The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Defending Human Rights and Their Impact on International Policymaking: A Grounded Theory Approach

Abstract

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have gained a greater prominence and weight in defending human rights or rather affecting international politics. However, the understanding of why some NGOs are comparatively more effective than others, remains largely unaddressed. This study seeks to define these significant factors utilising Grounded Theory technique as developed by Corbin & Strauss. Through a qualitative methodology, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 participants including human rights practitioners, NGO actors and policymakers in Iran. Owing to the specific nature of population in this area, respondents were recruited using snowball sampling and the process of interviewing was continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Our analysis uncovered several key factors that influence NGO effectiveness in defending human rights. These include seven causal factors, such as lack of resources and regulatory challenges, as well as eight intervening factors, including stakeholder engagement and political climate. Furthermore, seven strategies were identified, including coalition-building and leveraging digital technologies, which NGOs can employ to enhance their impact. The results contribute to existing knowledge by offering a comprehensive model of how NGOs can navigate challenges in the human rights space and improve their role in shaping international policy. This study imparts useful knowledge about the techniques which the NGOs can adopt to be more efficient in carrying out human rights activities and this bears practical significance for both the practitioners and policy-makers. The analysis of these factors helps to determine the directions of further work regarding the strengthening of the ability of Non-Governmental Organisations to engage with the strategies of global human rights discourses.

Keywords: Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Human Rights , International Policymaking, Grounded Theory

1. Introduction

An organization that is mostly volunteer, non-profit, and organized at the local, national, or international level and that is active on a local, national, or international level is known as a non-governmental organization (NGO). Because of the ambiguity created by this negative term, other authors have proposed alternative titles. What is specifically international or governmental is not made clear by the title. Despite the usage of several titles, no other title has become widely recognized. The phrase "transnational non-governmental organization" is becoming more and

more common in the US (Dar, 2015). An NGO's credibility is significantly impacted by its independence. NGOs find it difficult to remain independent of the government. Sometimes, individual governments create NGOs that support their policies in an attempt to sway the NGO community in that sector. The fact that government-organized NGOs are frequently referred to by their abbreviation, GONGO, is evidence of this. Furthermore, NGOs may find it extremely difficult to work freely in more authoritarian nations, and even when they can, they might not get recognition from other political players (Mostashari, 2005).

It is possible to argue that the last ten or so years have been the "golden era of INGOs" due to the extraordinary expansion in both the quantity and variety of third sector organizations worldwide. Ten to fifteen percent of the money raised by OECD members for development aid was directed to Northern NGOs in the late 1980s. By 1991, practically all bilateral and multilateral donor agencies had permanent divisions set up to serve as liaisons with development INGOs, and some bilateral donors channeled 25% of their official development support through INGOs (Boli & Thomas, 1999). INGOs outnumbered all other forms of development organizations by far in 1995, when over 2,500 of them claimed to be promoting greater funding for international development or running development projects in low-income nations (Boli & Thomas, 1999). The NGO Working Group on UN-NGO Relations, which was established in the middle of 2009, promotes an amicable and transparent collaboration between NGOs and the UN. The group talks about things including physical access to the Headquarters building, NGO participation in UN meetings and conferences, and the accreditation procedure. It stays in touch with other concerned NGOs throughout the globe as well as a comparable group in Geneva.

With the exception of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, NGOs currently provide more formal development aid than the whole U.N. system (Mathews, 1997). Social scientists are becoming more interested in the growing role that NGOs are playing in human rights, gender justice, environmental conservation, and other areas. According to Mary Kaldor, NGOs dominated international civil society in the 1990s and altered accepted wisdom on humanitarian action and human rights. NGOs, which have enormous influence, are crucial for post-conflict rehabilitation (Kaldor, 2003). However, some NGOs have the power to overthrow governments, and other NGOs push for nation-states to alter their conduct (Finger, 2013).

NGOs are essential in influencing policy choices, standing in as a bridge between the people and the government, and promoting social justice. NGOs come in a variety of forms, from environmental advocacy groups to human rights organizations, and they may have a wide range of effects on political change. NGOs frequently play a crucial role in facilitating citizen engagement in politics and promoting an inclusive and adaptable system of government. NGOs

support the democratization of political institutions by amplifying the voices of underprivileged people via community mobilization and advocacy (Banks et al., 2013). By fostering a more dynamic and representative democracy, this participation role highlights the importance of NGO operations and enhances the connection between civil society and political reform. NGOs advocate for more significant political and policy changes than only local concerns. For instance, the international human rights organization Amnesty International has played a significant role in influencing global policy and increasing public awareness of problems like discrimination and torture (Keck, 1998). This illustrates how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may impact worldwide political change and global standards through their lobbying campaigns. NGOs are essential in ensuring that governments are held responsible for their deeds. NGOs scrutinize political processes and policies to guarantee openness and respect to human rights norms. They accomplish this by means of monitoring and reporting procedures. By strengthening the checks and balances found in political systems, NGOs' accountability role helps to create an atmosphere that is favorable to constructive political reform. NGOs not only have a direct impact on governance systems, but they also frequently act as channels for information sharing and community capacity building. NGOs help to create an informed and politically active public, which is necessary to bring about significant political change, by empowering individuals and disseminating knowledge (Gideon & Porter, 2016). The role that NGOs play in education highlights the wider social influence that NGOs have on the political scene. Cross-pollination of ideas and resources is facilitated by NGOs' collaborative character, which frequently involves them working in alliances with governments, other NGOs, and international organizations. When tackling complicated political issues, this cooperative strategy improves the efficacy of NGO solutions (Clark, 1991). As NGOs navigate a variety of political environments, their adaptation and resilience are reflected in the interconnection that these relationships produce (King, 2023). International human rights are universal legal and normative principles designed to protect individuals against inhuman, degrading, and unfair treatment or abuse irrespective of membership, race, gender, or religion. Such rights are found in international documents and treaties, the most important being the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) approved by the United Nations on December 10, 1948. The idea of human rights has changed and developed over the years: now its scope sounds broader and includes many civil and political liberties like freedom of expression and right to fair trial as well as basic economic, social and cultural rights such as the right to education, health, and decent living conditions. Those rights have always to be promoted and protected since they are viewed as critical to international peace and justice, and sustainable development (Şener, 2021; Rahman, 2020). Nevertheless, even with

