

# The Unpreventable Emotional Telecom Fraud —— "Pig-Butchering Scam"

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## Abstract

It is well-established that the position of fraud crime has gradually shifted from traditional offline fraud to online telecom fraud. Among them, "Pig-Butchering Scam", as a new type of fraud, was listed as one of the ten most prevalent fraud crimes by the National Anti-Fraud Center of China in February 2021. This study focuses on the victims of "Pig-Butchering Scam" cases, aiming to find out what common susceptibility traits or potential victimization factors the victims have, and how to cut off their false representations from the "susceptibility" to the behavioral dimension through effective interventions, in order to refine the psychological induction mechanism of emotion-based telecom fraud through this study. The purpose of this study is to refine the psychological induction mechanism of emotional telecommunication fraud. We have conducted field surveys and semi-structured interviews on victims' personalities and analyzed their common characteristics. The results were similar to our hypothesis: the vast majority of victims generally showed a tendency to have low self-identity in the dimension of self-esteem, especially interpersonal-social self-esteem. This result suggests that people with low self-esteem, especially those with low interpersonal social self-esteem, are more likely to be potential victims of the "Pig-Butchering Scam".

**Keywords:** Susceptibility Characteristics, Emotional Telecom Fraud, Psychological Induction Mechanism.

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the position of fraudulent crime has gradually shifted from the traditional offline fraud to network telecom fraud, which has continuously aroused the vigilance and attention of the public. In February 2021, the Chinese Anti-Fraud Center announced the top 10 most common types of fraudulent crimes. "Pig-Butchering Scam" is one of them [1]. "Pig-Butchering Scam" type of marriage and dating telecommunication network fraud crime refers to the crime of taking illegal possession for the purpose of making up a false persona to an unspecified object through social software, then cheating the emotional trust through the form of dating, fictitiously high returns, and cheating public and private property [2]. Unlike other forms of fraud, which are "short, flat and fast", "Pig-Butchering Scam" is characterized by a long line to catch a big fish, which is like fattening up a pig and then slaughtering it, hence the name "Pig-Butchering Scam" [3]. Nevertheless, according to the

incomplete statistics of China's Judgment Document Network, the valid data of online dating fraud in China from 2017 to 2021 is 719, accounting for 12% of all criminal cases of telecommunication network fraud decided, involving a total amount of 326,249,521.23 yuan [4]. In addition, through data monitoring, it can be found that with the booming development of Internet technology and virtual currency payment means, especially the increased anti-fraud propaganda in the Chinese domain, many fraudsters have begun to look abroad and use the mature "Pig-Butchering Scam" technique to scam in countries around the world, and the "Pig-Butchering Scam" is spreading rapidly around the world. As a result, the prevention and response to the "Pig-Butchering Scam" needs to be addressed urgently. Why is it so difficult to solve the "Pig-Butchering Scam"?

First of all, it is worth noting that although the degree and role of the connection between the causative factor and the crime are different for different victim

subjects, in a sense, victims are often intentionally or unintentionally involved in the development of a particular case and play an integral role in it, which ultimately leads to the realization of the fraud [5], and the research on the perpetrators of fraud has been fruitful in the academic world, therefore, our group mainly focuses on the victim side of the "Pig-Butchering Scam", looking for common characteristics or potential victimization factors of the victim group, in order to refine the psychological induction mechanism of emotional telecommunication scams through this study.

Second, given that most of the "Pig-Butchering Scam" are of the love dating type, it can be roughly inferred that the victims of this scam should be mostly single and have certain urgent needs for love dating. At the same time, the "Pig-Butchering Scam" involves the privacy of the victim, so after the fraud occurred, there are some victims choose to conceal rather than actively disclose the situation, which undoubtedly brings a lot of resistance to solve the problem of "Pig-Butchering Scam". In this case, we propose the scenario that victims choose to make romantic friendships online as a more indirect alternative to direct contact with each other offline, most likely because the victim group tends to have low self-esteem, low self-confidence personality traits, and a certain level of social anxiety. In fact, through an empirical qualitative research method, after retrieving a hundred or so real cases of "Pig-Butchering Scam", conducting a field survey of forty "Pig-Butchering Scam" victims, and conducting semi-structured interviews with the victims, we initially found that the susceptible population of "Pig-Butchering Scam" is mainly older single women or middle-aged emotionally disillusioned women. And as the field survey progressed, we found that the personality traits of the victim group were not highly uniform, with some victims being cheerful and extroverted and some being undemonstrative and introverted, with no very prominent commonalities. However, we do not know whether the fraud experience has produced stress, almost all victims showed self-denial or even self-depreciation in the survey and interview, based on which we found that most of the victims generally showed low self-identity tendency in the level of self-esteem, especially interpersonal social self-esteem. The low interpersonal social self-esteem makes this group tend to avoid contact with others in reality and prefer to socialize on the Internet. After extracting the direction of self-esteem, we will use quantitative analysis to verify the personality trait of low self-esteem based on the hypothesis of a scale test to confirm whether low self-esteem is one of the susceptibility factors of the victims of "Pig-Butchering Scam".

In the context of the current focus on combating telecommunication network fraud in China, most of the domestic research on "Pig-Butchering Scam" cases is in the category of public security investigation and prevention countermeasures, and the few theoretical studies are mostly local studies, and most of them are focused on the perpetrators, and there are few studies on the victims. Therefore, we hope that through systematic sorting and analysis, theory and practice can be combined to provide some benefits for the in-depth study of the "Pig-Butchering Scam" problem. In terms of practical guidance, we analyze the concept and characteristics of the "Pig-Butchering Scam", explore the principles and specific methods of psychological induction of the victim by the perpetrator, and propose psychological prevention countermeasures in order to raise the public's awareness of prevention, enhance the public's vigilance and self-defense against "Pig-Butchering Scam", and reduce the possibility of being cheated. It is also hoped that further research and exploration of related issues can be carried out for other researchers on this basis.

In conclusion, we propose the following preliminary solutions and preventive measures to address the problem of "Pig-Butchering Scam": (a) building an early warning mechanism to prevent sensitive terms in the construction of online social networking platforms; (b) widening the coverage of regulatory protection at the level of personal information protection; and (c) increasing publicity and education to raise the level of anti-fraud awareness. The prevention of "Pig-Butchering Scam" needs the common concern and attention of the public and the state public power, and also needs the law as the support to strictly control it. It is hoped that the problem of "Pig-Butchering Scam" can be improved and abated to some extent globally.

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