

Perspectives of the Leadership of Ethnic Minority NGOs in Romania

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Abstract

Ethnic minority non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Romania play a crucial role in promoting community rights, supporting social inclusion, and fostering sustainable development. This study explores the efficiency of these organizations through a qualitative analysis of management strategies and the challenges they face. Based on eight semi-structured interviews with NGO leadership members, the research highlights key factors influencing organizational performance, including transparency, financial sustainability, and the impact on the communities they serve. The adopted methodology incorporates word frequency analysis and sentiment analysis to identify perceptions of efficiency and the obstacles these organizations encounter. The findings suggest that while NGOs are perceived as having a positive impact on their communities, challenges related to financial resources, strategic coordination, and member retention may affect their overall effectiveness. This study contributes to the academic literature on NGO management and provides practical insights for enhancing organizational performance.

Keywords: NGOs, organizational management, efficiency, ethnic minorities, sustainability

JEL classification: L3; L31

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1. Introduction

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in supporting minority communities by protecting their rights, improving living conditions, and preserving cultural identity. Through the implementation of educational, social, and economic programs, they facilitate access to essential resources and opportunities. Moreover, these organizations influence public policies, raise awareness, and collaborate with various institutions to amplify their impact and ensure the sustainability of their initiatives (Salamon, 1994). These organizations play a fundamental role in promoting a fair and inclusive society, contributing to the integration of ethnic minorities and the reduction of discriminatory practices. Through their activities, they support the rights of these communities and influence public policies, having a significant impact on protecting ethnic and cultural diversity (Kymlicka, 2007). They implement a wide range of programs and initiatives aimed at improving living conditions and creating economic opportunities for minority communities, providing access to education, entrepreneurial support, and labor market integration (Ram, 1998). Regarding the role of management in the

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efficiency of these organizations, we consider that effective management is essential for the performance and sustainability of NGOs. It involves resource administration, clear strategies, and continuous monitoring. A visionary leadership and strong financial management ensure adaptability and transparency, maximizing the positive impact on the communities they serve (Agarwal, 2024). Transparency and clear reporting of results are also essential for maintaining donor trust and attracting new resources. Open communication strengthens relationships with partners and supporters, ensuring continuous support and highlighting the positive impact of interventions (Mikeladze, 2021). Thus, we can conclude that effective management ensures the sustainability of NGOs, facilitating sustainable growth and long-term impact. Through solid administrative and financial practices, these organizations remain resilient and capable of addressing community needs, contributing to social and economic development. In particular, managing industrial and governmental relations is crucial for creating a favorable operational framework for NGOs. Investing in employee training enhances skills and organizational efficiency, strengthening their ability to respond to challenges and maximize social impact (Chalhoub, 2009). A well-structured management system enables NGOs to continuously monitor and evaluate performance, promptly identify and address potential deficiencies, and optimize resource utilization (Sheu & Wacker, 1994). This integrated management framework ensures continuous oversight of organizational activities, facilitating the early detection of issues and the swift implementation of appropriate solutions. Through systematic performance monitoring and evaluation, organizations can adjust strategies and processes to maximize the efficiency and impact of their interventions. This approach allows NGOs to be more agile and responsive to changes in the external environment, ensuring they remain relevant and effective in fulfilling their mission. In this regard, we can conclude that well-implemented management practices are essential for the efficiency and sustainability of NGOs.

Strategic management, performance measurement, human resource management, and financial management ensure the optimal use of resources and the maximization of impact. These practices strengthen donor and partner trust, enabling organizations to fulfill their mission and drive lasting change in the community.

However, the efficiency of NGOs depends on multiple variables, both internal and external, which can significantly influence their ability to achieve their strategic objectives.

This study aims to evaluate the efficiency of non-governmental organizations through an empirical approach based on the collection and interpretation of qualitative data (N=8). Additionally, the study examines the interactions between organizational structure, decision-making mechanisms, and achieved outcomes, providing insight into the internal dynamics of these organizations.

The relevance of this study lies both in its contribution to the specialized literature on non-governmental organization management and in its practical value, providing useful insights for improving practices in this field. Thus, the research holds dual significance, both theoretical and practical.

