

The Exploration of Persuasive Skills and Participants Characteristics in Pyramid-Sale: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract : Pyramid sales have been a widespread issue in China. Victims who are defrauded not only lose money but damage interpersonal relationship. A deeper understanding of pyramid-sale models can be beneficial to prevent potential victims from fraud and improve the property security. The goals of this study were to detect psychological characteristics of pyramid-sale sellers, and analyse persuasive skills in pyramid organizations. A qualitative study was conducted in this study. Participants (n=6) recruited by 'snowball' sampling from present pyramid-sale sellers (n=3) and imprisoned pyramid-sale sellers (n=3). All participants accepted semi-structured interview for collecting data. Content analysis was adopted for data coding and analysis. The results indicate that pyramid organizations are used to utilize their appearance packaging and celebrity effect to strengthen the positions in participants' mind. The status gap between pyramid-sale sellers in same organization, as well as rewards to increase reputation, are used to motivate participants in pyramid. The most significant common characteristics among all participants are that they tend to possess a high sense of belongingness within the firm. Moreover, the expression of pyramid-sale sellers on gambling mentality is expected to growth as constantly losing money. Findings suggest that the psychological characteristics of pyramid-sale sellers in accordance with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, persuasive skills of pyramid organization confront to 'attitude-behaviour change model'. These findings have implication on 'immune education' that providing guidance for victims out of stuck and protecting ordinary people from the jeopardizing of pyramid sales.

Keywords : pyramid sales, characteristics, persuasive skills, qualitative study

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