the recognition of human dignity, there are plenty of areas where disrespect for human rights prevails, especially by the state, capital, and non-state actors. The United Nations, regional courts with human rights jurisdiction, or other treaties assist in protecting these rights through supervision, enforcement, instant response and promotion. Still, the practice of these measures is largely contingent upon the desire of the countries involved and on the collective demand from local and global societies in maintaining human rights practices (Flores-Macías & Zarkin, 2024; Mahoney & Mahoney, 2023). NGOs are highly prominent defenders of human rights by promoting disadvantaged communities, publicizing human rights abuse activities, or rendering authority accountable. These bodies function to propagate, resist or fulfill human rights including within and outside the country (Chandler, 2001). Such organizations as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch, among many others, have succeeded in capturing the world's attention to the violations of rights and fundamental freedoms and in calling for regime change in repressive countries to ensure justice for the victims of these countries. Their activities mostly revolve around obtaining information through human rights techniques, meeting the growing needs of the international justice and human rights movement, preparing and publishing papers, and seeking human rights violators, especially institutions like the United Nations (Thoolen & Verstappen, 2021).

Besides advocacy and on-the-ground campaigns, NGOs play a crucial role in the shaping of policies at the international level. NGOs engage at the country level by attending international meetings, helping in the formulization of treaties, and uniting with other stakeholders in the quest for change that fits within the human rights ideology. In such circumstances, they act as a link between those who have suffered from particular aspects of human rights abuses and the people who are in a position of power, and in so doing, they help give publicity to the needs of the oppressed so that these issues are not ignored in the governance of the country. They also help refine the language of the law, the guidelines and the policies on the particularly sensitive subject of human rights at the international level, sometimes advocating for the adoption of actions and policies that are more extreme than the rest. Despite various studies observing the efforts made by NGOs, to ensure human rights are respected and policies are implemented at different levels, few studies have focused on why these efforts work. This research gap leaves unanswered questions about how NGOs manage the bitter battles of international politics, as well where and what kinds of strategies do these NGOs employ to make the most out of the current policies on global human rights issues. Lack of proper strategies that take into consideration the above dynamics explains to an extent why such institutions fail to achieve their operational appetites, policymaking influence included. In line with this objective, this paper claims that it utilizes

Grounded Theory in addressing this gap by created theoretical model from the data. It will also be effective at generating theories because its design permits biasing of the observations so as to identify suggestive relevant patterns and relationships. For this reason, if this study investigates the cases of NGOs, their policies and strategies and the obstacles they face, this study will be a success in adding to the knowledge on right defense by NGOs and the international politics of policy formulation.

2. Literature Review

Traditionally, the authority to make laws has rested with sovereign nations, who use international treaties to legally legitimize standards (Abbott et al, 2000). Formal codification procedures produced the main human rights and humanitarian law accords. However, official legislative attempts have not been very effective in the last few decades (Pauwelyn et al, 2014). All things considered, international law is frequently portrayed as being in a crisis in a number of different topic areas (Lesch and Marxsen 2023). Simultaneously, the conventional, consensus-based method to lawmaking has become less prevalent (Krisch 2014). According to research on the subject, judicial institutions—at least those that are officially recognized as such—make laws through the rulings, decisions, and advisory opinions they render (von Bogdandy and Venzke, 2012). This is particularly true when those rulings establish standards for the implementation and advancement of international law. However, the concept of lawmaking in this literature still rests on a legal mandate and established lines of delegation. Furthermore, without a clear mandate, legal experts have shown the increasing impact of non-formal law-making methods (Brölmann & Radi 2016; Lesch & Reiners, 2023).

NGOs and other non-state players are becoming more and more significant in both domestic and global affairs. Political science and legal study have often examined their responsibilities (Yanacopulos 2015). International NGOs (INGOs) have been described as norm advocates in international politics, vital in keeping national governments responsible for a range of policy areas (Keck and Sikkink 1998). INGOs can do this by focusing on particular nations as well as by actively campaigning in international forums and organizations (Tallberg et al. 2018). INGOs alert foreign governments to environmental, international humanitarian law, or human rights issues by obtaining information and engaging in "information politics"—often in conjunction with regional NGOs operating locally. Based on research, it appears that INGOs choose their targets and lobbying tactics carefully, suggesting that their actions might not be all that unlike from those of other interest groups. In this way, INGOs are strategic players in policymaking even if they have normative objectives (Buntinx & Colli, 2022).

