



Factors Influencing Sustainability of Non-Governmental Organizations in the developing world

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ABSTRACT

NGOs provide support services in developing countries when governments are unable to improve the growth indicators. There exists a requirement for sustainable NGOs that can help fill the gap between the needs of the people and the scarce resources available in developing countries. This study aimed to identify essential factors that are internally controllable by the NGO and to reflect on the impact of the internally controllable factors on the NGO's sustainability. The study used established theories to investigate internal and external factors influencing NGOs and to identify the factors of significance. This qualitative research was designed with a systematic review followed by content analysis. It was undertaken in a developing country with a sample size of thirty-four using Purposive sampling. Analysis suggests that three variables including Financial Performance, Organizational Practices, and Community Interest have a statistically significant effect on sustainability. The study infers that considering the business environment, NGOs must focus on internal controllable factors. It also reiterates that NGOs should ensure a steady flow of funds, have robust management and should enjoy the support of the community to remain sustainable.

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Introduction

In developing worlds policies made for human development and societal development often lag behind their implementation. The lack of government policies to improve the country's growth indicators often compels civil society to provide those services that the government is unable to provide (Gurtner, 2010). These include social sector services in areas such as education, health, poverty alleviation, disaster management, etc.

Civil society typically refers to Non-Government Organizations (NGO), Non-profit organizations (NPO), or Community-Based Organizations (CBO). This study refers to civil society organizations as NGOs. NGOs are divided into four categories: advocacy, policy issues/debates, relief/rehabilitation/emergency, and development projects/programs (Delisle et al., 2005). These categories suggest that NGOs play an important

role in the growth of the country (Teegen et al., 2004). Lage & Brant (2008) provide evidence, that the NGOs have set themselves as a response to the transparency and accountability issues in the government's decision-making. It can also be observed that NGOs have been instrumental to tackle social issues with their growing and significant contributions (Banks, 2021). However, research shows that there are few success stories in terms of maintaining sustainability (Arhin et al., 2018; Masefield et al., 2020; Olivo, 2007). The majority of the NGOs remain poorly oriented and typically require support to sustain themselves but often are unable to survive longer (Tortajada, 2016). While a considerable amount of money is received by NGOs from foreign donors; as the legal environment changes, NGOs face allegations regarding international interference (Tortajada, 2016) impacting their sustainability (Lage & Brant, 2008).

The sustainability of an organization refers to the capability of managers to maintain and retain a business over the long term (Omeri, 2014). It is an ongoing process that is built by the experiences of people who work and improve the organization (Imasiku, 2021; Medne & Lapina, 2019). Every organization, governmental or non-governmental, profit or not-for-profit, needs sustainable growth and factors that contribute to it differ in diverse cultures, countries, regions, and communities. 'Sustainability' contains many dimensions according to various sustainability indices (Seghezze, 2009). Dimensions of sustainability are economic, environmental, ecological, societal, political, technological, organizational, financial, and so on. Sustainability is essential for ensuring continued growth for an NGO that usually face multiple challenges (Hernández-Sánchez, 2021). USAID's Sustainability Index indicates that the developing world lacks strategic planning and generally starts with a broader mission to influence public policy. At the same time, the political environment in the country often limits NGOs' sustainability (Partelow et al., 2020). Hence, there is a need for NGOs to create a balance between the needs of people and scarce resources to remain sustainable (Abiddin, Ibrahim, & Aziz, 2022). The past evidence from the developing world suggests that in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh and India, NGOs are unsustainable due to a lack of financial stability and organizational effectiveness (Amiri & Pagheh, 2019; Zaidi, 1999). Experiences from other emerging nations suggest the same (Bromideh, 2011). These organizations fail to create an 'association between their mission and the interests of their stakeholders' (Arenas et al., 2009).

According to Delisle et al. (2005), NGOs create and operate programs relating to healthcare, learning, education, and economic and social welfare, driven by a desire to help and develop deprived sectors of society. Sustainable NGOs can effectively tackle societal issues (Hosseinpour et al., 2016; Peng et al., 2022). The sustainability of NGOs is affected by various external and internal factors (Ebenezer et al., 2020; Metin et al., 2021). However, due to uncertain legal and political conditions, external factors to an NGO are often uncontrollable and difficult to predict (Huyse et al., 2010). Hence, this research mainly focuses on internal factors that are controllable and quantifiable and the ones that affect the sustainability of an NGO (Miriti & Karithi, 2020; Njoroge, 2013; Paul, 1987).

Research Questions

According to Gazzola et al. (2021), there are several quantitative studies available regarding the measurement of NGO's sustainability with a greater focus on macro-level perspectives. The presented research focuses on qualitative analysis of internal controllable factors leveraging which NGOs can manage their sustainability.