2. Research methodology

The information was gathered through eight semi-structured interviews conducted with members of the leadership of the studied organizations. This research method facilitates an in-depth qualitative analysis of the strategies adopted and the challenges faced in managing these entities. To understand public perception regarding the efficiency and challenges faced by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), I conducted a qualitative analysis of the collected interviews. This methodology involved several successive stages, starting with data collection and processing, followed by word frequency analysis, sentiment analysis, and the identification of key themes related to challenges and efficiency.

The data used in this research was collected through structured interviews, with each respondent being asked to answer questions related to their personal experiences with NGOs, the challenges they faced, and their perception of organizational efficiency. The interviews were imported and processed using the R programming language, a tool for statistical and textual data analysis. In this case, specialized natural language processing (NLP) and text analysis packages such as "tm", "quanteda", and "tidytext" were used. These packages enable the processing, organization, and interpretation of text to extract relevant information. During processing, the text was tokenized, meaning it was broken down into smaller units such as words or phrases to facilitate further analysis.

Tokenization is an essential step in natural language processing (NLP) as it enables the identification of term frequency, the construction of semantic models, and sentiment analysis. This transformation of raw data into analyzable components allowed for the identification of key themes in participants responses and the emergence of patterns related to the perception of NGOs. The methodology used for interview analysis, specifically sentiment analysis, involved several distinct stages aimed at highlighting respondents perceptions regarding the challenges and efficiency of NGOs. First, the data was processed from an RTF document using the "read_rtf" package in R to facilitate content processing. Next, filtering and tokenization functions were applied to the responses to extract word frequency and identify key themes related to "challenges" and "efficiency." Term frequency analysis was performed using the "unnest_tokens" function to identify the most frequently mentioned words and to generate visual representations, such as word clouds, that highlight dominant concepts (Figure 1). In the next stage, sentiment analysis was applied using the "tidytext" library to classify terms into positive and negative categories, aiming to understand respondents' attitudes.

3. Findings and Discussion

The obtained results provide a detailed perspective on how these organizations are perceived both internally and externally, highlighting both the challenges they face and the factors that contribute to their efficiency.

3.1 Word frequency analysis

A key initial step in data processing was identifying the frequency of words used by respondents. By tokenizing the text and calculating the frequency of each word, we were able to extract expressions and terms that frequently appeared in participants responses. This process was conducted to identify terms that indicate either challenges or factors contributing to NGO efficiency. High-frequency words (Figure 1) were grouped and analyzed to observe emerging patterns. At the center of attention is the term "community," which suggests a major focus on the impact of organizations within the communities they serve. This term highlights NGOs' ongoing commitment to community development and the active involvement of beneficiaries in social projects.

Words such as "educational," "development," and "education" indicate a clear focus on activities with an educational impact. The interviewed NGO representatives place significant emphasis on initiatives aimed at supporting education and contributing to community development, confirming the crucial role of education in achieving social objectives. The terms "challenges," "difficulties," and "main" indicate the problematic aspects identified by respondents. These words suggest a concern regarding the obstacles faced in carrying out activities, such as financial difficulties, lack of human resources, or communication issues with partners and the community.

The frequent mentions of the words "branch" and "members" suggest a complex organizational structure, in which various local branches contribute to the implementation of NGOs' overall strategies. This highlights a continuous need for coordination and collaboration across organizational levels.

Furthermore, this emphasizes the balance between educational and community activities, as confirmed by regression analysis, along with the challenges encountered and the necessity for national-level coordination.

The identified challenges are primarily related to available resources and the need to strengthen community relationships. At the same time, the overall perspective remains focused on efficiency and the importance of NGO activities in the development of civil society.