Governments employ a range of strategies, directives, and programs to affect the identities, attitudes, and actions of individuals and social groups (Walker, 2010). Regarding this, Foucault (1982, p. 790) claims that the term "government" refers not just to political systems or state administration but also to the mechanisms that may be used to control the conduct of individuals or groups, such as the governance of sick people, children, souls, and communities. To restrict the possible realm in which others might act is, in this sense, to dominate. Common governance strategies, grounded in the panopticon principle, are employed by governments to enforce compliance and subordination among individuals and groups. According to Foucault (1991, p. 187), disciplinary authority, on the other hand, is exerted by its invisibility; at the same time it imposes a principle of forced visibility on those it subjects. Previously, the subjects of power may remain in the shadows (for example, imprisoned in dark dungeons). Therefore, the visibility principle that directs regulatory mechanisms of the government might be viewed as a trap (Foucault, 1991). Based on the panopticon principle, the government can utilize surveillance techniques to impose disciplinary measures since they make the actions of individuals and groups visible, observable, and analyzed. They also provide the impression that individuals are always under observation, even when this isn't the case. According to Foucault (1991), the primary impact of the panopticon is to create in the prisoner a condition of constant and conscious visibility that ensures the automatic operation of power, while the perfection of power should tend to make its actual exercise superfluous. A single sight may observe everything continually without necessarily being noticed thanks to this nearly flawless disciplinary machinery (Foucault, 1991). NGOs frequently get substantial sums of money from foreign donors, which they employ to carry out public functions, promote democracy, and combat human rights abuses and corruption. While governments typically applaud assistance and NGOs' efforts to improve population well-being, they also see a danger from NGOs' potential to impede sovereignty and indiscriminately expose and condemn wrongdoing (Dupuy et al., 2016). According to Clark (1995), governments are not fond of non-governmental organizations' (NGOs') actions that contest their policies or strengthen particular groups, including political rivals. While hybrid or democratizing regimes frequently allow freedom of expression and association while finding other, more subtle methods to limit the breadth and size of independent groups, completely authoritarian governments frequently overtly persecute independent NGOs, as seen by the global trend of government limitations on receiving and utilizing foreign funds (mainly, cash originating from the US and Western Europe) by local NGOs in Africa, Asia, South America as well aspost-Soviet republics (Christensen & Weinstein, 2013). The dilemma faced by economically strapped governments willing to repress non-governmental groups by punitive measures may be linked to

their desire to maintain political power and independence. Foreign aid may provide novel perspectives and approaches, such as promoting democratic values, civil society, and liberal principles, which might be in opposition to the sociocultural, political-economic, and institutional frameworks that are now in place. They usually perceive it as supporting opposition political parties and a threat to their authority (Goncharenko & Khadaroo, 2020).

In summary, the role of NGOs has appropriated several faces and critical with respect to the advocacy and protection of human rights, and new tactics will be employed in Rolston's declaration of these concepts. Here, technology is important – it can be used to take the human rights violations that need to be addressed and show them live at the very moment they are happening. Non-Governmental Organizations have presented the change in the traffic of information about protection of human rights with the help of social networks therefore any information can reach any corner of the world within a few seconds, which has drastically reduced the space for oppressive regimes to hide the wrongs. The capability to track and report human rights abuses through live streaming, posting reports on the internet and monitoring key data points has helped consolidate and mobilize adequate resources needed to counter human rights abuse. Organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have used new technologies in their favor and extended their grasp on subjects which conventional cherishes do not pay any attention to.

Another important innovation that falls within the defense of human rights of the NGOs is their operability within the international law. Occasionally, they act as a bridge between local victims of misconduct and the international courts like the ICC, or relevant regional courts that hear human rights cases. They assist these victims in negotiating the foreign legal systems, instituting cases and preparing the relevant paperwork for superior justice. By creating networks of legal practitioners and activists, NGOs help address the prosecution of war criminals, genocidal leaders, and other offenders of surpassing crimes against civilization. In addition, they take part in "strategic litigation" which simply means that certain types of important litigation are undertaken in order to change legal practices all over the world for better protection of human rights. This pre-emptive approach to the law has been productive in terms of addressing illegitimate statutes and demanding accountability from the state. Moreover, many of the NGOs are impacting the way human rights are protected through community participation. Instead of acting as the voice of the victims, many of the NGOs have moved to the fields and are able to empower the people to fight for their own rights. These groups emphasize strengthening the capacity of local populations through education on human rights and making it easier or creating mechanisms for citizens to actively fight for justice. They also help focus on specialised support

towards the movement to help combat physical harm. The dangers targeted towards human rights defenders like facilitators and advocates should also be greatly reduced. Besides direct lobbying and litigation, they are also becoming specialists in public policy through partnerships and discussion with governments and intergovernmental organizations. Many of them have moved from a purely confrontational approach to one where they engage relevant authorities in order to help draft laws that comply with the tenets of international human rights. Rather than waiting for law to be passed and attempting to ensure that the relevant authorities comply with it, NGOs use advocacy such as lobbying to affect legislation at the formulation stages where more favorable positions on rights can be created. Other instances include how NGOs such as Transparency International engage governments to formulate anti corruption laws where enforcement of the laws will enhance other human rights by improving access to public services. Finally, innovation of non-governmental organizations in the sphere of human rights protection can be attributed to the growing impact of storytelling on NGOs. The focus is on moving from a conventional approach, which is based on reports to a more story-oriented one whereby personal accounts are the centerpiece. These accounts help to bring the human rights issue into perspective and help mobilise emotions and help in Urging for Real World Change. This type of advocacy has been very effective in rallying the stakeholders' attention, influencing the global narrative on the subject, as well as advocating for certain actions to be taken by those in power. Thus changing the ways in which the stories are told and shifting the focus to the people behind the stories, the NGOs can create a stronger global movement for human rights.

3. Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature and carried out within the framework of Grounded Theory as it was proposed by Corbin and Strauss (1990). The aim is to find out the particular features of NGOs that enable them to undertake effective human rights advocacy and monitor and influence international policies. Grounded Theory allows for the generation of theory directly from data, making it an appropriate methodology for this study, which seeks to understand complex processes and interactions in real-world settings.

Research Question

This study is seeking to answer this question: What factors contribute to the effectiveness of activity of the NGOs in the area of human rights protection and participating in international policy-making? This question is examined through various means including interviews with relevant stakeholders on the subject of human rights and NGO's activities.

Sampling and Data Collection

We used a snowball method of sampling to select the participants for the study as it was important to get a wide array of human rights, NGO, and policy views. This method was utilized this method because of the sensitive and somewhat small population of the specialists. A total of 18 semi-structured in-depth interviews were administered to participants until theoretical saturation was attained such that there were no new emerging concepts from the data collected.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using the three-step coding process of Grounded Theory: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. This process allowed them to examine repetitively occurring elements and relations and helped in providing an explanatory theoretical framework in regard to the factors behind NGOs performance in human rights advocacy and policy making.

