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INFLUENCE OF NETWORKING ON PERFORMANCE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: A STUDY OF SELECTED NGOS IN FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY, ABUJA NIGERIA

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Abstract

Societal problems such as unemployment, poverty, inequality, and injustice are common problems to underdeveloped countries of the world. However, NGOs make concerted effort in curbing these societal problems, especially in developing countries where government capacity and revenues are often very limited. However, the social focus of NGOs along with their nonprofit nature hinders their performance as they are often faced with problems relating to funding, poor workforce quality as well as public skepticism about their intentions that bothers on their image. It has been asserted that networking is critical in determining the success of any organization because through networks, the social entrepreneurs can obtain necessary resources, and information. Thus, this study sought to examine the influence of networking (building, maintaining, and using contacts) on Performance of NGOs. A survey research design was adopted utilizing a questionnaire to collect data. The population of the study was 367 NGOs registered with the Nigerian Network of NGOs (NNGOs) out of which 106 NGOs were sampled. Multiple regression analysis (stepwise method) was used analyze the data. Findings of the study show that NGOs networking positively and significantly influence their performance as evidenced by R^2 value of 0. 602. The study therefore recommends that NGOs increase their participation and membership in professional association as well as sharing information and catching up with existing contacts as these activities have been found to contribute significantly to their performance.

Keywords: Networking, Performance, Non-Governmental Organizations

1. Introduction

The role of Non-Governmental Organizations in curbing social or societal problems such as unemployment, poverty, inequality, and injustice cannot be overstated. These organizations are acknowledged to be important contributors to socio-economic development especially in developing countries where government capacity and revenues are often very limited. NGOs contributions or intervention takes such form as welfare or relief projects which entail distributing handouts to prevent suffering and preserve life, and empowerment projects which aim to overcome

constraints or barriers to the socio-economic welfare of individuals. While the former is not only a short-term focus, it is also reactive. The latter, however, has a longer-term focus and tries to identify and address the root cause of the cycle of social problems, suffering, and deprivation (Burger & Owens, 2009). However, the social focus of NGOs along with their nonprofit nature hinders their performance as they are often faced with problems relating to funding, poor workforce quality as well as public skepticism about their intentions that bothers on their reputation. Furthermore, the notion that firms are embedded within complex networks, and that

managers spend time actively networking, have long been accepted by scholars (Naude, Zaefarian, Tavani, Neghabi & Zaefarian, 2014). Moreso, it has been asserted that networking is critical in determining the success of any organization because through networks, the social entrepreneurs can obtain necessary resources, and information (MacMillan, 1993). In addition, extant literature on networking, broadly views networking as individuals' behaviors aimed at building, maintaining, and using work-related contacts to obtain resources, such as influence or support in their work and careers (Wolf, Weikamp, & Batinik, 2018).

Furthermore, managers/entrepreneurs use different activities as a means of developing their networks such as membership and active participation in different types of clubs and associations, asking others for informal advice on work-related matters, and going out for drinks with colleagues, participating in professional activities, or staying in contact with former colleagues to stay up to date in business matters. These activities enable the entrepreneurs to meet new contacts, gain new perspectives, and obtain access to resources (This is because they have developed a personal or trusting relationship with a contact) as well as get to know others with similar social interests and professional work experiences (Premaratne, 2002). Surprisingly, while literature suggests that networking is critical to success of organizations, few empirical studies were found with respect to networking effects on performance of nonprofit organizations like NGOs. Therefore, the aim of this study is to evaluate the influence of networking on performance of NGOs. Specific objectives were to; examine the influence of building contacts, maintaining contacts, and using contacts on Performance of NGOs. Thus, the study has the following null hypotheses

H₀₁: Building contacts has no significant effect on performance of NGOs

H₀₂: Maintaining Contacts does not significantly influence Performance of NGOs

H₀₃: Using Contacts has no significant effect on Performance of NGOs.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Issues