On the same lines given study was conducted to answer the following questions.

- What are the socio-economic factors of sustainability of NGOs that are internally controllable?
- How much do these factors affect the sustainability of NGOs?

Literature Review

NGOs are reflections of civil society organizations based on humanitarian services and the well-being of society and individuals (Lehman, 2007; Sternberg, 2010). These organizations are staffed with philanthropic workers and are often run by volunteers who work for social purposes, rather than for profit. Founders of these organizations are often creative, passionate, and humble and always come up with the idea to give a way to live a better life (Diao et al., 2019; Gooding, 2017). These organizations are funded by donors (known, anonymous, national, or international), the government and volunteers (Werker & Ahmed, 2008).

During the 17th century NGOs were working for sustained development as self-help groups at the field level and then during the 18th century, NGOs transformed themselves into advocacy groups (Iriye, 1999; Leung et al., 2016). In the 19th century, especially after Second World War, NGOs shifted their role as catalytic in people-centered development (Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002; Makoba, 2002). Nowadays NGOs are emerging as a bridge between the government, corporations, and society (Banks et al., 2015; Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002). As indicated by Giorgi (2019) NGOs' role came under a formal focus after Second World War. As per Charnovitz (2006), United Nations recognized the importance of NGOs at the UN Congress in San Francisco (1968) by making a provision in the article of Charter of the UN framework (article 71). The provision gave civil society consultative status in the Economic and Social Council. Hall-Jones (2006) observed that after Second World War, the number of NGOs kept on increasing every year. Over the years NGOs aligned their work with relief during a crisis such as floods, earthquakes, famine, and wars (Grogg, 2016; Rouhi et al., 2019).

The Concept of Non-Governmental Organization

There are several definitions and terminologies like non-governmental organization (NGO), Community-based organization (NBO) and Not-for-profit organization (NPO) where their names vary from culture to culture, country to country, and according to norms and values. Although the term NGO determines a variety of organizations, in this study, NGOs are defined as civil society organizations, which are involved in societal development programs, using donations collected from public, private or corporate organizations (D. Lewis, 2017; Mohanty, 2002). Voluntary organizations, social development programs, civil societies, social welfare organizations, mutual aid, advocacy society and grassroots organizations are also called nonprofit organizations. They are increasingly becoming an important force within society (Teegen et al., 2004).

The difference between for-profit and not-for-profit organizations is based on the “distribution of net earnings”. NGOs are barred from the distribution of their profit among those who run the organization (Jenkins, 2007). These organizations however are free to pay reasonable compensation to people for their efforts and are not barred from earning profits (Baker, 1985; Du Toit Née Renard & Snelgar, 2015; Hallock, 2000).

Net earnings of NGOs are typically used for further financing of their operations, products, and services. They are also different from for-profit organizations in terms of the absence of stock holding by sponsors which gives their owners profits as well as control (Hansmann, 1980; Karanth, 2018).

From an informal group to a large formal organization, NGOs can play various roles and can take different shapes. Some NGOs receive huge amounts of funding from the government and external sources and generate profit even though they may be called not-for-profits. This has sparked complex debates about the description of an NGO (Lewis, 2011) where the last two decades have witnessed an unprecedented rise in government restrictions on foreign funding to nongovernmental organizations (Bromley et al., 2019). Ali (2016) indicates that this has however received mixed responses while Pallas & Sidel (2020) believes such limitations can enhance or undermine sustainability.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a process, which enables an organization to determine its potential and continuously improve the quality of its operations and protect stakeholders' demands (Camilleri, 2017; Mensah, 2019).

Sustainability can be defined using five principles: quality of life, partnership and participation, care for the environment, fairness, and reverence for ecological constraints (Camilleri, 2017; Education, 1948; Parkin et al., 2003)

Various developmental forums define the process of sustainability as the synchronization of resources, investments, the orientation of technology and institutional change to improve the present, while simultaneously synchronization of the emerging potential to meet the future needs of humans (Forster, 1985; Sharma, 2009). However, a consensus on the definition of sustainability does not exist (Johnston et al., 2007; Kajikawa, 2008; Moore et al., 2017).

Pursuant to Lozano (2018) sustainability has appeared as a concept to help address the negative economic, environmental, and social impacts through a holistic perspective. There is a concern regarding sustainability because there is no other alternative to being successful other than sustainability. It is often considered a competitive advantage (Kersten, 2015). Hence, Epstein et al. (2015) have stressed quantifying and measuring sustainability. Sustainability reporting serves as a tool for measuring the performance of an organization; however, reporting sustainability is one thing and actual practices of sustainability often tell a different story (Gray et al., 2010).