Open Coding: In the first step, open coding, for instance, the raw data from the interviews were broken down into discrete parts that are examined sentence by sentence and phrase by phrase so as to search for relevant such concepts and categories. At this stage, we generated codes that focused on advocacy strategies, legal aspect, international cooperation and many others.

Axial Coding: In axial coding, categorization was extended to building integrations or interconnections between the specific categories identified in the open coding. In this step, reorganizing of the data was done in any new way to recognize how certain factors connect, for instance, the influences of funding structures on advocacy efforts or the roles of international organizations on the surrounding policy initiatives.

Selective Coding: As has already been stated, selective coding represents the last step in the analytic process after open and axial coding. In this stage, we focused on the main theme that emerged from the analysis: the multifaceted role of NGOs as linking organizations between the sub-state level human rights advocacy and the formal international policy process. This stage of coding resulted into the development of the core theory which indicates the uses for which global NGOs have adopted a strategic, collaborative, and flexible approach to the promotion of human rights.

Trustworthiness of Data

To ensure the reliability and validity of our findings, we employed triangulation by cross-verifying the data from different sources, including policy documents and existing literature.Analysis of preliminary findings shared with one of the subsets of participants as a means of member checking was performed as well.

4. Results

In this section, we outline the results of the research using Grounded Theory, which, as we have mentioned, pertains to the analysis of the interviews. The objective was to highlight the enablers that increase the effectiveness of the activities of the NGOs in human rights defense and international law influence. The coding process brought out two core phenomena, seven causal, and eight intervening factors. These factors provide information concerning the various roles that NGOs undertake, the barriers that hinder them, and the approaches that they follow to maintain the efficiency of their advocacy activities. Explanations are provided for all the factors listed and evidence from the interview data are provided to support the claims.

Table 1: Factors related to Core Phenomena

Core Phenomena

Strategic Adaptability NGOs have to remain strategically adaptable if they are to continue being effective in the protection of human rights as well as international policymaking . This refers to being able to adapt to the new dynamics on the political, social and legal scenes. In this respect, it is helpful, when organizations show flexibility, since such an orientation will in most cases help them to achieve objectives even in the tougher external environments.

Of one of the respondents it was said: "*The most successful NGOs are those who do not have a well laid out business plan. They have to change their plans according to new rules or international trend changes*".

Another expert said: "*Life has made us resilient and for this reason, we have been able to adapt to different circumstances in our advocacy even when governments see it necessary to control us*".

Collaborative Networks The effectiveness of NGOs is very dependent on building up and maintaining strong collaborative networks that will help the NGOs enhance their voices and resources. These networks include linkages with other NGOs, governments, international organizations and grassroots. With the aid of cooperation, the NGOs can utilize the available resources and also disseminate more information concerning human rights by lobbying jointly.

In the opinion of one interviewee, "*We have seen that coming together with local and foreign organizations, the potential to advocate for the policy changes has improved significantly*."

In a similar vein, one more participant remarked, "*The idea of uniting different stakeholders, collaborating and joining forces improves our chances because we become harder to ignore*."

Table 2: Causal Factors

Causal Factors

Access to Funding Funding is one of the most crucial factors if not the most crucial factor, for the success and sustainability of even the most effective NGO activities. A persistent shortage of funds makes the launching of campaigns, conducting of research, or any presence in international fora impossible for NGOs.

One leader from Among NGOs said that '*most funding is pinning down ideas.*' '*Securing funds is half the battle. We can have all the ideas in the world, but without the money to back them, we're stuck.*'

Another volunteered, "*Human rights campaigns 'worked to the greatest extent' when active financial support was available. It enabled us to engage in international conversations.*'

Policy Advocacy Expertise Most NGOs need to possess the capacity in policy advocacy as one of the strategies to interact with global policy makers. Such knowledge entails understanding how laws are made, which documents are likely to be persuasive, and how to persuade the right people.

As one participant explained, "*This is important because it is necessary to understand how the policies are formed at the international level. We've learned to identify the areas for which we can put effort and influence redress.*"

Another added, "*Policy decisions are most influenced by those particular NGOs that have an extensive advocacy outreach. If one lacks that skill, it's easy to be sidelined.*"

Legitimacy and Credibility The public and the policymakers need to be their sources of legitimacy and credibility for the NGOs as well. This factor has to do with the how people yawn the reputation of an NGO, this is mostly based on their transparency, accountability and how many successful interventions they have done.

One respondent noted, "*Building credibility is a long process usually undertaken but it is very much needed. If they don't have confidence in us and believe we are genuine in our concerns, there is no way that policy makers will listen to us.*"

Another mentioned, "*The credibility that cut across the borders was earned after consistent reporting of activities and the outcome of those activities over a period.*"

Legal Framework Navigation It is important for the NGOs to know how to utilize the different local and international legal systems in order to avoid any hindrances in their operations and to increase their participation in policy making. The NGOs who are either able to conform to the legal criteria or fight against it are likely to be effective.

One participant commented, "*We invest a lot of resources in ensuring compliance to domestic and international law as this makes our work run smoothly without interruptions.*"

Another said "*In different countries, we are given a chance to take into consideration the legal aspects of how to position our human rights messages within the legal system.*"

Public Awareness Campaigns Raising public awareness is an important aspect as far as the functioning of the NGOs is concerned. Because policymakers are often subject to the public's influence especially in democratic types of governance, it becomes necessary for NGOs to create awareness of human rights issues to put pressure on policy makers.

One interviewee explained, "*The goal of such campaigns is help the public to understand issues that are pertinent therefore creating a scenario whereby the public demands an explanation/action. It is this public kinship that then sways the policies undertaken in the relevant government arms.*"

Another said, "*There was a real change in policy as a result of the initiative to run an awareness campaign aimed at the general public and which received extensive media coverage.*"

International Alliances Senior officials are aware that collaboration with international entities (UN, EU, other multicultural organization) gives additional power and mechanisms to NGOs while pursuing their causes.

