

A Comparative Study of Ngos Strategies in Diverse Asian Contexts: Case Studies from Hong Kong, Shenzhen, And Indonesia

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Abstract. There is little known about comparative qualitative research on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in differing Asian socio-political contexts. To address this gap, this paper reports on a qualitative comparative case study of three NGOs working in the disability/community development sectors in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Zhuo Xin Strength), Shenzhen, China (Shenzhen Zero One Rare Bone Disease Care Center), and Indonesia (Ragam Foundation). Through document analysis and semi-structured interviews, the paper examines how differing institutional environments and resource landscapes help shape governance structures, funding strategies, and program designs in an NGOs. Major variations – from the established member-driven to a flexible project-based and founder-centric governance structure; and funding strategies that range from state support to social enterprise and entrepreneurial approaches – diversify the ways in which these contexts are interpreted by issues of age and mission under the rubric of Institutional and Resource Dependence theories. The NGOs, while experiencing common challenges of constraints in resources, make different forms of innovations. This study contributes a granular understanding of NGOs operational diversity in Asia, revealing the dynamic interplay between institutional context and organizational strategy, thereby offering a new perspective for research on NGO sustainability and effectiveness in varied settings.

Keywords: Comparative NGOs; Governance; Social Enterprise; Asia; Disability & Community Development.

1. Introduction

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) increasingly important in the world, mainly promoting welfare and public discussion, also in global cooperation [1]. The sector is incredibly varied by the specific mission and structure of the organization and by the socio-political context at different levels of operation - Hong Kong, Shenzhen (PRC), and Indonesia are dramatically different settings [2]. Problems involved in the running of an NGOs are universal and include, besides other factors, fundraising, human resourcing, and proving impact to different regions and domains. Even when the importance of NGOs is known, there is a lack of relative comprehension of their functioning that has been perceived as existing through scholarly qualitative inquiry, particularly that contrasts grassroots and specific NGOs in various Asian socio-political settings like those under examination here [3]. Previous comparative research has not adequately considered the way the local context can distinctly shape the strategies and outputs of NGOs.

This paper profiles and compares three NGOs, which is therefore a study different from extant work. These NGOs focus on disability/rare disease support and community development in Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Indonesia. The paper answers several key research questions about pointwise differences in governance, funding models and challenges, program strategies, perceived impacts, and the influence of contextual factors. The primary objectives include profiling the cases, making cross-comparisons of their operational dimensions while noting common challenges, and identifying explanatory factors related to the environments and internal mechanisms of these cases. Such careful, qualitative cross-context comparison advances a more in-depth understanding of NGOs operational diversity in Asia. It emphasizes the critical interaction between institutional environments and organizational strategies and can thus inform a wide range of stakeholders in the academic and

development sectors interested in NGOs sustainability and effectiveness. The paper goes on to review literature, detail methodology, present findings, discuss implications, and conclude.

2. Literature Review

This section covers the extant literature on the complexities of NGOs relevant in matters of governance, funding, and the assessment of impacts, as well as the landscape of comparative studies. It provides the theoretical grounding that signifies the existence of the research gap which, in turn, the study will fill.

2.1. Core Concepts and Theories

2.1.1 Defining NGOs and Their Diversity

NGOs represent a sector that has very wide dimensions in terms of the size, scope, mission, and mode on which different entities within it operate [4]. While in general described as a nonprofit voluntary organization that is non-governmental and has its own management or governance arrangements, actual roles vary greatly. They usually act subsidiarily to the state sharing in welfare at the community level, also forming public opinion, sometimes even in the framework of private cooperation of governance structures [5]. An NGOs is also considered to have its unique mission, or nature, and style of organizational structure and leadership that creates its activities and identity [6].

