of untrue information
		Getting to the bottom of it and bringing the real crisis makers to light
		Indicates that the crisis was triggered by uncontrollable factors

	response strategies		Self-improvement	Optimization of law enforcement methods to improve the quality of civilian police and reduce the sources of risk of crises
	Rebuild response strategies	crisis	Enforcement according to law	Enforcement the law-breakers according to law
			Apologize	Publishing letters of apology or otherwise apologizing to the public concerned
	Mix response strategies	crisis	Non-positive response	Respond but not attribution of crisis responsibility
Complementary strategy	Bolstering response strategies	crisis	Positive publicity	Show the positive deeds of the public security , guide the positive public opinion

#### 4.2.1 Direct Response Strategy

##### 4.2.1.1 Deny Crisis Response Strategies

The Deny crisis response strategies can be used when the attribution is weak, and two methods are mainly used: dispelling rumors and shifting contradictions. To dispel rumors is to clarify the false news about the public security and to provide strong public evidence to prove that the crisis does not exist, which can be used in general when encountering rumor-type crises. In the traffic police “beating” incident mentioned above, the public security authorities released the on-site video recorded by the law enforcement recorder on the same day, clarifying the truth of the case and resolving the public opinion crisis in a timely manner, shifting the contradiction means that the public security authorities should find out the truth in a timely manner in the face of malicious attacks from external countries/organizations and make it public, so as to avoid expanding the responsibility for the crisis and at the same time enhance public confidence in the public security authorities and the public's understanding of the crisis. Expanding, at the same time, can enhance the public's trust in the public security .

##### 4.2.1.2 Diminish Crisis Response Strategies

When the attribution is appropriate, a diminish crisis response strategies can be used, in which two methods of self-improvement and justification are mainly used. In the face of a challenging crisis, self-improvement methods can be used, insisting on “all-police public relations”, innovating law enforcement concepts, perfecting the law enforcement system, optimizing the law enforcement

methods, improving the overall quality of the police, and forming a police force with high quality, good style, and a good image. When a crisis occurs due to equipment problems, the public security authorities can take a defensive approach, explaining that it is not the subjective intent and that the crisis is caused by uncontrollable factors so as to reduce, to a certain extent, the public's negative view of the public security authorities.

##### 4.2.1.3 Rebuild Crisis Response Strategies

Rebuild crisis response strategies can be used when attribution is strong, and this type of strategy generally includes two methods: apologizing and dealing with the situation according to the law. Mainly by the public security on the network to issue an apology letter or other ways to apologize, take the initiative to take responsibility in exchange for the understanding of the masses, according to the law, that is, the police involved in the incident in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations to be punished, to show the public security of the disciplinary nature and sense of responsibility. For example, in a place where the owner of the car paint was fined in the event of improper punishment of the police, after investigation, the public security so that the police involved in the party apologized and were sentenced to an administrative warning. In actual public security work, the reconstruction-type coping strategy is used more frequently and has a significant effect.

##### 4.2.1.4 Mix Crisis Response Strategies

The use of hybrid strategies[7] can also be considered when attribution is strong. The kernel of the hybrid strategy is that the public security do not immediately attribute the

responsibility for the crisis to themselves and can make a fuzzy response. For as a place a girl suspected of suicide drowned under the watchful eye of the police after the outbreak of the incident, the public security of the first time to set up an investigation team, the police involved, and auxiliary police officers to make a suspension to accept the investigation, but did not directly attribute the responsibility to a few police officers. It should be noted that the choice of hybrid coping strategies needs to be more careful; once the use of the scenario is not appropriate, it may produce the opposite effect so that the masses think that the public security are evading responsibility.

#### 4.2.2 Complementary Strategy

Some auxiliary strategies can also be used while using direct response strategies. Public security can, based on the main position of positive publicity, all-round, multi-angle, in-depth display of positive public security work to guide positive public opinion related to the police network and reduce the negative impact of the crisis on the image of the public security with a good image. In recent years, public security have also been paying more and more attention to their own positive publicity, publicizing together in traditional media and new media, telling a good police story, setting up a good image, letting positive remarks seize the high ground of public opinion, promoting the main theme, transferring positive energy, and striving to expand the positive public security publicity position<sup>[10]</sup>.