One respondent stated that "*The engagement with international organizations provides us with an opportunity and authenticity we require to advocate for change.*"

Another shared that "*The cooperation with foreign partners has led us to engage leading political figures for conversation like never before.*"

Technological Tools The campaigns of NGOs are usually targeted towards many countries. This justifies the extensive use of information and communications technologies, in particular the Internet, and, especially social networks, as an effective tool for humanitarian action.

As one respondent paraphrased, "*Social media has helped us to at least claim to penetrate much deeper and perhaps that should not be overlooked in the current state of affairs policy.*"

Another shared that "*Technology makes it easier for us to work and collaborate all around the world.*"

Table 3: Intervening Factors

Intervening Factors

Political Environment There is always an effect on the execution of activities by NGOs depending on the level of threats in a country or region. In restrictive areas, NGOs are under duress, while less constrained regions provide more chances of operation.

One participant shared, "*It is quite hard working in countries that have authoritarian political regimes, as such our activities are restricted.*"

Another explained: "*Because in more democratic countries, we perceive more possibilities to work and to have better chances to affect the policy.*"

Media Representation Media images and reporting of human rights can either affect the work or promote the effectiveness of NGOs. When the media reports favorably on the NGOs, they benefit as their message is disseminated but tha is not the case with negative reporting.

One interviewee noted: "*Positive takes from the media can be very helpful, because they can superimpose on our efforts, enhancing the work we do, further to making it visible.*"

Another stated that: "*We've had to be very careful about how we present our work to the media because it is very easy to destroy our credibility by incorrect portrayal of our work.*"

Cultural Context Cultural differences can cut either the other way, that is, help, increase the efficiency of, or prevent the realization of NGO goals. There are cases where cultural practices may cut across the promotion of human rights, thus limiting the impact of NGOs.

An expert said, "*I've come to understand that in certain countries, there is, for all intents and purposes, a cultural block against attempts to pursue human rights, which we have had to circumvent quite intelligently.*"

Another added, "*Knowing the culture helps us frame the message and advocacy in such a way that it's more acceptable to the people*."

Global Bureaucratic Hurdles Most NGOs experience management issues that hamper their effectiveness and increase the time taken to complete tasks. These are registration delays, delays in receiving funding approval, or delay in getting construction permits.

According to one interviewee, "*The bureaucratic systems that we have to contend with are very annoying, I must say. It makes the implementation of our programs take ages, or in some cases, never*."

Another stated, "*On the stress, I believe that reducing the burden of these procedures would greatly improve our response capacity with regard to violations of Human Rights*."

Economic Stability Another variable in determining the effectiveness of NGOs focused in a country is the economy. In an economy that enjoys stability, there are more resources within the reach of the NGO's, while in the process of an economy that is struggling the NGO's have to encounter a deficit in funding.

One participant pointed out that "*in such countries, especially where there are economic crises, it becomes very difficult for us to get the funding necessary for good operations on our part*."

Another added, stating, "*It is only in an environment in which there is economic stability that we can engage more in advocacy work and not be preoccupied with ensuring that we raise funds*."

Government-NGO Relations The interaction of the government and non-governmental organizations can range from a healthy partnership to a total animosity, which in some situations excludes the possibility of those NGOs contributing to any policy change.

One respondent shared, "*At times, in some regions, we do collaborate with the government and so am in a position to affect policies more*."

Another explained, "*Wherein, we are deemed as a threat by the authorities, we often get our efforts nullified which makes our job a whole lot harder than it ought to be*."

Donor Influence In most of the cases donor funded NGOs become the victims of 'donor dictated activities' which has an impact on the posture of the institution so that its work in the area of advancement of human rights becomes ineffective.

One of the participants said, "*There are circumstances where we are forced to adapt our campaigns in order to be able to raise the funding, which goes against the principles we set out to achieve in the first pla*ce."

Another explained, "*That's the problem with donor funding, that's great but at the same time it reaches its limits as it is attached with conditions which shackle us*."

Legal Limits Legal restrictions also include barriers like prohibitive laws governing the work of NGOs with certain countries. In these cases, there are constraints on the activities of NGOs which inhibits them from campaigning or going for relevant items.

One respondent indicated, "*The other challenge we are facing is the legal restrictions. That has been a big constraint. We were any even engaged in illegal activities cause we had to shelter some of the people we helped. That was necessary for them*."

One other said, "*A great deal of time is wasted on compliance with legal limitations on our activity which takes away our attention from the primary purpose of our organization which is human rights protection*."

Table 4: Strategies

Strategies (Mechanisms)

Capacity Building Programs Creative ability of NGOs can be enhanced by implementing capacity building programs for the employees and volunteers so that they are skilled in all of the necessary areas of advocacy, legal knowledge and policy making capacity. This involves advanced training for example in international law, lobbying, and communication skills.

One of the answers. "*In policy dialogues, those capacity-building efforts have been used to better reach out, persuade and argue with policymakers*."

As another participant put it, "*Our policy influencing skills improved quite dramatically when we began focusing on training staff in legislative and advocacy methods and strategies*."

Utilization of Digital Advocacy tools Availability of various digital platforms such as social media, online petitions, and participation in data analytics to reach out to supporters and apply pressure on nations and institutions has seen a rise in the use of these tools by NGOs.

One interviewee noted, "*This is how we utilize social media to spread our message within hours to thousands of supporters thus generating public interest in critical human rights matters*."

Another commented, "*The change in Digital advocacy is how we do things now. It's more efficient and cheaper to send out our message and bring policymakers on board*."

Coalition Building Some other non-governmental organizations, social movements, and supranational institutions build coalitions with an NGO, thereby benefiting the latter in resource mobilization, knowledge exchanges, and even human rights advocacy.

In the words of one participant, "*We have been able to politically outwit coalition building agencies with several such organizations as Fletcher's and that has enabled us to undertake sustainable and bigger campaigns.*"

Another noted, "*Most of the reasons why we were able to promote and pass laws on human rights were largely because of the strength of the coalition we had formed and the many people who forms part of it*."

