

NGOs Management: A Roadmap To Effective Theory And Practices

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Abstract

There is no denying the fact that in spite of the continuous influx of researchers into the field, the literature on NGOs management remains comparatively underdeveloped in contrast to the extensive body of work dedicated to private enterprises. Therefore, through an extensive review of existing literature across various domains, this paper puts forth a conceptual framework that integrates diverse management functions within a cohesive structure tailored for NGOs. The findings present with an adequate knowledge on how different facets of management are synergistically interwoven within this proposed framework. Thus, it is indispensable to acknowledge the need for empirical validation of this conceptual model through a blend of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. This paper's originality lies in its unique perspective on NGOs management, fostering significant interest among diverse stakeholders, including donors, communities, volunteers, managers, and policy-makers. The proposed discussion emerges as a valuable contribution to the evolving discourse surrounding NGO management by practical insights for enhanced organizational effectiveness and impact.

Keywords: NGOs Management, Project management, Resource management, Managerial changes, Organizational effectiveness.

Introduction

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have gained increasing attention in various societies for diverse reasons. As a result, researchers are eager to explore these organizations and develop empirical evidence to make strong claims about NGO management. Traditionally, NGOs have focused on philanthropy and volunteering, with less attention given to rationality, effectiveness, efficiency, and economic sustainability. However, the past few decades have seen a shift towards introducing management systems and tools from the public and private sectors into NGOs (Akingbola, 2012). Thus, keeping in view these perspectives, this paper reviews the existing literature on NGO management from various perspectives and timeliness in order to provide with an adequate understanding of these management areas in NGOs. The paper attempts to cover the management areas involving strategic management, marketing, human

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resources, logistics and supply chain management, project management, organizational culture, and performance measurements. These areas are essential for effective NGO management and can be used to improve the operations and performance of these organizations.

Background to the Topic

The research on effective theories and practices of NGO management has its roots in the dynamic landscape of the late 20th century. During this period of time, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) appeared to emerging in a significant way by playing a fundamental role in addressing societal issues and, thereby, adequately contributing to development efforts around the globe. It is important to mention that the accentuating prominence of NGOs prompted a paradigm shift in academic focus, which consequently ensued the development of programs aimed at preparing individuals for roles within this sector. One aspect of the force behind this research is the peculiar context within which NGOs operate (Cozzolino et al., 2012; Haider, Ahmad, & Ali, 2024). In contrast to for-profit and government organizations, NGOs relatively face significant challenges pertaining to resource management, service delivery, fundraising, and resource management without any motive of earning profits. As a result, understanding and developing effective management practices became more imperative for the success and sustainability of NGOs (Paco et al., 2014; Dilshad, Shah, & Ahmad, 2023). In this regard, a number of scholars aimed at exploring the degree to which management strategies and theories from the for-profit sector could be adapted to the structures, objectives and funding models of NGOs (Ahmed, & Imran, 2024).

With the passing of time, the turn of the 20th century witnessed the evolution of management theories. For this, application of these evolving theories began materialising to the specific context of NGOs by considering their unique roles and goals. Also, they aimed to bridge the gap between established management theories and the specific challenges faced by NGOs. Such an undertaking involved consideration of the inherent differences in their models when compared to traditional organizations (Saunders & Roth, 2019; Ali, Shah, & Ahmad, 2023).

Research Question

How can the integration of management theories and techniques in resemblance to the characteristics of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) improve their capacity, long-term viability, and overall influence on global social, economic, and political spheres?

Understanding the term ‘NGOs’ through Various Definitions

The definitions of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) vary among authors. Girei (2016) defines the sector as "a set of organizations which are collectively considered to possess characteristics that set them apart from states, markets, or households." There are three types of distinctive features that produce different definitions of the sector: the nature of the inputs to the organization, the nature of the goods and services they provide, and how organizations distribute their surplus revenue. Da Silva (2020) focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of these institutions by examining the services they provide. In addition to that, Waweru (2012) defines this sector as organized, private, self-governing, nonprofit distributing, and voluntary, playing a third-party role between market rules and state intervention. The globe in general recognizes NGOs as key third sector actors in development, human rights, humanitarian action, environment, and other areas of public action. Girei (2016) views these entities as active players in international development and increasing the welfare of poor people in poor countries. At present, NGOs appear to work independently and alongside bilateral aid agencies, private-sector infrastructure operators, self-help associations, and local governments (Ahmad, 2023).