2.1.2 NGOs Governance

Good governance ensures the effectiveness of the boards and thus the accountability and performance of NGOs. The governance models differ greatly in this sector. They range from boards of formally incorporated organizations to associate member-based organizations that emphasize self-regulation, to fonder main at weaker or informal arrangements in smaller or less-established entities. The governance challenges of the NGOs are reflected in almost all models. According to some studies, the models will create an accountability challenge from transparency to the decisions and financial management made by a wide range of stakeholders, such as beneficiaries, donors, the public and governmental bodies [7-9]. How such challenges are addressed by the NGOs can be viewed through different theoretical lenses. NGOs do not operate in isolation. A deep understanding of the broad institutional environment, under the purview of the institutional theory, explains that these NGOs are deeply embedded within broader institutional environments [10]. There is external pressure on the organization to reform the legal status in accordance with prevailing regulatory norms of the mission towards the expectation of funding agencies and socio-cultural values in the quest for legitimacy and resources. Resource dependence theory relates that the organizations act with and operate with freedom in consideration of their reliance on external resources, particularly finances [11]. NGOs will be inclined to comply with the wishes of their specific donors regarding governance and programs. They may, therefore, suffer mission drift, according to the perennial problem of percentage research that adequate funds are hard to come by. In this way, therefore, the theory of the stakeholder underlines the complicated network of relationships managed by NGOs. NGOs interact with several stakeholders and are accountable to them. For profit-making organizations, they are accountable mostly to their shareholders. The stakeholders of NGOs include service recipients, employees, donors, government agencies, and the general public. Often, these interests may conflict with one another. At the heart of governance for NGOs is, therefore, a continuous process of checking and balancing varied interests.

2.1.3 NGOs Funding and Financial Sustainability

One of the most persistent challenges facing the NGOs sector is securing adequate and sustainable funding. Traditional reliance on grants and donations is increasingly supplemented or replaced by more diversified resources, including activities that earn income, corporate alliances, and the emergence of social enterprise models. Yet, each money source brings with it an impact on organizational stability, independence, and mission. There should be effective financial mechanisms

towards attaining financial sustainability and which often must be in line with the regional priorities and socio-economic goals [12]. The push to have more streams in revenue must be weighed against the organizational ability to oversee various forms of relationships and income-producing ventures.

2.1.4 NGOs Impact Assessment and Sustainability

Show of effectiveness and attainment of long-term survival are basic worries for NGOs and their partners. Evaluation of social impact proves daunting due to various barriers. These include accounting for specific effects resulting from NGOs initiatives, measuring changes that are intangible and long-terminated, and breaking barriers of ineffective communication of the impact to possible supporters [13]. There are different possible examples from logic models and theories of change to Social Return on Investment (SROI) calculations and qualitative methods like case studies and storytelling. The integration of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) aspects into the primary purpose and activities confirms organizational sustainability from a wider perspective [14]. The attainment of this calls for strong internal systems that include a well-elaborated strategic plan, clear performance measures to monitor progress and detect problems in due time. All set against a background of readiness to innovation and change, possibly through reinvention and interdisciplinarity [15].

2.2. Comparative NGOs Studies

The literature on NGOs is vast. However, comparative studies, especially from a cross-cultural and cross-national purview, can provide unique insights into the ways context is formatively implicated in the non-profit sector. Existing comparative work has tended to concentrate mainly upon the large international NGOs, specific regions in Europe or North America, or is more quantitative in its approach toward the analysis of large datasets on NGOs populations [16]. Such works have proven very insightful regarding general trends and variations in the regulatory environment, sources of funding, and civil society space at a macro level. Fewer numbers of studies constitute in-depth, qualitative comparative research, much less across the immensely divergent contexts of the various Asias with different historical trajectories and contemporary socio-political realities.

2.3. Gaps and Research Niche

The current body of literature shows a relative deficiency in focused, qualitative comparative studies that highlight grassroots or specialized NGOs at play in vastly distinct Asian settings such as Hong Kong, Shenzhen (as a representation of Mainland China), and Indonesia. While the issues such as scarcity of funding and the need for sustainable mechanisms appear to be common, they are manifested differently and therefore responded to, subject to variations between institutional setups, cultural norms, and economic circumstances. This paper is dedicated to filling this research gap by providing a detailed comparative analysis of governance-oriented rare disease/disability NGOs in the three aforesaid different contexts. It will do so by critically evaluating issues of funding, programs, and impact through qualitative research that goes beyond broad generalizations to identify, in much better detail, the host of environment-behavior relations that underlie NGOs strategic choice and operation based on NGO-specific and context-bound factors.