Strategic Litigation Some of the activities that NGOs can undertake are strategic litigation, lawsuits looking at the legality of a government or other actors' actions with respect to an issue in human rights law, such litigation often aims at creating legal precedents for improving policies.

One interviewee remarked, "*Suing governments is a powerful tactic for us to achieve system change. The decisions made in court invariably numerous times lead to actions from the political actors*."

Another added, "*Litigation in politics enables us to combat oppressive legislation from the root and makes the state more thoughtful about certain practices*."

Localized Advocacy Models Altering advocacy strategies to particular local environments can assist the NGOs in enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of their campaigns. Modifying strategies in accordance with geographic factors and social attitudes enhances effectiveness for their causes.

As one respondent explained, '*Local advocacy enables us to speak about human rights issues in a way that addresses the challenges of the community in question.*'

Another participant noted, '*When we utilize our strategies with respect to the situations of the country and culture, there is generally a very high response to the public and the policymakers.*'

Grassroots Mobilization Non Governmental organizations can increase their leverage with the simproval of non governmental organization through instigating the locals to say no to violations through fighting for their rights. This approach facilitates change from the lowest hierarchy.

One interviewee said: "*We have been able to create a movement based on the local communities quite effectively by letting the local people defend themselves*."

Another added: "*It's what ensures sustainability of our campaigns and resources at the heart of the communities we hope to protect*."

International Media Campaigns Helping international media to cover the issues of human rights abuse can be another sphere of activity for the NGOs and can help increase their advocacy. The press coverage of the issues can lead to governments trying to do something about those issues, or at least utilising the power of the press to threaten action.

One participant noted, "*The story drew the attention of the international media and as a result a great deal of pressure was exerted on the local authorities to address the human rights violations we had been highlighting*."

Another respondent shared, "*We've done a corporal work that is working together with international media such any global media size fits the politicians' movements*."

Table 5: Contextual Factors

Context (Contextual Factors)

Political Will The political context of a nation comprising the readiness or reluctance of a person in power to work with the human rights advocates in the context of advocation has a greater impact on effectiveness.

One interviewee stated, "*Our success depends largely on the political will of the government. In countries where the government is more willing to engage in dialogue, there is more progress*."

Another added - "*In politically inappropriate situations, we have received such an obstruction, that their activities have been limited and one has to invent the how, under the conflict, weave them into the order of the government*."

Socioeconomic Stability The socioeconomic status of a country such as inequality or the provision of social amenities also affect the ability of the otganisations to garner resource and support for human rights advocacy action.

One respondent shared - "*We were forced to rely on correspondent's funds too much. It is especially difficult in those countries, where one is operating for the very first time and when the economic conditions are very good, to justify this or other outlay*."

Another participant noted, "*Support for more general human rights appeals is more difficult to enlist when the average person is struggling for all of his or her most basic needs*."

International Diplomatic Relations The country regarded as the case study and the international society whether those entities are or are not able to make the proverbial dent on policy or not. Good foreign relations tended to provide more room for hairier people oeprating within the curling dolor allocating realms.

One expert said, '*When our government-friendly to other countries, it is quite simple to operate under international parameters and attempt to make the necessary changes regarding the respect of human rights*.'

Another commented, '*In cases when there is no diplomatic conflict, tension has developed between our advocacy and both the local's and even the outer politics attention to it*.'

Cultural Norms and Values The cultural environment especially the perspectives of human rights that the local publics hold frames the strategies of the campaigns of the NGOs as well as determines their acceptance.

One respondent noted, '*In certain areas where cultural values are opposed to the perspectives of human rights, we have had to really tread carefully on the campaigns we have put up.*'

Another stated, '*It has been rather successful to convince the local population to support our campaigns. Addressing local cultural patterns has been the reason behind it.*'

Legal Constraints Because of NGO Laws such provisions as limitations in funding, activities and free speech, governing the operations of non-governmental organizations in most countries highly influences the policies and practices of such organizations.

One interviewee remarked, "*The restrictive legal environment we operate in is a big hindrance with regard to the work we engage in. Legal hurdles are always there*."

Another commented, "*There is always some aspect of the system that one has to deal with including the law, but these are the things that have helped us all the time to achieve what we are chasing*."

Public Support The degree of public support concerning the importance of human rights is dependent on education, awareness and the media and determines the pressure that NGOs are able to exert on decision makers.

One participant explained, "*We did achieve our most successful campaigns when there was strong support from the public for the campaign. In the absence of this support, it is very difficult to change policy*."

Another added, "*Information of the public on human rights has been an important aspect in acquiring the kind of support that one requires to advocate change*".

Institutional Trust Dominance of trust in government and legal mechanisms may also add on or reduce the effect of NGOs lobbying on different issues. In countries where there is high trust, NGOs are able to influence more while in countries where corruption is rampant such institutions, it's quite difficult for NGOs to operate.

One respondent elaborated saying "*The individuals we surveyed in countries that trust the government have been polled differently. And policymakers are more receptive to our concerns*."

In the words of the former associate, "*When people have low levels of trust in the institutional structures, it is hard for our initiatives because they do not have faith that any recommendations we make would be implemented by the government*."

Table 6: Consequences

Consequences

Policy Reform Constructive policy-oriented activity by the NGOs can yield policy changes commensurate with the enactment of new policies or changes in policies and legislations to advance the protection of human rights.

One interviewee said, "*there was a lot of success in the effort to change the labor laws with the passage of laws to protect the work enlistment in our country*".

Another participant stated "*Our group helped implement and advocate for new policies to curb child labor practices which became quite effective within communities.*"

Increased Global Awareness Humanitarian organizations protect human rights are thereby successfully enhancing the international attention on more issues which consequently create higher pressure for action from the world on underlying governments or respective bodies.