Sustainability Frameworks

The three main settings of sustainability are typically social, economic, and environmental. Some commonly used sustainability frameworks include the Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 2001), the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) (Labuschagne & Brent, 2005), Variables of Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2007), Sustainable Consumption Indicators (Bentley & De Leeuw, 2003), IChemE framework ((Da Costa & Pagan, 2006) and USAID (NGO sustainability index). They are integrated frameworks for gauging sustainability and were taken into account while assessing organization's sustainability (Labuschagne & Brent, 2005).

Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)

With the objective of 'enhancing the quality, rigor and utility of sustainability reporting' the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economics (CERES) and The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) launched Global Reporting Initiative (Brown et al., 2009). GRI hierarchy considers three important areas social, economic, and environmental. Within these areas, more than 79 indicators or variables of sustainability are incorporated. However, not all the indicators are easy to measure but a few of them are and can be selected to measure NGO's sustainability according to the context of the organization or country (Veleva & Ellenbecker, 2000).

United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development Framework

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) devised a sustainability indicator framework. The main difference between GRI and CSD is that it has four dimensions social, economic, environmental, and institutional. As per DiSano (2002), the framework includes 15 main indicators or variables and 38 sub-themes (dimensions). CSD has been used extensively as a basis for measuring sustainability by developing nations (Hass et al., 2002).

In addition to the above frameworks, literature on the sustainability of NGOs suggests financial, organizational, and economic factors important enough to affect their long-term existence. There exist several factors that could affect the sustainability of NGOs. Factors that contribute to sustainable growth differ in different cultures, countries, regions, and communities. Sustainability includes several external as well as internal/controllable factors. Literature suggests that internal factors (variables) that an NGO can control are

the sustainability of its financial position (Karanja & Karuti, 2014) organizational achievements (Okorley & Nkrumah, 2012) and mission alignment with the interest of the community (Paul, 1987).

While both developed and developing nations face challenges related to the sustainability of NGOs, including dependence on external funding, limited resources, and political instability (Arhin et al., 2018; Khieng & Dahles, 2015) there are also important differences related to access to resources, institutional capacity, and the nature of development challenges (Imasiku, 2021). Despite the best efforts of many NGOs, their impact on development outcomes in developing nations can be limited due to a range of factors, including poor coordination with government agencies and limited community participation in program design and implementation (Rajabi et al., 2021). This indicates the need for an exploratory study to quantify the internal controllable factors affecting the sustainability of NGOs.

Methodology

Research Design

For this study, a qualitative research method was adopted within the research design (Hadid, 2019). There are various studies published on the sustainability of NGOs (Hosseinpour et al., 2016; Ishaku et al., 2021) however availability of large literature makes such a topic relatively complex, and knowledge from various research papers is often needed to inform this kind of study. Hence this study applied a combination of Systematic review followed by content analysis (Mikkonen & Kääriäinen, 2020; Tawfik et al., 2019). During the first phase of the study, a systematic review utilized a formulated question that used systematic and explicit methods to identify the internal factors affecting NGOs' sustainability.

The second phase carried out Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) to understand the impact of the selected factors on sustainability. The articles were sampled using Purposive sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015) as non-probability sampling. According to Khan et al. (2003), a qualitative systematic review was conducted in five stages. There were 157 Studies identified using Google Scholar with respective keywords (Identification) and 60 Studies were used to extract variables (Screening). The articles were searched to identify (internally controllable) socio-economic factors of sustainability and gauge how much these factors affect the sustainability of NGOs. A total of 42 Studies with keyword factors affecting the sustainability of NGOs (inclusion/exclusion as per **Table 1**) were referred where 34 studies adapted variables and terminologies of respective variables. As per Samnani et al. (2017) SALSA method was deployed for a Qualitative systematic review.

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for The Selection of Studies

| Criteria | Justification |
|--|--|
| Inclusion | |
| All the studies with keywords e.g., sustainability, NGOs, internal factors, organizational factors, controllable factors | The sustainability of NGOs is the primary aim of the research. Therefore, all the studies including relevant key terms were used irrespective of the database. |
| Context (Country) | This study is based in a developing country, therefore, to identify the variables, studies conducted in developing countries were included. |
| Exclusion | |
| Methodology | To identify the internal controllable variables, all the studies having no quantitative methodology were excluded. |
| Instrument | Studies with no research instrument were excluded. |
| Published in the English language | Due to limited resources e.g., translators only studies published in the English language were used. |

Since this was a qualitative study, a tool called ‘NVivo’ was used for Qualitative Content Analysis. The data were fed to the software to develop sentiment analyses, word cloud, co-occurrence analysis and Sankey diagram. Coding of qualitative data was performed using automation to be able to minimize the researcher’s bias and such research design facilitated the illustration to be able to perform robust data analysis. This approach towards QCA established interconnection among vision, resources, funding, policies, and management strategies to achieve sustainability (Lee et al., 2018).