Concept of Networking

It is important to distinguish between the concept of 'network' and 'networking'. While networks refer to a

set of existing contacts or relationships, networking refers to efforts made towards building, maintaining, and using networks. For instance, networking behaviors include asking others for informal advice on work-related matters, going out for drinks with colleagues, participating in professional activities, or staying in contact with former colleagues to stay up to date in business matters. Therefore, networking implies the actual process of relationship building or establishment and maintenance. Networking otherwise referred to as networking behavior is thus defined as building, maintaining, and using informal contacts or relationships to attain work or career resources (Wolf & Spurk, 2019). Similarly, networking is also understood as the actual process of relationship establishment and maintenance and underlines the dynamic side of their formation by the focal actor (Shaw & Conway, 2000; Johannisson, 2000)

Networking Dimensions

Extant literature has shown that authors sometimes view networking as a one-dimensional construct and other times as a multi-dimensional construct (e.g. Forret and Dougherty, 2001; Wolf & Moser, 2006). However, Wolff and Kim's (2012) networking model consists of two facets. The first relates to a structural facet that entails internal and external networking and refers to contacts or networking within and outside the organization. The second facet is a functional facet which entails building, maintaining and using contacts that depicts the process of relationship development. Furthermore, Wolf and Moser (2006) as cited by wolf and Spurk (2019), identified six dimensions of networking with regards to internal and external networking behaviors. These dimensions are; building internal contacts, maintaining internal contacts, using internal contacts, building external contacts, maintaining external contacts, and using external contacts. However, this study focuses on the external networking dimension because it is believed that networking with a more diverse group of individuals provides more valuable resources to the actors in a network. Perhaps the quickest and easiest way for entrepreneurs, managers, or business owners to establish an external network is through membership in various clubs, societies, and associations (Premaratne, 2002). For instance, membership in an association like the Nigeria Network of NGOs provides such benefits as free workshops, seminars, networking meetings,

community forums, etc. (<http://nnngo.org/membership-benefits/>).

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance is a term which does not have a universal definition. Thus, it has become impossible for professionals to concur about what exactly they mean by organizational performance. Luo and Wang (2012) opine that there are as many interpretation of the term as the studies that have used the construct as such they suggests that organizational performance should be measured in economic and operational terms. Another view of organizational performance is as a measure of survival and growth (Chandler & Hanks, 1993). Thus, in the context of this research, performance indicators from internal and external stakeholders' perspectives were identified and these includes; variables such as availability of funds, quality of workforce are used as proxies for performance from internal stakeholders' viewpoint and social impact in the form of increasing number of beneficiaries as well as the organizations image and goodwill represent proxies for performance from external stakeholders viewpoint.

i. **Availability of Funds:** Funds can be used to acquire other vital resources. However, while business entrepreneurs' funds primarily come from the sale of goods or services that are offered to the market as well as some credit facilities, a social entrepreneur's a fund come, in many cases, from donations or grants (Simón-Moya, Revuelto-Taboad, & Ribeiro-Soriano, 2012).

ii. **Workforce quality:** The people engaged in or available for work either in an area or in a particular firm or industry is what is referred to as workforce. Sometimes workforce is referred to as human resources who refer to the capacity, quality, or qualification of people who make up the workforce of an organization, industry, or business sector (Carlos et.al, 2016; Gitonga, 2018). According to Iwu, Kapondoro, Darko, Dengeh (2015), important criteria in evaluating the organizational effectiveness in the non-profit organization includes the quality of her workforce.

iii. **Organization reputation:** This is the belief or opinion that is generally held about something or someone. A good or favorable reputation attracts a favorable response from others, while a poor or unfavorable reputation attracts a poor response from others. For corporate entities, Reputation is an important component for their success (Bass, 2018).

According to Carauna (2014), Organization Reputation emerges from the images held by stakeholders of an organization. It is seen as the net effective or emotional reaction that involves the overall estimation in which a company is held by its stakeholders (Fombrun, 1996). A favorable organization reputation has been found to increase business survival and profitability (Roberts & Dowling, 2002). It also attracts goodwill to the organization.

iv. **Social Impact:** For a nonprofit organization, social impact is perhaps the most important performance indicator used by external stakeholders. Weber and Kratzer (2013), view social impact for social enterprises in terms of the output and outcomes of an organization's interventions such as the number of beneficiaries served as well as the extent to which such intervention has changed beneficiaries' lives. This is the view upheld by this study.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)