"*What is remarkable is that our campaign received international attention and more than one country spoke out against the human rights violations committed in this part of the world*," said one respondent.

As another witness said, "*Human rights violations that were ignored before are no longer sidelined in such ways and are spoken of on the international platform now, thanks to our activism.*"

Strengthened Civil Society There is a positive impact on the development of civil society in the countries where NGOS work and this stimulates the population to be more active and aware of their rights and how to protect them.

"*I think that we have contributed to the development of civil society in such a way that there are people who are ready to fight for their rights*," one expert explained.

Another interviewee said, "*The most fulfilling aspect of our work has been the development of civil society. People are not passive and stand up for things that are worth standing up for.*"

Enhanced International Cooperation Human rights NGOs as a result, and effective promotion of the human rights agenda by IT NGOs, lead to better synergy among governments, international organizations, non-government organizations, and other actors in pursuit of international human rights.

As one of the respondents asserted, "*There has been an increase in opportunities for the interaction of international organisations and local authorities thanks to our achievements.*"

A second noted, "*Because of our campaigns, we have been able to establish closer working ties with international organizations which have been of great support towards the course.*"

Empowerment of Marginalized Groups. The extension of voting rights is very crucial for NGOs because the latter makes outreach to the neglected population and facilitates their empowerment.

One of the participants made a remark, "*We have succeeded in bringing the policy process to the people in the campaign even to the oppressed community.*"

A second opined, "*empowerment of these communities was to us one of the greatest milestones. Their abuses are now being taken into consideration.*"

Institutional Accountability. Non-Governmental Organizations usually assist in monitoring these governments or private sectors for abuses of human rights and this in turn creates better practice, prosecution of abusers, and, process reforms.

One of the respondents asserts, "*Owing to the investigations that have been made by us, some officials have been punished for abuses of human rights.*"

A second responder asserted, "*This is very important for the achievement of our objectives. Because of our activities there is pressure on institutions making them more restrained from human rights violations.*"

Sustainable Human Rights Advocacy – Successful advocacy efforts lead to the establishment of long-term systems and frameworks that ensure ongoing protection and promotion of human rights, even after specific campaigns conclude.

One respondent explained, "*Our greatest achievement is ensuring the sustainability of a model for human rights advocacy which goes on to work even in the absence of our active presence.*"

Another participant noted, "*Thanks to our emphasis on the long-term survival of the organization, civil rights issues are not forgotten*."

Legal Precedents NGOs that utilize a strategic litigation approach frequently establish court rulings that become guides for other human rights complaints, resulting in a chain reaction of changes in laws and protections.

One interviewee mentioned, "*We obtained a court ruling as a result of human rights protection that has been utilized in other jurisdictions for similar purposes*."

Another shared, "*Due to strategic litigation, we were able not only to win the cases but also to affect the change in law*."

Social Justice Movements An effective advocacy by the NGO may catalyze greater social justice practice where the society's activism directly or indirectly demands redress and accountability on rights abused by the structures.

One respondent advocated, "*We have played our part in encouraging social movements for justice as many people have come out declaring their rights*."

Another noted, "*There's been a domino effect, where changes we built campaigns around led to more calls for change from civil society*."

Causal Conditions

- Access to Funding
- Policy Advocacy Expertise
- Legitimacy and Credibility
- Legal Framework Navigation
- Public Awareness Campaigns
- International Alliances
- Technological Tools

Core Phenomena

- Strategic Adaptability
- Collaborative Networks

Intervening Conditions

- Political Environment
- Media Representation
- Cultural Context
- Global Bureaucratic Hurdles
- Economic Stability
- Government-NGO Relations
- Donor Influence
- Legal Limits

Strategies (Mechanisms)

- Capacity Building Programs
- Utilization of Digital Advocacy tools
- Coalition Building
- Strategic Litigation
- Localized Advocacy Models
- Grassroots Mobilization
- International Media Campaigns

Context

- Political Will
- Socioeconomic Stability
- International Diplomatic Relations
- Cultural Norms and Values
- Legal Constraints
- Public Support
- Institutional Trust