NGO Management

During the late 1970s, the literature on NGO management showcased diverse perspectives as the sector gained prominence, leading to the development of academic programs preparing individuals for NGO work. Scholars observed overlapping viewpoints on NGO management, with a consensus emerging on the transferability of business practices across sectors. The

Business/For-profit Perspective, exemplified by authors like Saunders & Roth (2019), emphasizes the universality of business management concepts. Within the NGO sector, it specifically explores the application of for-profit management strategies, such as accounting practices, to NGO finance. Contrastingly, the Public Administration/Government Perspective argues for distinct management strategies tailored to NGOs due to revenue sources differing from for-profit organizations. Authors like M. Moore and C. Letts suggest managing NGOs and government organizations differently, focusing on operational capacity value, authenticity, and public support (Hovland, 2020; Akram, Sewani, & Ahmad, 2024; Imran & Akhtar, 2023).

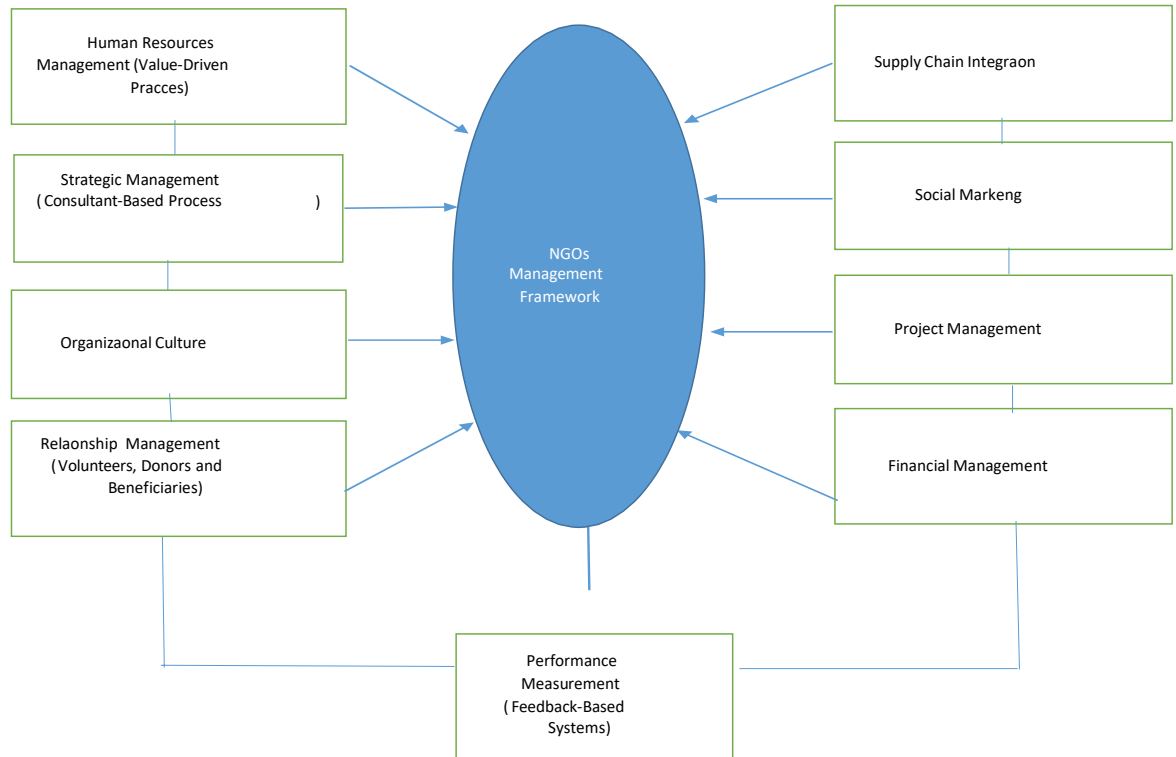
The Independent Researcher/Academic Perspective introduces innovative theories like Finger (2013) "Innovation," challenging the notion that effective NGOs solely require a skilled workforce and financial management. Other academic perspectives delve into tailoring NGO management to citizens as clients, fundraising, and organizational preparation. Within this academic perspective, organizational capacity gains attention concerning NGO performance. Capacity, encompassing program delivery, expansion, and adaptive capacity, is discussed in terms of staffing, budgeting, project management, fundraising, and staff coordination. Adaptive capacity, crucial for organizational effectiveness, involves processes like adopting best practices, aligning human resources with the mission, creating relevant products, and employing goal-oriented measurements Rodriguez et al., (2016).