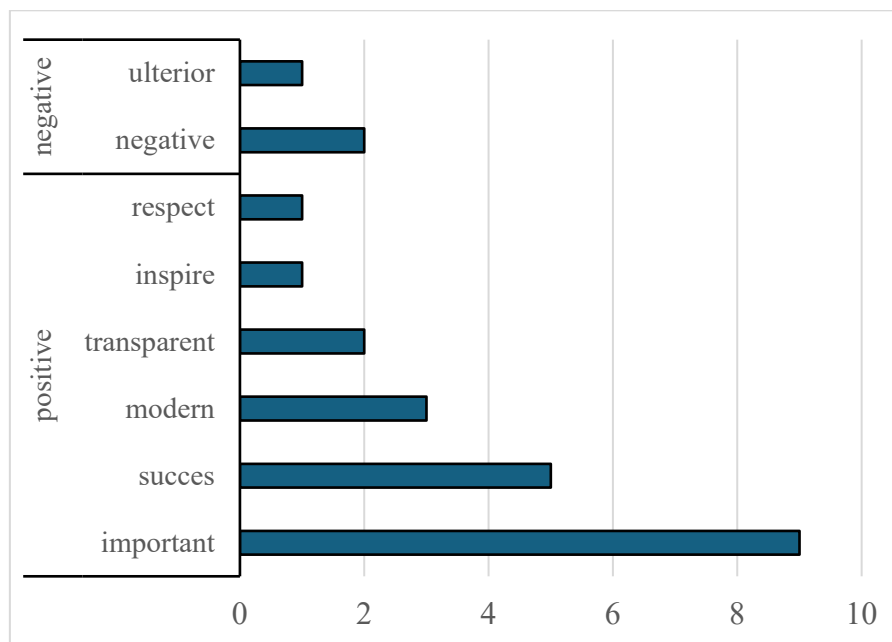


Figure 2. Results of Respondents' Sentiment Analysis

Source: author interpretation

The presence of the term "transparent" (mentioned twice) reflects an appreciation for the openness and clarity of internal processes within these organizations, which helps build public trust in their activities.

Additionally, the words "inspire" and "respect," although appearing only once each, indicate positive values associated with NGOs, such as the inspiration they provide to the community and the respect for diversity and partnerships.

Regarding negative sentiments, two words appear: "negative" (mentioned twice) and "ulterior" (mentioned once).

The term "negative" suggests the existence of challenges or difficulties faced by NGOs, possibly related to financial resources, project implementation, or collaboration with authorities.

The word "ulterior" may reflect uncertainties regarding the future of organizations or the long-term sustainability of the projects they implement.

Respondents' perception of NGO efficiency and necessity is predominantly positive, with a strong emphasis on the importance, success, and modernity of their activities. The identified challenges do not significantly affect the overall perception of the positive impact these organizations have on the community.

3.3 Identification of challenges and efficiency factors

The challenges and factors contributing to NGO efficiency (Figure 3) support the themes mentioned by respondents. It is observed that the terms associated

with NGO efficiency are predominantly positive, focusing on aspects such as community, education, and projects.

On the other hand, the identified challenges are mainly related to financial resources, operational difficulties, and project implementation.

Regarding NGO efficiency, the word "community" has the highest frequency (65), aligning with the previously presented data (Figure 1). This suggests that the positive impact on the community is perceived as essential for organizational activities, with NGOs playing a crucial role in strengthening social cohesion and developing community initiatives.

Additionally, the terms "education" (31) and "projects" (32) appear frequently, indicating that respondents consider education and project development as crucial factors in increasing NGO efficiency. Other relevant terms include "development" (23), "impact" (22), and "beneficiaries" (17), reflecting a clear focus on the tangible benefits that NGOs bring to their communities. Regarding the challenges faced by NGOs, the term "challenges" appears with a frequency of 40, indicating that difficulties are perceived as a significant aspect of organizational activities.

Among the main obstacles identified are "implementation" (22) and "difficulties" (10), indicating that project execution often encounters challenges—a common issue in these types of organizations. This is largely justified by poor communication of organizational strategies and objectives.