Using the diagramming tool, a multi-representational approach integrated with research design where such representation could systematically examine a concept and ultimately enhanced the analytical process (Sal Moslehian et al., 2022). Also, the word cloud and word co-occurrence table adopted in the study explored multidimensional relationships across the content (Almeida, 2020; Chen et al., 2016).

Data Analysis

There were thirty-four articles analyzed with the help of Qualitative Content Analysis. Generated insights were in the form of –

Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment analysis (SA) is a process of extensive exploration of data stored in the content to identify and categorize the views expressed in a part of the text (Aqlan et al., 2019). In qualitative studies sentiment analysis confirms the appropriateness of selected content.

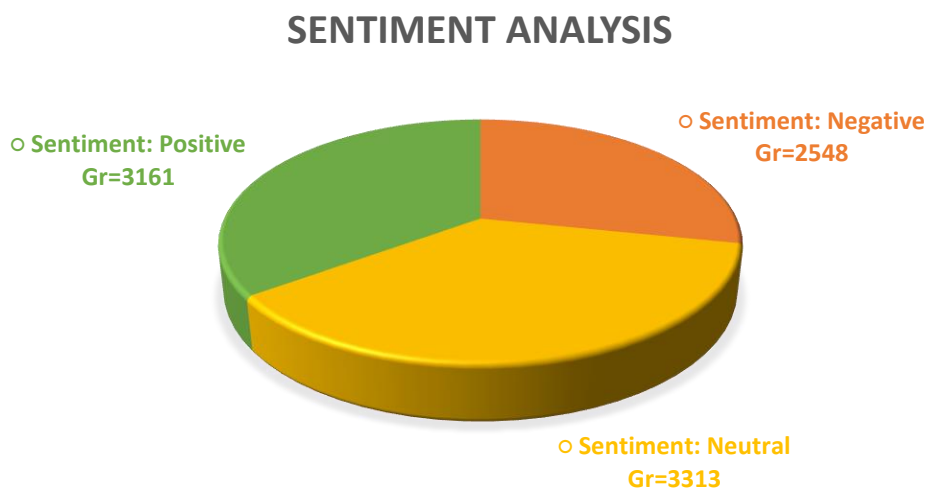


Figure 1: Sentiment analysis based on content analysis

In this study, the range of ‘Groundedness’ of sentiments as shown in **Figure 1** indicates that the articles selected for the analysis were balanced and had minimal selection bias.