Literature Review:

Proposed Framework for NGOs Management

The application of various organizational theories from the for-profit sector to NGOs can enhance their management. Organization theory, as a tool for analysing an organization's components, is crucial for developing a management framework tailored to NGOs. The below designed framework has important aspects like meeting stakeholder expectations, defining financial and non-financial standards for organizational health, valuing branding, establishing strategic directions through mission and vision, fostering commitment among a skilled workforce, supporting technological and managerial changes, managing unpredictable work situations, and monitoring stakeholder feedback on performance.

Strategic Management



NGOs employ strategies that define their long-term direction and scope, aligning resources with their evolving environment, markets, and stakeholder expectations. The growing emphasis on modern management techniques for local governments has placed similar expectations on NGOs to prove their efficiency and effectiveness. Strategic management is described as a "rising star" in the voluntary sector, creating a management surge (Da Silva et al., 2020; Thomas, Khan, & Ahmad, 2022). Despite this, there's a realization that NGOs should adopt a more business-minded approach to strategic management (Handy, 1988). In NGOs, strategic management involves stages like environmental analysis, strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, utilizing tools such as PESTAL, SWOT, and Stakeholders analysis. NGOs lacking strategic planning capacity may need to recruit consultants or content specialists based on their capabilities (Waweru, 2015; Naeem, Ali, & Ahmed, 2022).

Marketing

In the broader landscape of organizational dynamics, marketing stands as the pivotal management process, the Chartered Institute of Marketing defines (CIM, 2015), which has a responsibility to identify, anticipate and eventually satisfying consumer requirements. When transposed onto NGOs, marketing transforms into a strategic instrument for generating funds and recruiting essential human resources. Termed "Social Marketing" in the NGO context, this approach applies marketing concepts to address societal issues, seeking to improve the conditions of marginalized individuals. Pioneered by Kotler and Levy in 1969, social marketing involves designing programs to influence the acceptability of social ideas, covering product planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research. Aboramadan (2018) accentuates that the essence of social marketing lies in inducing desired behavioural change, emphasizing the importance of measuring program success beyond quantitative metrics. NGOs are advised to employ various marketing activities, such as market segmentation, product

positioning, advertising, and effective place strategies, to assess the competitive landscape and attract donors.

Parthasarathy (2014) introduces the 8 Ps—product, price, place, promotion, public, partners, policy, and purse—as valuable components shaping non-commercial marketing campaigns. Brand management emerges as a critical facet in the NGO sector, wielding substantial influence over donation decisions and volunteer attraction. The concept, rooted in the industrial revolution, is particularly vital in the NGO realm, serving as a key differentiation factor. As declared by Paço et al. (2014), effective branding not only distinguishes NGOs but also attracts a myriad of donors, consequently increasing financial resources. In the dynamic landscape of the digital age, NGOs can harness the power of mobile marketing, utilizing text messages, well-crafted websites, and social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter to attract funds and enhance community awareness (Lasica and Burke, 2012; Yee and Yazdanifard, 2015). Social media, functioning as a platform for two-way communication, becomes a valuable tool for NGOs to cultivate relationships with donors, volunteers, and stakeholders. In pursuit of financial stability and long-term objectives, NGOs are encouraged to meticulously design fundraising campaigns, necessitating the creation of specialized roles like Media Relations Manager (Sultana, Ahmed, & Imran, 2024).

Human Resources Management

The challenge of limited financial resources and the escalating costs associated with the implementation phase adversely impacts HR practices, encompassing training, payment, and development. Recognizing employees as indispensable assets for achieving NGO goals and missions, Akingbola (2012) underscores the critical role of Human Resources Management (HRM) in ensuring strategic success by guiding adaptation to change. Aligning HRM with the evolving objectives of the organization becomes imperative. According to Akingbola (2012), attracting qualified individuals from diverse business disciplines becomes essential for NGOs to fulfil their objectives. Yassine and Zein's (2016) study advocates for altered HR practices, incorporating recognition, rewards, and incentives to foster employee appreciation, pride in their work, and a willingness to recommend the NGO to others. The evolving HR practices should showcase value-driven management. The body of HR does also play essential role during the phase of the project by rendering skills and knowledge, in addition to training to capable employees both before and during project interventions.