3. Methodology

This study used a qualitative comparative case study design to enable a deep look and comparison of three NGOs working in different settings. This approach helps understand complex issues in their real-life settings (Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Indonesia) and find patterns of likeness and difference linked to the context.

The three NGOs, namely the Hong Kong Zhuo Xin Strength, the Shenzhen Zero One Rare Bone Disease Care Center, and the Ragam Foundation, were purposively selected based on contextual diversity, related to sectoral focus and potentially varied organizational characteristics and data

accessibility, to be the three hot cases—from Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Indonesia, respectively. These are from the disability/rare disease, community development sectors.

Data were collected through two primary methods:

1. Document Analysis: Looking at some available organizational documents (for example, websites, annual reports, project materials, or news articles) which highlight the background information and official perspectives.

2. Semi-structured Online Interviews: These were discussions held with the management staff where a set of important questions were asked to have a better understanding of the organizational history, governance and funding, programs, and challenges along with the ability to sustain, and also standard ethical rules were followed including informed consent and making sure everything remains confidential.

Data analysis simply meant carrying out thematic analysis of interview transcripts and documents so as to be able to identify key themes within each case, followed by comparative analysis across the three cases in order to identify patterns of convergence and divergence. Triangulation between the document and interview data was done in order to enhance the validity of the findings.

Key research limitations comprise the small sample size (three cases), which does not reflect generalizability; potential bias in information due to dependence on organization documents and management views; interpretive work of the researcher; and cross-sectional data, as it is only a snapshot in time.

4. Case Profiles and Comparative Findings

This section shows the main findings from the analysis of the three case study NGOs: Hong Kong Zhuo Xin Strength (HKZ), Shenzhen Zero One Rare Bone Disease Care Center (SZO), and Ragam Foundation (RF). Table 1 gives a summed-up view comparing these organizations on key dimensions, putting together data from earlier tables for an easier comparison. The following story describes these comparisons in detail, clearly connecting noted similarities and differences to the theoretical lenses of Institutional and Resource Dependence Theories.

Table 1. Comparative Profile of Case Study NGOs Across Key Dimensions.

Dimension	Hong Kong Zhuo Xin Strength (HKZ)	Shenzhen Zero One (SZO)	Ragam Foundation (RF)
Founding & Context	1964, Hong Kong (Mature Civil Society)	2010, Shenzhen (Dynamic Mainland China Context)	2021, Indonesia (Developing Community Context)
Primary Field	Disability Rights, Social Services	Rare Disease Care, Disability Employment Support	Education, Community Development
Governance Approach	Established; Member Participation & Self-Governance Focus	Flexible; Project-Oriented; Core Team Driven	Newer; Simple & Flexible Structure; Founder/Core Team Driven
Funding Strategy	Diversified: Govt. Funding, Donations, Earned Income, High Transparency	Social Enterprise Focus; Project-Specific Donations	Entrepreneurial: Angel Investors, Donations, Earned Income
Key Program Focus	Rights Advocacy, Direct Social Services, Community Participation	Innovative Employment (Fusion Restaurant), Patient Support	Broad Community Initiatives (Kitchen, Garden, Education, Relief)
Perceived Impact/ Recognition	High Social Recognition; Policy Influence (Accumulated)	Awareness Raising; Social Inclusion via Innovative Model	Community Responsiveness; Direct Local Support

4.1. Governance Approaches and Institutional Adaptation

The governance structures of the three bodies have varied considerably, and it appears that they have been shaped by different degrees of institutional pressures, as prescribed by the institutional theory [17]. The history of HKZ as a traditional self-help organization would explain the strenuous stringency of legitimate NGOs governance within an already mature civil society in Hong Kong, based on emerging norms of such governance. This is opposed to the simple, flexible structure of RF, which would be in line with the characteristics of most recently established organizations but, from another angle, reflects strategic, organized behavior that allows more agility in a different institutional context where such formal procedures are less common, or even discouraged, in facilitating grassroots action. The project-oriented flexibility of SZO in Shenzhen is a further different version and seems optimized to respond to its institutional constraints in Mainland China and, at the same time, effectively manage an innovative social enterprise. These differences show how NGOs shape their governance not just from internal needs, but also in response to outside pressures for legitimacy and conformity within their specific fields.