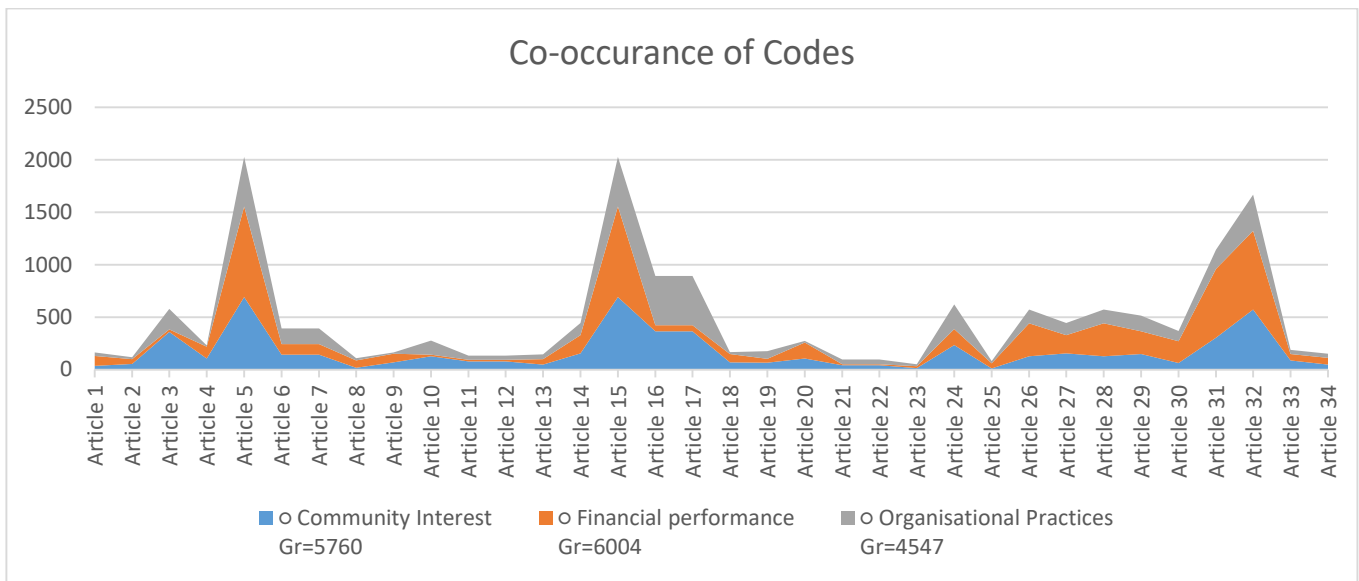


Figure 3: Co-occurrence of codes indicating respective groundedness

The three coded terms can be seen with similar density throughout 34 articles. The spike in the co-occurrence also corresponds to similar density levels for these 3 variables in the study.

Sankey Diagram

Data visualization using the Sankey diagram provides summative snapshots of research insights. At the same time, it illuminates the generalizability & significance of work (Otto et al., 2022). The Sankey diagram emphasizes the flow of information and relevant terminology from one state to another or one time to another. The Sankey diagram confirms the relationship of coded terminologies in the documents.



Figure 4: Conceptual flow toward sustainability

The Sankey diagram (Refer to **Figure 4**) shows that the funds retrieved through financial performance can be effectively managed with organizational practices to favor the community interests.

Topic Models

According to Kherwa & Bansal (2020), ‘Topic modelling’ is a statistical approach in text mining. It can be used for revealing the underlying semantic structure in large collections of documents. As indicated before, ‘Topic Model’ was created using a Machine learning tool that made use of classification techniques to identify a structure within the content. According to **Figure 5** following analytical insights were generated:

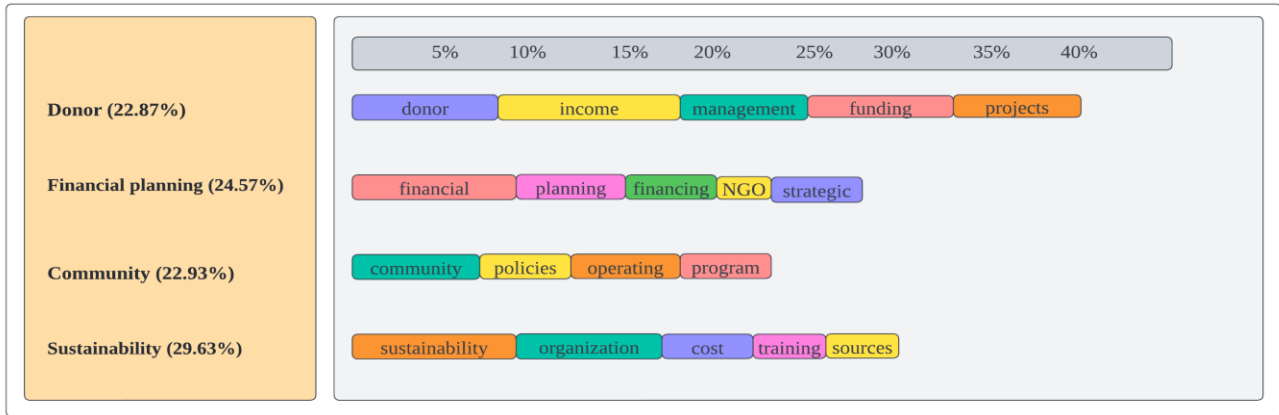


Figure 5 - Topic model generated from the qualitative content

- Donor (22.87%) deals with the source of Funding and how the projects are being funded.
- Financial planning (24.57%) is aligned with the strategic goals of NGOs
- Community (22.93%) has a stake in other Policies & programs.
- Sustainability (29.63%) reflects consideration of associated costs.

As noted by Acharya (2022) content analysis is a matter of interpretation and may potentially lead to inaccuracies. The context needs to be well understood before making any inferences and unlike statistical software, QCA tools are to aid the analysis process, which the researcher must always remain in control of (Zamawe, 2015).

Validity and reliability

According to Noble & Smith (2015), Qualitative research calls for scientific rigor as well as transparency in the analytical procedures and avoidance of researcher bias due to the inherent lack of standard processes. It suggests the necessity of replicable studies and triangulation of data sources. Validity establishes the soundness of the methodology, sampling process and data analysis process while reliability focuses on the process and the results that have replicable outcomes (Golafshani, 2015; Mohamad et al., 2015).

In the given study the validity was established using the automation of data analysis to overcome researcher bias; at the same time, reliability was achieved through the process of triangulation using multiple methodologies that ensured research was conducted through multiple perspectives.