### 4.3 Matching

An important research result of SCCT is the construction of the logical path of “crisis scenario-crisis response strategy”, which classifies crisis scenarios according to the attribution of responsibility and formulates different crisis response strategies for different crisis scenarios, thus building a complete theoretical framework and basis for the organization to deal with crises. Concerning Coombs' thoughts, this work analyzes the matching of police-related online public opinion crisis scenarios and their coping strategies according to the actual situation of public security, and summarizes the following matching suggestions:

#### 4.3.1 Response Strategies Applicable to Victim Crisis

In the face of a victim-based crisis, the responsibility attributed to the crisis event is extremely small, and the public security authorities can prioritize the denial-based coping strategy to cut off the association between the responsibility of the crisis and the public security authorities, to achieve the purpose of maintaining the image of the public security authorities. When encountering rumor-type crises, public security can adopt the method of refuting rumors, finding out the truth in a relatively short period, and responding promptly to refute the rumors and eliminate the impact of the police-related online public opinion crises; when encountering natural disasters with external influences that public security are not directly responsible for associating with them or crises of malicious destruction by outside countries/organizations, they can adopt the method of shifting the contradiction to shift the responsibility for the crises to the external factors /organizations to eliminate the public opinion crisis. When encountering misdeeds/violations of the masses, the truth of the matter should be found promptly, and the masses involved should be dealt with according to the law and publicized.

#### 4.3.2 Response Strategies Applicable To Accidental Crisis

Accidental crises are usually “challenge” crises caused by some people's negative perception of the public security authorities, or crises caused unintentionally by the public security authorities, which are less attributable, but still have a certain degree of responsibility, and thus can be prioritized for the de-emphasis-type of coping strategy. The “challenge” type of crisis, may be due to the previous crisis history of the public security, or it may be due to the improper behavior of the police or irregularities in law enforcement in their lives, which causes some people's impression of the public security to deteriorate. They post their opposing views online, which ultimately evolves into a public opinion crisis. To handle such crises, the core lies in controlling them at the source. Public security can use self-improvement methods to reduce the public's negative views of them by optimizing the work mode and service quality of the public security and responding appropriately to the crisis. For crises triggered by technology/equipment problems, public



security can choose a downplayed, mixed or reconstructed response strategy, depending on the situation. Suppose the severity of the technology/equipment problem is low. In that case, the downplaying strategy can minimize adverse public perceptions by explaining that the public security authorities did not cause the problem intentionally or due to uncontrollable factors. If the severity of the problem is high, a hybrid or reconstruction-type response strategy can be adopted.

#### 4.3.3 Response Strategies for Preventable Crises

Preventable crises generally have a firm attribution of responsibility, so reconstruction-type coping strategies are preferred, and public security authorities need to respond promptly, using penalties or apologies to calm the public's emotions. In the case of a local traffic police officer who was accused of gender discrimination, there was the problem that the traffic police did not do an excellent job of checking the content, so the local public security authorities issued an apology letter as soon as possible, adopting the method of apology and praying for the public's forgiveness. When the crisis results are more serious, such as the police violating laws and regulations, disciplinary regulations can be taken to punish the law according to the law, the wrong police officers, to give the public an explanation. In practice, the public security will also choose to take a hybrid response strategy; for example, in the face of a local shooting incident, the local public security will take the truth of the matter and explain that the procuratorate has intervened in the investigation of the response to the way, did not attribute the responsibility for the incident to itself. However, hybrid strategies are also like a double-edged sword; once they are misused and applied to inappropriate crisis scenarios, they can have the opposite effect, which may cause the public to believe that the public security authorities are evading their responsibilities, and doing more harm to the image of the public security authorities.

The above matching suggestions are summarized from the data. In actual public security work, the matching suggestions can be used as important references. However, public security organizations must analyze specific problems in different crisis scenarios and choose the correct response strategies. At

the same time, the public security authorities should also pay attention to the timeliness of their responses and the consistency of their response strategies. If denial-based response strategies are mixed with the other two, resulting in inconsistent or conflicting responses, the response effect will be easily weakened or cause more negative impacts.

## 5. Case Study

In the previous section, this work has localized SCCT to a certain extent, and organized and summarized the types of police-related public opinion crises and coping strategies in some detail. In the following, this work will analyze the case according to the SCCT, find the possible problems in it through the crisis scenario analysis, and further discuss and put forward appropriate response strategies.