The term NGO is widely used with other overlapping terms such as "non-profits," "Voluntary," and "civil society" organizations. In many cases, the use of different terms does not reflect descriptive or analytical rigor, but instead a consequence of different cultures and histories in which thinking about NGOs has emerged (Lewis, 2009). Thus, NGOs are organizations in the form of a trust or a society with definite cultural, educational, economical, religious, or social programs registered with the government for the socio-economic change of the society (Xavier, 2019). According to Lewis (2009), there are variations as to what constitutes a precise definition of NGO and the challenge of analyzing the phenomenon of NGO remains surprisingly difficult. The World Bank classified NGOs as operational NGOs and Advocacy NGOs (Xavier, 2019). The main purpose of operational NGOs is to design and implement development-related projects which could be national, international, or community-based. While the main purpose of the Advocacy NGOs is to promote a specific cause such as raising awareness and knowledge by doing various activities like lobbying, press work, and sector activist events.

2.2 Empirical Review

Albourini et.al (2020), studied the effect of Networking Behaviors on the success of Entrepreneurial startups in Jordan. The study used a structured questionnaire to collect data and multiple regression to analyses the

gathered data. It was thus reported that networking behaviors positively influence the success of entrepreneurial startups in Jordan.

McCallum, Forret, and Wolff (2015) studied the relationship between networking behaviors (internal and external) and affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Utilizing a survey research design, the study sampled 335 managers and professionals of a health system. they performed a correlation and multiple regression analysis to test the study hypotheses. Results show that networking behaviors within the organization (internal) was positively related with affective and normative commitment, whereas external networking behavior was negatively related to normative commitment. Furthermore, networking externally was not related to affective commitment and neither internal nor external networking behavior was related to continuance commitment.

Gitonga (2018) evaluated the factors that influence the sustainability of Non-Governmental organizations in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study drew a sample of 128 NGOs from a population of 1,881 registered NGOs in Nairobi County and used a non-probability sampling technique of judgmental sampling to select the study respondents. Furthermore, using multiple regression analysis, the results show that the three independent variables (human resources or workforce, community engagement, and fund development) have a high explanatory power for the sustainability of NGOs.

2.3 Theoretical Framework: Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory is largely attributed to the works of Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam. The social capital theory is built on the assumption that a person's family, friends, and associates constitute an important asset that can be capitalized in times of need, leveraged for capital gain, or enjoyed purely for human interaction it affords (Alfred, 2009). According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital refers to the actual or potential resources that are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition of membership in a group which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital. Lin (2001) submits that some benefits accrue through social networking such as facilitating the flow of information from those with access to those with a need to know, influencing those in power positions to behave favorably towards those

who are in less desirable positions and who rely on them for help in improving their conditions. Networking also reinforces an individual's identity and visibility within a social group or community. According to Putnam (1995), networks have a value that provides the actors with information, identity and solidarity, reciprocity and mutual aid as well as collective action generating amplified impact. He added that social capital serves bridging functions which offers linkages to other networks.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a survey research design to achieve its stated objectives. Given that the elements under study are scattered around, a survey design becomes an efficient means to cover a relatively large number of respondents as well as elicit their responses on the various issues being studied. Thus, a structured questionnaire was designed to collect data with respect to NGOs performance while the questionnaire designed by Wolf and Moser (2006) was adapted to gather data with respect to networking behaviors of the NGOs.

3.2 Population and sample of the study

The population of this study comprises all the NGOs in Abuja from which a member of the management team of each NGO is selected to respond to the questionnaire items. Efforts to identify and obtain a list containing all the NGOs in Abuja through the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) was futile. Therefore, the researchers opted for a list of NGOs who are domiciled in Abuja and registered with the Nigerian Network of NGOs (NNNGOs) which is a membership body for civil society organizations in Nigeria and has been operational in since 1992. The study sampled the operational NGOs (charity and or empowerment) and not advocacy because operational NGOs' activities and impact are more practical and assessable than an attempt to assess policy impacts which is the theme of advocacy NGOs. Thus, a list of NGOs obtained from the official website of the NNNGOs revealed a total number of 367 NGOs operating in Abuja. Based on the thematic areas by which the association grouped its members, a total of 106 NGOs are charity and or empowerment.