Findings

Financial Performance

NGOs that have sound financial arrangements, appear capable of fulfilling their mission and can respond to community needs and future challenges accordingly (Njoroge, 2013); however, for developing nations it could be a major challenge. Financial resources are the principal aspect of non-profit organizations according to the triple-bottom-line sustainability theory (Correia, 2019; Elkington, 1999). As per Drucker (1990), NGOs find themselves with an endlessly increasing agenda of new programs, which need adequate financial resources, but the fact is that they have limited opportunities for the generation of additional funds, which leads to financial unsustainability. NGO's financial performance consists of resources that enable them

to avail opportunities as well as enhance their ability to deal with unforeseen challenges while maintaining ongoing organizational operations for the best interest of society (Bowman, 2011). Another definition suggests that financial performance is an ability to generate a diverse resource base that could help an organization to continue its operations with the community services they are providing, specifically, when donors' financial support has died down (Bell & Renz, 2010).

Data gathered from the National Council of Kenya suggests that a decrease in donor funding affects NGO's financial performance and other variables of financial performance also identified through the study e.g., strategic financial management, a paradigm shift in services, internal funding, strategic alliance, and structure of the organization (Waiganjo et al., 2012). A study conducted on a local NGO in Zimbabwe concluded that income diversification and strategic financial management are the indicators that determine the financial performance of an NGO (Omeri, 2014). Strategic financial management is an indicator of financial sustainability (Waiganjo et al., 2012) that deals with the financial planning and financial administration of an NGO. For an NGO, financial management is more than just paying the expenses and scrutiny of financial performance. It also keeps the promise of long-term delivery of civil services in a sustainable manner. Financial management consists of several tasks performed by employees to keep their organization financially stable (Abraham, 2003). Several NGOs do not even include financial planning in the minutes of their meetings, which makes NGOs' credibility questionable (Mikeladze, 2021). A study revealed that financial planning and documentation of planning give a roadmap toward handling future operations. Financial administration is also a key indicator of financial sustainability which involves obtaining and analyzing financial data for better decision-making (Appleby, 1991; Gleißner et al., 2022). This variable specifies whether planning, recordkeeping, and administration of financial processes maintained can affect sustainability. Because NGOs struggle with issues of billing, recording, planning, and decision making which ultimately calls for emergency measures.

Financial planning is used for identifying sources of funding and allocation of those funds. Any Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) is largely dependent on different sources of funding e.g., international/national donors, government, and community (Omeri, 2014). However, the number of grants received by an NGO has a negative relationship with sustainability (Ali, 2016). Sustainability declines as the ratio of funding increases. The counterargument to this statement is, organizations will do well if they get the grants needed for operational size. Here word the 'operational size' is noticeable. Many NGOs in developing countries receive grants more than they need or operationalize those grants. Studies state that organizations do less when they get more assistance (Omeri, 2014). When greater assistance in an organization is awarded, the higher will be amount of debt. As a supplement, another research stated that financial sustainability has a negative relationship with dependency ratio meaning the equity donated to total capital. A reduction in dependency ratio indicates that the organization is profitable and sustainable and it can meet its operational expenses on its own (Kereta, 2007). Sources of funding can be internal, which is income diversification and external sources are called donations. Internal funding can help an NGO to remain sustainable as several studies conducted in Kenya stated that the major source of funding for NGOs is generated from internal activities (Njoroge, 2013). NGOs in Ghana are against external income generation activities. They are more satisfied with their internal and local funding. However, for an NGO overall internal funding barely helps to meet all the operational costs. Data suggest that directors and managers must consider external sources of funding to generate income to improve the sustainability of NGOs (Okorley & Nkrumah, 2012). Since a total reliance on internal funding can affect NGO's operations in long term, NGOs should consider a diverse portfolio of income so that they can survive financial shocks (Abraham, 2003). According to modern portfolio theory (MPT), a diversified portfolio reduces the risk of expected returns. Income diversification and MPT theory suggest that more diversified income will reduce the vulnerability of income and funds generation (Kingma, 2003).

To reduce the risk of unsustainability an NGO should have a diversified portfolio of some external funding. Those organizations, which rely solely on internal income generation, are more vulnerable in

comparison to organizations with diversified sources of income (Green et al., 2021; Reardon et al., 1988). The concept of income diversification holds a theory that there is very less probability that all the sources of income can be affected by economic shock (Bryce, 1929; Nguyen et al., 2022; Wan et al., 2016). The fewer the number of income-generating sources the more vulnerable the organization will be (Trussel, 2002; Tuckman & Chang, 1991). Therefore, revenue sources should be larger in number because as revenue increases an organization will tend to be sustainable (Njoroge, 2013). León (2001) suggests that NGOs must have 60% of their income from at least five different sources because diversification of income saves an organization from the unpredictability of external donor funding (Samuel et al., 2016; Tifow, 2013). Income diversification secures as many funds for the future as possible through national or international donors and communities (Lewis, 2010). Again, with all events, odds must come. Diversification of income also has its cons as diversified income comes with restrictions. Many NGOs use diversification strategies to reduce the intensity of external shocks and donor dependency. Thus, no dominant donor can limit an NGOs access to income.