### 5.1 Overview of The Case

The focus of this Internet police-related incident is a video widely distributed on the Internet, which shows a physical conflict between a local traffic police officer and a woman holding a baby in the course of his official duties, which has triggered widespread public concern. A local police officer, Zhu Mou, and an auxiliary police officer were here to punish a car illegally parked on the sidewalk. Zhu Mou, according to the provisions of the photo evidence, was issued a ticket for illegal parking. The female car advocate did not cooperate and chased into the police car, took the pickpocket door, pulled the rear-view mirror, with the body against the passenger door and other forms of preventing the police car away. Zhu got out of the car and warned Zhang not to obstruct the police in the performance of their duties. However, Zhang not only did not listen to the warning but began to push and shove law enforcement officers. In the Zhangmou third push, the police, Zhumou, did not fully take into account the safety of the baby in Zhangmou's arms and took the measures of tripping and falling, resulting in Zhangmou's arms falling to the ground. Zhu and auxiliary police officers to control Zhang before Zhu picked up the fallen child.

After this incident, the public engaged in a heated discussion around the appropriateness of the police's law enforcement actions and the behavior of the woman involved, and the

incident continued to occupy a high hotspot in online public opinion.

### 5.2 Crisis Scenario Analysis

According to SCCT, the crisis scenario should first be analyzed based on the case. SCCT emphasizes that accurate identification of the type of crisis is a prerequisite for the development of an effective communication strategy. In this case, from the perspective of crisis attribution, the woman involved in the incident could be initially categorized as a victim-type crisis, in which the core issue is the improper or illegal behavior of the public because she did not follow traffic rules and obstructed the police from carrying out their official duties. However, the complexity and multidimensional nature of the incident require a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the crisis scenario.

Considering the fact that the police took the measure of tripping and falling despite the fact that the woman was known to be carrying a baby in her arms, causing the baby to fall, this behavior not only reflects the roughness in law enforcement, but also the lack of consideration for the safety of the citizens, especially the baby. This behavior not only exacerbated the impact of the crisis but also triggered the public's questioning of the rationality of law enforcement and humane care, thus making the incident characterized as a preventable crisis. In preventable crises, the attribution of the crisis is usually closely related to foreseeable and avoidable human factors, emphasizing the behaviors and poor decision-making of the responsible parties before and after the crisis.

Further, the rapid dissemination of the incident in social media and public opinion, coupled with widespread skepticism about the behavior of the police, contributed to the rapid escalation of the incident into a complex crisis scenario involving public trust and police-community relations. In this scenario, the crisis is not limited to a single incident or behavior, but involves multiple dimensions of public safety, the impartiality of law enforcement, and the ability of government agencies to respond in emergency situations.

To summarize, the incident was not simply one type of crisis, but a hybrid crisis. The immediate cause of the crisis was the woman's failure to comply with traffic rules and her

obstruction of the police in carrying out their official duties, so it can be initially categorized as a victim-type crisis, but as the police's brutal law enforcement, the development of the incident, and the public's reaction intensified, the type of crisis demonstrated the characteristics of a preventable type of crisis.

### 5.3 Response of Public Security Authorities

In the analysis of the coping strategy of the conflict between the traffic police and the woman holding the baby, the police's response and handling measures show a rapid and specific coping behavior. In this work, the response of the public security is organized in chronological order:

Immediately after the incident, the police sent the child involved and his mother, Zhang, to the hospital for examination. After a thorough diagnosis by the doctor, the child was diagnosed as having superficial abrasions on the arm, while Zhang was treated for soft tissue contusions on the face and neck.

With regard to the handling of the incident, The relevant departments of the public security organs attached great importance to the incident and promptly initiated the investigation process. At 12:00 p.m. on the day of the incident, the local Public Security Bureau instructed the branch office to conduct a full investigation in conjunction with the Municipal Police Inspectorate.

After several hours of investigation, by 16:00 on the same day, the basic circumstances of the case had been ascertained. Based on the results of the investigation, the local branch office gave Zhu, the police officer involved, an administrative demerit based on the Disciplinary Orders for People's Police Officers of Public Security, and at the same time warned Zhang, the woman involved, based on the Law of the People's Republic of China on Public Security Administration Punishments.

In addition, in order to ensure the transparency of the results and the public's right to know, the local Public Security Bureau published the results of the investigation and treatment on the network the following day, showing the police's serious attitude towards the matter and fair treatment.

On the morning of the following day, the Songjiang Branch once again communicated with the child's mother, inquiring about the

child's recovery from injuries and expressing apologies. At the same time, the police informed the family that if they had any discomfort, they should feel free to contact the police for further medical review. The family stated that Zhang and the child are not experiencing any discomfort at this time.

Based on the sequence of events, this work graphically compares the differences between the strategies suggested by the SCCT and the actual response strategies of the public security authorities (e.g., Table 3).