3.3 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The questionnaire was intended to measure networking behaviors (building, maintaining, and using contact) as well as survival of NGOs measured by availability of funds, organization reputation, and the quality of workforce of the sampled NGOs. Thus, the instrument was validated by subjecting it to scrutiny by

professionals in the field under study who ascertained its validity. A pilot study was conducted using 20 respondents selected from the population of the study from which a confirmatory test of internal consistency was conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient test. Presented below is the Cronbach's Alpha test results.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alfa Analysis of Dependent and Independent variables scales

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient
Building Contact	3	.705
Maintaining Contact	3	.726
Using Contact	3	.794
Performance	9	.824

Source: Researchers computations, 2022

All Cronbach's alpha coefficients as presented in table 1 above are greater than 0.7. Thus this is acceptable for construct reliabilities (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2010).

3.4 Method of Data Analysis

This study utilized multiple regression analysis (stepwise method) to determine the degree of influence of dependent variables on independent variables. The stepwise method of multiple regression was adopted

because it allows for the identification of the variables that contributes the most to the regression as well as the variable that contributes significantly.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Response Rate

Out of 106 NGOs selected for the study, 17 NGOs were unwilling to participate in the study as such only 89 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents.

Table 2: Response Rate

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Distributed copies of questionnaire	89	100%
Unreturned copies of questionnaire	5	5.6%
Returned copies of questionnaire	84	94.4%
Invalid copies of questionnaire	6	6.7%
Valid copies of questionnaire	78	87.6%

Source: Survey Data, 2022

4.2 Sample Characteristics

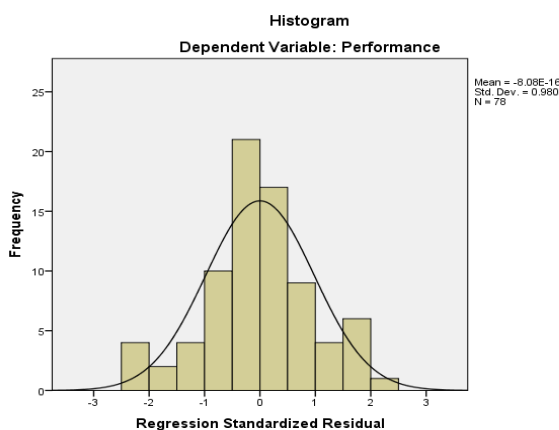


Figure 1: Histogram for normality test of the study data set

Source: Researchers Computations, 2022

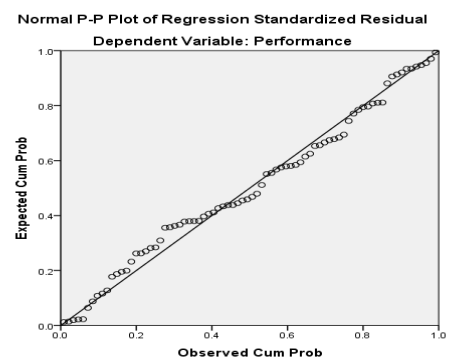


Figure 2: Normal p-p plots of Regression Standardized Residual

Source: Researchers Computations, 2022

A visual inspection of the histogram and Normal p-p plots were conducted and the results shows that the histogram followed a normal bell shaped curve. Also the normal p-p plots show that the dots are

approximately distributed along the diagonal line which implies that the data used for this analysis is approximately normally distributed.

4.3 Demographic profile of Respondents

Table 3: Demographic information of Selected NGOs

Thematic area		
	Frequency	Percent
Poverty	10	12.8
Employment and Skill Acquisition	15	19.2
Enterprise Development	9	11.5
Youth and Women Empowerment	15	19.2
Agriculture Development	3	3.8
charity and humanitarian aid	18	23.1
Health	8	10.3
Total	78	100
NGOs Workforce		
1 to 10 employees	5	6.4
11 to 20 employees	14	17.9
21 to 30 employees	36	46.2
above 30 employees	23	29.5
Total	78	100.0
Years in Operation		
1-5 Years	25	32.1
6-10 Years	32	41.0
11-15 Years	15	19.2
16 Years and above	6	7.7
Total	78	100.0

: Survey data, 2022

4.4 Regression Analysis and Test of Hypotheses

The study hypothesized that Networking behaviors (building contact, maintaining contact, using contacts)

do not have significant effect on the performance of Non-Governmental Organizations. Thus, a regression analyses was performed and the result is presented and discussed as follows.