Logistics and Supply Chain Management

When considering supply chain as an important element in terms of response effectiveness, it is undeniably a vital component for NGOs. The supply chain enables NGO personnel for preparedness for incidents with a view to ensuring efficient response. In this regard, the study of Cozzolino et al. (2012) signifies the importance of logistics in the third sector, particularly in disaster relief operations by highlighting some tough functions of agility and leanness. When it comes to logistics in NGOs, it involves effective mobilization of funding and goods globally, coupled with ensuring proper procurement access as well as timely distribution, although it remains one of the most expensive operations for NGOs owing to their relationships with suppliers and distributors in order to handle purchasing costs. There is no denying the fact that supply chain management is pivotal for NGOs in a manner to delivering needful relief items efficiently by taking both economic and social outcomes into account. In this sense, the study of Rodríguez et al. (2016) state the increasing significance of selecting partners and suppliers who can provide valuable additional resources.

Project Management

"Project Implementation Profile," introduced by Rusare and Ian Jay (2015), is considered to be a recent addition to the toolkit in NGO project management is the. This tool helps project

managers in assessing specific project success factors, which enable them to control and focus on the human relations aspect of project management. One of the key tasks for NGO project managers in development projects is the implementation approach and the selection of a pertinent and credible project team. While acknowledging the absence of a universal set of principles for project success across all contexts, project management associated with NGOs are insinuated to address other important areas such as objective definition, performance indicator setting, critical implementation problems, and impact evaluation. Considering these perspectives, Makuwira (2018) stresses on the notion that short- and long-term projects cannot be divorced from their organizational context and long-term repercussions. Therefore, it is essential to recognize that projects, irrespective of their duration, have lasting effects on both the organization and its context.

Organizational Culture and Learning

Leaders play a pivotal role in maintaining as well as shaping an optimal organizational culture with a view to fostering innovation by establishing the basis of shared values. Organizational culture is regarded to be a primary source of motivation and coordination, which acts as both a substitute for structure and a complement to leadership. While organizational culture is extensively researched, its prominence in the NGO sector is comparatively less explored Mikovic et al., (2020). Organizational culture encompasses methodologies an organization employs to fulfil its tasks, deriving from individuals' past experiences. suggests that culture manifests in rituals, values, symbols, and heroes, influencing behaviours.

The relationship between organizational culture and performance is multifarious. Strong cultures may lead to high permanence, high performance may foster strong cultures, a specific culture may be optimal in a given situation, and good performance can result from organizational learning holds a central position in NGO organizational management research. Omona & Mukuye (2013) identified four fundamental organizational practices crucial to an organization's culture, including advocacy, public education, resource generation, and client encouragement. The success of NGOs, as outlined by Brown and Covey, relies on management's adaptability, incorporation of organizational alliances, establishment of regulatory guidelines, and dynamic planning and decision-making processes. NGOs play a vital role in building alliances at various levels due to their complex structures and impact on communities (Paco et al., 2014; Khoso, Oad, & Ahmad, 2023). The ultimate goal of NGOs is to positively impact society by championing social development and change.

Performance Measurement

The question echoing among contributors, donor agencies, scholars, and relief practitioners is whether NGOs align their actions with their principles and how effective their programs and projects truly are (Finger, 2013; Akram, Ahmad & Sewani, 2024). This pursuit of understanding NGO performance involves the challenging task of measurement and quantification. The measurement of performance is not just a desirable aspect but a crucial element for ensuring the accountability of NGOs. They possess unique characteristics, and the ambiguous nature of their performance criteria adds complexity to this evaluation process. While measuring the performance of for-profit organizations is already challenging. Despite increasing interest in NGO performance measurement, only a few frameworks have been developed. Frameworks like that of Akingbola (2012), Hovland's (2020) application of the balanced scorecard "The Nature Conservancy," and system focus on outcomes, capacity, impact, and activity (Sultana, Ahmed, & Imran, 2024).

However, most frameworks tend to concentrate on project performance and overlook management performance (Ramadan and Borgonovi, 2015). A comprehensive approach to performance measurement in NGOs should encompass financial, organizational, and project performance. Achieving this involves setting clear objectives, defining indicators, collecting and analysing data. Effective performance measurement systems empower NGO managers to

make informed decisions, enhance overall performance, and ensure accountability. Such systems not only motivate employees and managers to allow them for continuous improvement, but also allocate more resources for consistent improvement. More importantly, they provide the means through which alternative approaches can be evaluated in order to gain more better control over operations and, at the same time, maintaining flexibility at the operational level.