After sorting it out, it can be found that the coping strategies adopted by the public security authorities in the conflict between the traffic police and the woman holding the baby have a high degree of consistency with the strategies recommended by the situational crisis communication theory. By comparing the changes in online public opinion before and after the public security authorities took response measures, it can be found that before the appropriate strategies were taken, online public opinion was generally inclined to support the woman involved in the incident, believing that the police's law enforcement process was too forceful and did not conform to the normative operation, which resulted in the injuries of the woman and her child, and that this trend of public opinion constituted a negative impact on the image and credibility of public security authorities. However, when the public security authorities took appropriate response measures, including timely medical assistance, investigation, disciplinary action, and public announcement of the results, etc., online public opinion gradually tended to recognize that the woman's first violation of the law had led to the police's overreaction and the public's view of the public security authorities was changed, reflecting the importance of an appropriate response strategy in maintaining the image of public security authorities. It can be seen that the correct response strategy maintains the good image and reputation of the public security .

**Table 3. Comparison of Cop Response Strategies to the Incident of Police Hugging and Dropping A Woman Who Holding a Baby**

Crisis types	Recommended Strategies	Date of occurrence	Strategies actually adopted
Victim	Deny	9, 12	Conducting

cluster	crisis response strategies	a.m.	investigations
		9,16 p.m.	Get to the bottom of the case and punish the woman in question according to the law
Preventable cluster	Rebuild crisis response strategies	10 th	Publication of findings and results of investigations
		9,16 p.m.	Given administrative demerits in accordance with the law
		10 th	Publication of findings and results of investigations

In this crisis, the public security organization first clarified the crisis category and adopted the same coping strategy as suggested by the SCCT, which successfully protected the organization's image. This practice shows that the scientific application of SCCT can effectively guide crisis response in the face of complex crisis scenarios so as to correctly guide online public opinion and maintain the positive image of public security . At the same time, the public security authorities' actions to emphasize stakeholders' safety in crisis response invariably implement the principle of protecting stakeholders' safety, as mentioned by Coombs in the SCCT, and also reflect China's people-centered value orientation.

Further analysis shows that the public security authorities' responses without explicitly using the guidance of the SCCT coincide with the practices suggested by the theory, especially in terms of responding quickly to public opinion, transparently releasing information, and appropriately dealing with the people involved. However, if the public security authorities use the SCCT to guide the response to the crisis, they can also adopt the reinforcing type of auxiliary response strategy, i.e., through positive publicity, to provide the public with legal knowledge of the police's law enforcement process, to enhance the public's understanding of the reasonableness of the police's behavior, and to further guide public opinion to a positive direction, so as to strengthen the image maintenance of the public security authorities.

Therefore, this case study reveals the practical utility of the SCCT in guiding the response to

police-related online public opinion crises and emphasizes the importance of applying the logical thinking of "crisis type - response strategy" in the selection of crisis response strategies. In the face of public opinion crises, public security should make full use of the systematic guidance of SCCT to improve the science and efficiency of crisis response, and better safeguard the good image of public security. In addition, this case also emphasizes the importance of timeliness of response, pointing out that a prompt and appropriate response at the early stage of a crisis is crucial for shaping a positive public image. By scientifically applying the SCCT, public security can be more calm and effective in facing various crises that may occur in the future, and effectively protect and enhance their credibility and image.

## 6. Conclusion and Implications

SCCT, as an important theory in the field of crisis management, is of some significance for the categorization and response to police-related online public opinion crises in China. Therefore, this work refers to the research idea of Coombs' SCCT and applies it to the research of police-related online public opinion crisis response. On the basis of the results of previous studies, we analyzed and sorted out the types of police-related online public opinion crises and coping strategies by taking into account the reality of China's police-related online public opinion crises and the sample data, and based on this; we constructed a "crisis type-crisis coping strategy" coping mechanism for the police-related online public opinion crises, which refined the categories of the crises and improved the pertinence of the coping strategies. Based on this, a "crisis type-crisis response strategy" response mechanism is constructed for police-related online public opinion crises, which refines the crisis categories and improves the pertinence of response strategies.

Of course, the localized theoretical model, classification, and coping strategy of police-related online public opinion crisis still remain in the theoretical stage, which is useful for public security to correctly understand the police-related online public opinion crisis in reality and scientifically promote the coping of police-related online public opinion crisis.

However, this work also has certain shortcomings. With the continuous development of society and the influence of various factors in reality, this work is still a relatively theoretical scenario design, which may need certain improvement if it is to be applied to real police-related online public opinion crisis response. It is believed that with the efforts of many scholars at home and abroad, future research in this field will be more scientific and in-depth, providing more solid theoretical support for the response and management of police-related online public opinion crises.

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