4.2. Funding Strategies and Resource Dependence

The approaches of NGOs starkly illustrate different strategies used by them for managing resource dependence [11]. While HKZ implements and maintains a diversified funding strategy throughout the government support, donations, and earned income, as seen in Table 1, which is in general very much prevalent among well-established NGOs in an environment like that of Hong Kong; it does mitigate the dependency on a single source but along with that brings in the dependencies and requirements, related with government funding, likely, too. On the contrary, the strategic focus of SZO on its social enterprise model introduces an attempt at reducing dependence through striving for alternative, relatively scarce, philanthropic or state resources within the specific context of Shenzhen through establishing this specific source of earned income, however, such dependence shifts to market viability. RF's entrepreneurial combination of angel funding, giving, and earned money shows the resource getting needs commonly encountered by new groups, requiring flexibility and different ways to secure start-up and continuing funds. These different strategies highlight how the resource setting forms organizations' decisions on financial sustainability and operational freedom.

4.3. Programmatic Focus and Alignment

The separate project activities explain in Table 1 are sound developments of each NGO's mission but are also prominently molded by their governance and funding fictions. The association of rights advocacy and direct services by HKZ justifies its existing structure, diverse funds, and rights-oriented mission. The primary fusion restaurant program at SZO relates to its social enterprise funding model and its mission to support patient employment and integration—an overt example of program design driven by both mission and resource strategy. The wide range of community initiatives at RF speaks to its mission of community development, most probably facilitated by the leeway its less prescriptive structure affords in responding to the myriad needs of the locale, entrepreneurial efforts included. This shows how program choices are not made in a vacuum but are rather intertwined with organizational structure, funding dependencies, and the pursuit of mission within certain sets of contexts.

4.4. Perceived Impact and Sectoral Challenges

All three NGOs have positive contributions, though the perceived impacts differ (Table 1). HKZ uses its history to ensure policy influence is known and has a broad social participation impact. Impact for SZO comes through the visibility and direct outcomes of its innovative social inclusion model. RF shows impact through localized community responsiveness. The reported performance and social recognition's strong reliance, more visible in terms of newer or more specialized organizations (SZO, RF), underlines a general challenge within NGOs for rigorous measurement and communication of impact [18]. This may be due to constraints in resources but also reflects institutional pressures where

the demonstrable effect is increasingly called for numerically, yet the methodology to do so is challenging, particularly for programs that are to bring about systemic change or on such intangible outcomes as social inclusion in the community. A meaningful data synthesis is restricted by the present case material's scantiness.

5. Discussion

Comparative results viewed through tested theoretical approaches indicate that the unique HKZ, SZO, and RF profiles are largely a product of the evolving interrelations between their history and mission, strategic choices, and most critically, the distinct contexts in which they operate. Observable differences adequately illustrate foundational organizational theories. An example is seen in their various governance structures, nicely corresponding with institutional theory. HKZ may be considered the mature, concerted type of organization in Hong Kong, adjusting and fitting existing norms while trying, in a very normative society, to secure legitimacy through well-tested practices. On the other hand, RF could be the equally simple and adaptive type of organization in Indonesia, which, in a less formal or dynamic institutional setting, favors responsiveness over a formal structure through which to establish local legitimacy. The project-based malleability of SZO in Shenzhen seems like a strategic reaction to the dynamic urban setting and the specific institutional pressures plus opportunities within the mainland of China's changing regulatory view for NGOs and social enterprises. Therefore, the governance differences show how organizations change their structures to meet the legitimacy demands and normative expectations of their institutional fields.

The varied funding strategies noted offer a lens through resource dependence theory. HKZ has a mixed model that involves government aid, donations, and earned income, which generally appears to be the style of balancing dependencies from multi-sourced resources within the well-set system of funds in Hong Kong. The diversification would buffer against risks associated with all resources being reliant on a single one but, however, likely would mean a more intense procedure on government funds. SZO heavily leverages its social enterprise model, that would be more developed as a strategic approach to minimize dependency on the probably scarce or unpredictable traditional resource channels, such as grants or donations, within Shenzhen: therefore, it would gain more operational autonomy. This, however, shifts the dependence to market dynamics and commercial feasibility, where the pressure and resource consideration frameworks are different. The resource acquisition challenges typical of newer organizations make it necessary for RF to rely on flexible and opportunistic strategies to secure the capital needed. The contrast in approaches demonstrates how the resource environments serve to fundamentally frame the strategic choices of NGOs regarding financial sustainability and the operational autonomy it have over them [19].