Consequences

- Policy Reform
- Increased Global Awareness
- Strengthened Civil Society
- Enhanced International Cooperation
- Empowerment of Marginalized Groups
- Institutional Accountability
- Sustainable Human Rights Advocacy
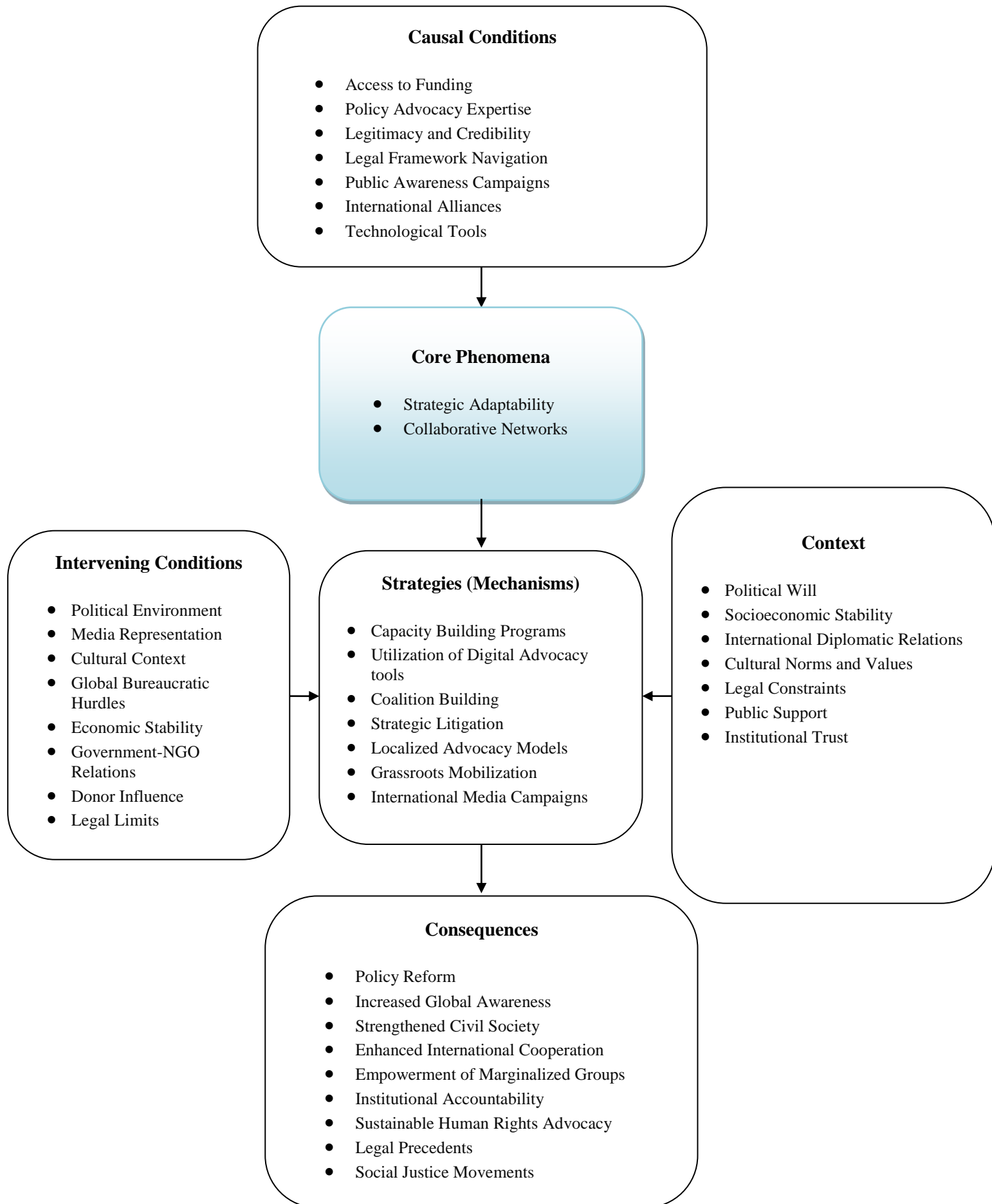- Legal Precedents
- Social Justice Movements

Figure 1: Confirmed Grounded Theory Model by Experts

The findings of the present research explain in depth the reasons that account for the success of the NGOs in protecting human rights and engaging with the international decision-making processes. We recognized certain arguments, emphases as well as actions that impact their efficacy in the course of issuing the in-depth analysis of the interviews. All these collate to form what is called final qualitative model as depicted in Figure 1, which shows various relationships and linkages between some core phenomena, causal factors, intervening conditions, strategies, context as well as outcomes. This model helps to understand how NGOs operate in order to fulfill their objectives and furthermore stresses the necessity of strategic and organized measures aimed at effecting change in human rights policy.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study highlighted the aspects that enhance the capacity of NGOs to uphold human rights as well as their standing in the global campaign for policy change. For this purpose, and applying the Corbin & Strauss Methodology of Grounded Theory, a considerable amount of qualitative data was collected using the tools of in-depth interviews among professionals to define core phenomena, causes, intervening conditions, strategies, context, and effects concerning the activities of the NGOs. We successfully came up with a qualitative model that helps to answer the questions related to the functioning of NGOs in the sphere of human rights protection and the exercise of power.

Organizational effectiveness of NGOs is strengthened by establishing collaborative arrangements and joining forces with previously established coalitions. There is a critical need for NGOs to go beyond the human rights world into civil society and build multiple links across the sectors to enhance their advocacy strength. When NGOs unite, they can monopolize resources, and capabilities, and plan themselves so that they can mowe palls into international regulatory bodies. These types of groups help in the collective effort to promote and protect human rights making it almost impossible for the decision-makers to completely ignore or water down their work.

Another vital strategy involves the use of the modern technological tools to expand and enhance the actions undertaken by the NGOs. There are several technological advancements such as data processing, social networks and even blockchain, which other sectors not related to technology have been able to apply and which the NGOs limit themselves in being able to do so. Such strategies would enable levels of advocacy activities heretofore unthought possible in pursuing human rights issues while maintaining presence and outreach on a world scale.

Adjusting funding mechanisms is necessary in order to ensure the operational stability for the NGO sector development in a long and steady timber. Moving rather towards adopting an incremental approach towards unrestricted funding would assist the changing dynamics and move towards achieving the set objectives. Funding structures which are well integrated would encourage the NGOs to increasingly be focusing on capacity enhancement and plan over the years instead as this would increase adaptive capacity in the face of shifting patterns of human rights issues.

Also, the professional development and capacity building are necessary to improve the skills of NGOs working in the human rights policy context. In this regard, NGOs need to emphasize the training of their personnel regarding skills, such as advocacy, policy negotiation, and strategic communication. By supporting structural functionalism, the NGOs will develop the internal capacity necessary to relate to the policy makers and participate more convincingly in the international human rights debates.

Strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency accountability and transparency mechanisms the last factors, which is necessary to improve the effectiveness of the NGOs, is oriented towards increasing internal efficiency. This relates to the concept of NGO accountability. For a non-governmental organization to carry out its activities satisfactorily and responsibly, there is a need to practice good accountability. This means that there is need to uphold clear governance structures, ethical practices and reporting structures, for instance clarifying to the NGO Beneficiaries who exactly will be responsible for what in the NGO. In summary, our research identifies certain model structures, which enhance the influence of the NGOs' activities related to human rights and the process of international political decision-making. In reliance on mutual cooperation, technological advances, adequate funding, training, and responsibility, it is possible to deal with numerous hurdles that non-profit organizations now have and transform them into effective defenders of human rights. This study concludes with practical suggestions that empower non-governmental organizations and updates scholarly understanding of different factors that determine effective functioning of non-governmental organizations in the context of international relations.

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