Research Methodology

In this research, the researcher opted for a secondary qualitative method by emanating important insights from primary sources already, which are available on the internet. In this way, an in-depth examination was performed with regard to the effective theories and practices in NGO management. For this, the data was comprised of scholarly articles, including organizational reports and organizational reports and first-hand accounts from individuals associated with various NGO entities. It is important to mention that these accounts were accessed, rather than originally generated, by the researcher, given the nature of the chosen research method. By doing a comprehensive and thorough review of the data, the researcher was certain to uncover the phenomenon, characteristics, patterns, and challenges faced by NGOs vis-à-vis management. Subsequently, the collected data was categorized on the basis of relevant keywords including themes, which allowed for a proper analysis of different NGOs and their management approaches. This categorization helped in the identification of commonalities and variations. Succinctly, this research takes ethical standards into account by ensuring that primary data sources, which were helpful for data analysis, are appropriately credited and anonymized through reference. It was deemed to be obligatory by keeping the confidentiality and privacy of individuals and organizations safe. It was assured that the secondary analysis method would not be materialised without ensuring transparency and integrity in analysing primary data for the research purpose.

Results and Analysis

While examining different ramifications of NGO management, one major issue came into limelight is the convergence of business methods within NGO management. The intractable integration of core business tenets, particularly in financial management and accountability processes, shows a strategic pursuit of increased operational efficiency and sustainability (Da Silva et al., 2020; Ali et al., 2023; Aslam, Iqbal, & Ahmed, 2022). At the same time, the amalgamation of various business-induced initiatives creates strategic friction in the industry. As NGOs compete for humanitarian aims and business-like methods, a debate emerges about the line between NGO and governmental or company management systems. Such a strategic tension emerges through the difficulties that must be carefully considered in the pursuit of efficient NGO management (Ridder et al., 2012; Ahmad, Sewani & Khoso, 2024).

Strategic Management Dynamics

The secondary analysis reveals that increased adoption of strategic management methods is an important aspect of NGO management. This surge is contextualized within the larger evolution of management ideas, which was notably evident in the late twentieth century. As NGOs battle with the need to prove their efficacy in the same way that commercial firms do, strategic management emerges as a rising star in the NGO sector. The implementation of strategic management, however, is not without its complexities, since resistance deriving from worries about potential sacrifices to organizational autonomy and treasured values pervades the sector (Finger, 2013; Ahmad, Sewani & Ali, 2024).

Marketing Strategies and Branding

The emergence and subsequent prevalence of branding and marketing strategies serves as a critical dimension in the effective management of NGOs. It was understood while analysing the data that the phenomenon of marketing within the NGO sector is line with the literal definition, which entails discovering, anticipating, and serving consumer needs profitably. It is important to note that this economic approach is directly linked to distinct role and goals of non-governmental organizations. This gradual, if not instant, shift in terminology among non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from marketing to ‘social marketing’ stresses the application of marketing concepts to societal challenges, with the extensive goal of improving the living situations of marginalized communities. In their foundational work in 1969, Kotler and Levy provided for the groundwork for this major change by asserting social marketing as the design, implementation, and control of programs intended to affect the acceptability of social concepts (Rodriguez et al., 2016; Ahmad, Noorani & Ali, 2024; Ali et al., 2023).

Marketing Strategies vis-a-vis 8’Ps Framework

The elucidation of the 8’Ps framework simplifies marketing strategy of NGOs. This framework, which delves deep into product definition, pricing considerations, beneficiary regions, and promotional activities, functions as a parameter for NGOs for transforming the competitive landscape. Also seen as an often-overlooked aspect on the other hand, ‘branding’ is considered as a popular concept which serves as a major difference in the NGO industry. As per the study of Paço et al. (2014), a strong brand reputation is a precursor for not just garnering donations, but also for attracting passionate volunteers who devote their time and efforts to the NGO cause. In this sense, the modern digital environment asks for consolidation of technical integration, with mobile marketing, well-designed websites and social media platforms that are becoming handy tools for NGOs (Mikovic et al., 2020; Ahmad, Mankash, & Sewani, 2024; Akram, Khan, & Ahmad, 2022). The interconnection offered by these digital platforms acts not only as a fundraising machine, but also as a means to raise awareness among many sectors of the community. With internet marketing, the conscientious use of social media has become more essential than ever in terms of offering platforms for better engagement and feedback that can ultimately strengthen ties with contributors, volunteers and stakeholders.