The comparison makes one think tentatively about the specific potential within these Asian contexts, although generalizations must be made carefully based on only three cases. For instance, SZO's pronounced embrace of a social enterprise model as a primary mechanism may or may not speak of broader trends or specific enabling (or constraining) factors within rapidly developing Chinese cities; this requires comparative exploration across China and Asia. For example, the particular manifestation of organizational flexibility that the example of RF gives about community-embedded extends to Indonesia, it could provide an adaptive strategy type of insight for specific Southeast Asian contexts. While these offer generic explanatory power, actual applications may possibly show different forms of creations and modifications under the impact of regional or national specificities. The review results constantly call for comparative NGOs research that should be attuned to the particular idiosyncrasies at a level of locality and perhaps also atypical of the existing Western-centric models.

The results of this study have direct theoretical and practical implications. At the theoretical level, it contributes to the comparative NGOs literature by offering a fine-grained qualitative analysis of three unique Asian socio-political milieus, which, for some reason or the other, have typically attracted isolation. It underlines the basic tenet of established organizational theories, institutional

and resource dependence, in probing variations in NGOs strategy and structure, stressing, however, the vital mediating role that specific local context play. Some of those findings are that conscious institutional efforts towards NGOs sustainability and effectiveness demand getting out of simple dichotomies, such as state-dependent vs. state-independent, and understanding the vicious interplay between institutional pressures, resource environments, and strategic organizational adaptation. Consequently, further research is needed to explore the specific forms of institutional logics and resource configurations that make up the nonprofit sector across the Asian contexts.

The practical level of this study articulates the critical need for strategic planning that is specific to the context in governance and funding for NGOs. It presents viable models that are workable and practicable—from the diversification of HKZ, to the social enterprise of SZO, and agile responsiveness of RF. However, success does not lie within a single formula but rather the strategy aligned with the environment at the local level, as well as addressing common challenges, for instance, funding scarcity and impact measurement. For policymakers, the comparison explains how the different regulatory and funding environments shape the behavior and capacity of the NGOs. An enabling policy with diversified funding streams, targeted capacity-building support, and clear yet flexible and forward-looking regulation will ensure building up resilience and effectiveness in the NGOs sector. A better understanding of the varied real-life situations, specific problems in the context, and different requirements of funds of organizations like HKZ, SZO, and RF is needed for funders to create successful ways of giving grants and for building valuable relationships that support long-term partnership.

The study's limitations, which comprise small sample size and cross-sectional nature are key acknowledgments that must be made and, at the same time, point toward future research directions. Other suggestions are to take the research design outside the cross-sectional design by setting up the comparison either geographically or sectorally and including more different stakeholders, especially the beneficiaries, and to further extend it by setting up longitudinal analyses to track adaptation over time and further investigating the specific dynamics of social enterprise models or the nature of collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches.

6. Conclusion

For the case study of three non-governmental organizations located in Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Indonesia, it is apparent that strategic adaptation varies considerably despite shared welfare commitments. The central findings reveal that the governance structures, funding models, and programmatic choices of NGOs do not come as universal but take shape distinctly by the interaction between organizational characteristics (age, mission) and the institutional and resource environments at which specific groups are directed. The research fills the gap by demonstrating context-specific realizations of institutional theory and resource dependence theory across diverse Asian contexts, showing how NGOs manage legitimacy pressures and resource constraints through strategies that range from established forms of diversification and member participation (HKZ) to the innovation of a social enterprise (SZO) and agile, entrepreneurial responsiveness (RF). The main novelty of the study is in its qualitative comparison that is nuanced across these three specific under-researched contexts (Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Indonesia) within the disability/community development sectors, offering insights that can challenge monolithic views of the nonprofit sector in Asia. This research underscores the critical importance of the context shaping the reality of NGOs and the need for theoretical frameworks and practical support mechanisms that should take and adapt to the profound diversity on a way to foster organizational sustainability and impact.

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