Organizational Practices

Implementing sustainability into NGO's core mission, and management control is important and has a greater possibility to retain NGO sustainability for the long term (Arjaliès & Mundy, 2013; Gond et al., 2012). Sustainability requires more than just securing a financial position. There is a direct relationship between leadership, employee management, service provision and participation in the community (Omeri, 2014). Management practices refer to the recruitment and development of staff at work. Management's leadership is positively associated with the sustainability of NGOs. Need-based or demand-driven project proposals, accountability, leadership training, ensuring transparency, and the development of employees are considered best management practices (Okorley & Nkrumah, 2012; Omeri, 2014). The key skills required for sustainable project management are control and ownership and employee participation (Lockwood, 2004). To manage the sustainability of NGOs, internal factors such as lack of operational consistency, management skills, weak decision-making committees, unrealistic priorities, and financial issues should be taken care of (Mutonga, 2015).

Another solution to make an NGO sustainable is to provide legal support to the community or volunteers. This will make members no longer liable for the company's debts, obligations, and contracts it will ultimately make members free and increase their willingness to work (Fonseca, 2003). Omeri (2014) stated that NGOs should emphasize the hiring of competent workers because competency will result in higher sustainability. Periodical training of staff must be ensured (Okorley & Nkrumah, 2012).

Leadership is the most important factor and issue for NGOs in the developing world. Instilling a spirit of teamwork and cooperation among employees and leading by example is quite a rare phenomenon in NGOs. Managerial leadership is a survival key for NGO sustainability (Kusi-Appiah, 2006). The leader's personality, transparency in communication, a knack for motivating employees, and ability to supervise are used as strategies for sustainable development (Thomas & Thomas, 2000). NGOs must ensure that they have adequate employees with the required skills. Lack of well-trained and experienced staff limits the extent to which NGOs can manage their daily affairs and their capacity to effectively plan, appraise, implement, and monitor their activities (Lekorwe & Mpabanga, 2007). Majerova et al. (2021) think that qualified and motivated staff are one of the pillars of a sustainable organization. Not surprisingly, the need for career planning and training for NGO personnel is essential for improving NGO sustainability.

In a materialistic way, NGOs usually hire the right (qualified) human resources for NGO operations. However, for those employees who are committed to humanitarian work, NGOs should properly train them.

To attract and retain employees, staff recruitment policies must be competent and should comply with the needs of employees (Thomas & Thomas, 2000). Launching too many development projects has been termed as 'development without proper planning' of sustainability of the desired project just as is the case with NGOs, especially in developing countries. In the past, sustainability was used as a reciprocal of development; but for a

few years, sustainability itself is used as a separate path for the vanguard of development. To make an NGO sustainable, NGOs should be transparent with their donors, communities, and other stakeholders. NGOs should write and communicate a real picture of the project's progress with their stakeholders.

Community Interest

Community interest refers to the ongoing involvement of the community in projects and programs administered by community-based organizations or NGOs to serve them (Ochelle, 2012). The interest of the community or public in NGOs influences the management and growth of development projects positively (Paul, 1987). Community participation creates a sustainable environment for NGOs by allowing users to guide management on their key issues, and selection of services they need and want to pay for. Community interest's perception has changed over the years (Yacoob & Walker, 1991).

The key to the sustainability of civil organizations is to involve users in the planning, processing, implementation, and maintenance of ongoing projects. Active participation of members may take the form of money, decision-making, labor, equipment, and support. Therefore, it is important that all the decisions and projects are based on the preference of the community and their active participation should be considered. The mission statement of the organization helps focus on human effort and causes all staff, and managers in organizations to have shared values and expectations, and with time, these values strengthen and cause the creation of community interest (Taleghani & Lyasi, 2013).

The success of NGOs suggests that projects and programs must be community driven so that they could provide an enabling environment and create the interest of the community to monitor and complete the program (Abiddin, Ibrahim, & Abdul Aziz, 2022; Livingstone & McPherson, 1993) NGOs must train, educate, and motivate community members in planning and participation to make the organization sustainable in the long term. NGOs are generally financed by the public or government but due to the reduction in donor funds with time and the increasing number of NGOs, competition has increased in private or community funding (Bendapudi, Singh, & Bendapudi, 1996).