Discussion

By collecting and analysing observations regarding many aspects of NGO management, an adequate understanding of missions and business-oriented methods has been emanated. It is also important to recognize that the ensuing strategic conflict evinces how challenging it is to maintain organizational autonomy and principles in the face of shifting management trends within the ambit of non-government organizations. Strategic management too appears as a key factor in this discussion by showcasing the sector's progress towards formalized processes in sharp resemblance to private firms. It has been understood from the above analysis that the employment of strategic management tools facilitates environmental analysis, strategy formulation, and rigorous evaluation, which collectively ensue a more holistic approach. However, the industry faces pushback, indicating concerns about potential sacrifices to treasured ideals (Saunders & Roth, 2019; Ahmad et al., 2024; Jabeen, Ali, & Ahmad, 2023; Imran et al., 2023).

From the above articulated analysis, it can be gauged that financial management remains a cornerstone, with NGOs recognizing its pivotal role in ensuring future support and stakeholder communication. The sector's unique reliance on fund accounting introduces distinct challenges, including the scarcity of complete financial statements. The role of auditing committees extends beyond financial performance to encompass broader organizational concerns and their self-concept (Girei, 2016; Ahmad et al., 2023; Akram, Fatima & Ahmad, 2024; Imran et al., 2023). To infer, effective NGO management is a multifarious endeavor that demands a proper understanding of business practices. The sector's ability to blend these

components must remain firm while preserving its core values shapes its capacity, sustainability and impact.

Conclusion

With the above areas of NGO management exhaustively discussed, it can be rounded off that NGOs represent a compelling avenue for extensive research, holding significant promise for exploration in both developed and developing nations. A heightened focus on the realm of NGOs, coupled with dedicated research endeavours, stands to yield substantial benefits for the various stakeholders associated with these organizations. The tasks undertaken by NGOs, exerting pressure on their processes and outcomes, necessitate the adoption of diverse strategies akin to those embraced by the private sector. This encompasses the pursuit of heightened efficiency, effectiveness, and the optimization of outputs vis-a-vis inputs. Throughout this paper, a detailed management framework supporting the integration of various management-related activities was put forth vis-à-vis the concept of non-governmental organizations.

Recommendations

With the above analysis and conclusion, a layout of enhancing management practices of NGO, together with increasing its effectiveness, entails the following recommendations:

First and foremost, there is a need for increased knowledge and collaboration between various NGO entities, so that effective NGO management can be fostered. By encouraging partnerships between different entities, it can result in the transfer of feasible and result-oriented practices and the development of hybrid management approaches to capitalise on the strengths of each sector.

Secondly, individuals working in the NGO sector ought to be encouraged to integrate modern technologies into their management practices. This may include data analytics for better decision-making, coupled with adopting digital fundraising strategies as well as realizing the potential of emerging technologies. Other than that, capacity-building initiatives must be placed at the operational, programmatic, financial, and organizational levels as a whole by focusing on technological literacy among NGO staff.

Thirdly, NGOs can create and strengthen adaptive ability, which is a pivotal component of their organizational strategies. But this cannot be materialised without providing with ongoing learning, adaptability to changing situations and a dedication to innovation. For this, investing in training programs and resources to improve adaptive capacity is required, which will consequently help in maintaining organizational effectiveness.

Besides, NGOs must remain vigilant in showcasing advocacy efforts to influence policies that can result in an enabling environment for their management operations. This may encompass and the needful collaboration with policymakers through the legal and regulatory landscape that can support the growth and impact of NGOs.

Lastly, knowledge-based platforms can be developed to promote sharing of best practices and acquisition of new techniques through staff members. By establishing a collaborative environment for NGOs to share their thoughts, concerns, and successful strategies, organizations working within the NGO ambit can better handle their management practices.

Research Limitations

While this paper attempted to offer a holistic perspective, it is not without limitations. The contextual nature of NGO management implies that findings may not be universally applicable. Additionally, the dynamic nature of the sector might render certain aspects subject to change over time. The reliance on existing literature and a theoretical framework may overlook specific nuances in diverse organizational contexts.

Implications for Future Studies

Future studies in NGO management may explore emerging trends, innovative practices and the evolving role of technology. Further research can delve into the unique challenges faced by NGOs in different regions and sectors. Exploring the impact of cultural and contextual variations on management strategies would contribute to a more understanding of certain management practices. For this, there is a pressing need for in-depth investigations into the regional and sectorial variations within the NGO landscape.

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