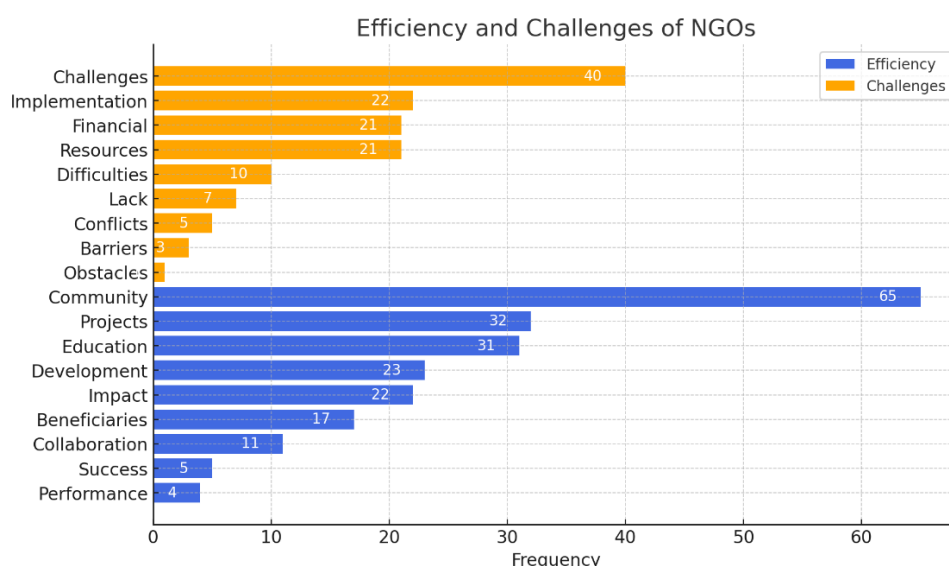


Figure 3. Distribution of perspectives on NGO challenges and efficiency

Source: author interpretation

Additionally, the terms "resources" (21) and "financial" (21) suggest that challenges related to access to financial resources represent a major constraint for these organizations.

Moreover, "lack" (7) and "conflicts" (5) further complete the list of identified obstacles, indicating both limitations in material resources and difficulties in managing internal or external relationships.

NGOs are perceived as being efficient in the communities they serve due to their educational activities, projects, and direct involvement in community life. However, to maintain and enhance this efficiency, they must find solutions to overcome challenges related to project implementation and securing the necessary financial resources. Therefore, developing effective strategies for securing funding and improving implementation processes should be a priority.

4. Conclusions

The efficiency of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is influenced by various internal and external factors that determine their success or failure in achieving their set objectives.

Merely being aware of strategic directions does not guarantee efficiency if there are no well-established mechanisms for their implementation. Additionally, financial resources and the capital of an organization have a direct impact on the sustainability of projects, and NGOs with diversified funding sources are more likely to overcome operational obstacles. Despite the advantages NGOs can gain from a well-defined strategy and a well-trained team, they face numerous challenges that affect operational efficiency.

Among the main obstacles are financial difficulties and lack of resources, which limit organizations' ability to implement impactful projects. The lack of necessary funds forces NGOs to rely on external funding sources, which are not always constant or predictable.

Additionally, the process of strategy implementation proves to be a major challenge, as NGOs often encounter bureaucratic obstacles, lack of coordination among team members, or difficulties in achieving the set objectives. Another critical aspect is recruitment and retention of active members, as many organizations face difficulties in maintaining a stable core group of engaged individuals. This affects the continuity and efficiency of activities, especially in organizations that heavily rely on volunteer work.

Additionally, previous experience in similar organizations is a major advantage, as it facilitates understanding the specific challenges of the non-governmental sector and allows for quicker adaptation to the organization's requirements.

Last but not least, communication and collaboration skills are essential, as the success of an organization largely depends on its members' ability to work as a team and effectively coordinate activities.

The results of this research can be used to improve the recruitment process for NGO members and ensure better alignment between the organization's needs and the skills of newcomers. Developing recruitment strategies that target individuals with an appropriate educational and professional profile can help form a stable and

efficient team. Additionally, developing training programs for new members can facilitate their integration into the organization's activities and enhance the necessary skills. Moreover, establishing clear selection and integration criteria for members would allow for better human resource management and ensure the continuity of activities. By implementing these measures, NGOs could optimize their efficiency and maximize their impact in the communities they serve.

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