Marketing has become very important for NGOs for self-generating funds and attracting new contributors. It is argued that to survive as an international NGO, it is important to become a global brand (Smillie, 1995; Wisetsri et al., 2021).

Building a public image has a lot to do with the sustainability of an NGO. Branding is an essential tool for NGOs, as it is said that branding is more important for a non-profit organization than a commercial one (Chiagouris, 2005; Naddaff, 2004).

Discussions

From an NGO's point of view, sustainability equals continuously delivering benefits to the target population regardless of funding-related issues. As stated in the literature, there are three significant aspects that need to be addressed while making an effective sustainability plan for an NGO.

- **Financial performance** (*NGO should be financially sustainable*) to ensure the steady flow of funds to generate revenue and continue the NGOs work.
- **Organizational practice** (*NGO should have stable structure and management practices*) to ensure that NGO has a proper management system and
- **Community interest** (*also referred to as programmatic sustainability*) ensures that the NGO can continue its programs with the support of the community.

Results show that there exists a strong relationship between these three variables with sustainability. These variables are a combination of different dimensions, that reflect upon a single variable. The study suggests that financial performance has a major impact on the sustainability of NGOs in the developing world as compared to organizational practices. Financial performance has dimensions of strategic financial management, source of funding and income diversification. The research depicts that healthy financial management needs proper organizational planning, along with its setup and implementation of workable systems, procedures, and policies, which can handle and overcome the financial challenges an NGO can face. The analysis further revealed that income diversification strategies do enhance financial sustainability, which includes the flexibility of funds, reliability of funds, reducing exchange rate fluctuations and unrestricted access to funds. At the same time, aggregated data indicates that organizational practices determine the success of an NGO. Findings from the given study also revealed that community interest has a significant impact on the sustainability of NGOs. The study found that in the developing world financial performance and community interest are important factors as compared to factors such as organizational practices by an NGO.

Conclusion

The presented study was staged to explore significant Factors that can affect the Sustainability of Non-Governmental Organizations in the context of developing nations. Using two staged qualitative research designs, qualitative content was reviewed and analyzed to identify variables with statistical significance. It was observed that having well-educated and skilled staff with good leadership provides assurance and confidence to the donors. With appropriate reporting structures, it facilitates accountability and openness and helps promote itself to its donors. These factors were found significant in the financial sustainability of the NGOs.

Factors related to organizational management such as proper governance structures, top management that adopts policies that motivate employees, and leadership with required qualifications, competence, and experience, do impact the sustainability of NGOs. It was also noted that dwindling foreign donor funding was having a significant effect on the financial position of the NGOs, so they were taking the initiative to explore non-traditional sources of funding where stakeholders having faith in the management and meeting community needs through well-designed projects affected the sustainability of NGOs. Thus, the study suggested that the variables of Financial Performance, Organizational Practices and Community Interests have a significant relationship with the sustainability of NGOs. The outcome of the study can be extended to other developing countries to support local NGOs to fulfill their mission and assist their stakeholders over the long term.

Implications and Future Direction

Poverty, hunger, health, and education are major concerns for any developing nation (Murray, 2006). NGOs improve the life of the underprivileged population and incentivize workers so that government can effectively use available resources somewhere else to develop the nation.

Managerial Implications

The research concluded that healthy financial management needs proper organizational planning, along with its setup and implementation of workable systems, procedures, and policies, which can handle and overcome the financial challenges an NGO can face. If the community, an NGO is serving, is satisfied with the brand image and operational activities of the NGO, it will survive for a longer period. If the NGO is branded as a foreign mission server, the community may be reluctant even if it has the financial means to operationalize its activities. These results suggest managers understand the anthropology of the locality in which an NGO is working.

The study also revealed that income diversification strategies do enhance financial sustainability, which includes maintaining flexibility, reliability, and unrestricted utility of funds. Managers should identify key competencies of NGOs to generate enough funds to run their operations even if it is not donor-based organization. The findings of the study also revealed that community interest has an impact on the sustainability of NGOs. The components of the presented study also determined that the image, community faith, community interest, and vision of the organization have an impact on the sustainability of the NGO. Hence managers should build the image of the NGO as per the requirement of the community it is serving.

Future Direction

As established by Zamawe (2015) one must understand that software cannot fully analyze qualitative data and must be extensively supported by a researcher to draw insights. However, automated analysis using state-of-the-art technologies leveraged by Machine learning can minimize bias and intelligently automate the content analysis process (Mustafa & Rahimi Azghadi, 2021). Keeping this in mind we plan to deploy the proposed approach in upcoming studies. In the future, this research can also be reorganized in several ways where researchers can categorize education, health, and environment to test the important factors identified and extend them to other developing countries.

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