Table 4: Model Summary table for Networking Behaviors and NGOs Performance

Model	R	R ²	Adjstd R ²	Std. Error of est.	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.600	.360	.352	.33766	.360	42.825	1	76	.000
2	.699	.488	.474	.30409	.128	18.707	1	75	.000
3	.776	.602	.586	.26984	.114	21.243	1	74	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), BC									
b. Predictors: (Constant), BC, UC									
c. Predictors: (Constant), BC, UC, MC									
d. Dependent Variable: Performance									

Source: Researchers Computations, 2022

Table 4 reports the R, R² and R² change values of the regression analysis. The R value is a simple correlation between the variable in the analysis, The R² value is the coefficient of determination which indicates how much

of total variance in the performance is explained by the networking behaviors of building, maintaining and using contacts. Also the R square change value shows the changes in the R² as an independent variable is

added to the models. Thus, from this result, the multiple regression analysis (stepwise method) generated 3 models such that variables that contributed significantly are entered sequentially.

Model 1 shows an R^2 value of .360 which means that the networking behavior of building contact alone as a predictor accounts for 36% of variance in performance of NGOs. Model 2 included a second variable “maintaining contact”. This increased the R^2 value by

.128 to .488. Therefore, both networking behavior of building and using contacts combined, explains 48.8% of variance in performance. In the third Model generated, networking behavior of maintaining contact was added to the model and the R^2 further increases by .114 to .602. Thus the combined building, maintain, and using contacts as networking behaviors explains 60.2% of variance in performance of NGOs.

Table 5: ANOVA table for Networking Behaviors and NGOs Performance

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.883	1	4.883	42.825	.000 ^b
	Residual	8.665	76	.114		
	Total	13.548	77			
2	Regression	6.613	2	3.306	35.755	.000 ^c
	Residual	6.935	75	.092		
	Total	13.548	77			
3	Regression	8.159	3	2.720	37.352	.000 ^d
	Residual	5.388	74	.073		
	Total	13.548	77			
a. Dependent Variable: Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), BC						
c. Predictors: (Constant), BC, UC						
d. Predictors: (Constant), BC, UC, MC						

Source: Researchers Computations, 2022

Table 5 above is the ANOVA table and it reports how well the regression equation fits the data. Therefore, models 1, 2, and 3 all have a sig (p values) of .000 which is all less than .05 as such the models are all significant. However, model 3 explains more variance

in the dependent variable than earlier models. The model indicates that building contacts, maintaining contacts and using contacts are statistically significant predictors of NGOs performance.

Table 6: Coefficients Table for Networking Behaviors and NGOs Performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.270	.166		13.635	.000
	BC	.310	.047	.600	6.544	.000
2	(Constant)	1.783	.187		9.509	.000
	BC	.297	.043	.574	6.928	.000
	UC	.191	.044	.358	4.325	.000
3	(Constant)	1.104	.222		4.969	.000
	BC	.279	.038	.539	7.300	.000
	UC	.186	.039	.348	4.736	.000
	MC	.216	.047	.340	4.609	.000

Source: Researchers Computations, 2022

Table 6 above reports the information to predict the dependent variable from the independent variables as well as determine whether the independent variables contribute significantly to the models. The B value under the unstandardized coefficients indicates how much the dependent variable will change as a result of change in an independent variable if all other variables are held constant. In line with this and with respect to model 1, the B value for Building contact (BC) is 0.310. This means that Performance will increase by 0.310 if there is a unit increase in BC while all other variables are held constant. In addition, the p value (sig) for this variable is .000 which is less than .05 thus, BC statistically significantly influence performance. Model 2 reports that both BC and UC as included in the model statistically significantly influence organization reputation. This is evidenced by p values of 0.000 and 0.000 respectively. Furthermore, Model 3 reports that all 3 of networking behavior variables of building, maintaining, and using contacts statistically significantly contributes to the model as evidenced by their p values of less than .05 and B values of 0.279 (BC), 0.186 (UC), and 0.216 (MC). Thus the null hypothesis that networking behaviors (building, maintain and using contact) have no significant effect on performance of NGOs are all rejected.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study sought to evaluate the effect of networking on the performance of Non-Governmental Organizations. Findings of the study show that the behaviors of NGOs positively and significantly

influence their performance as evidenced by R^2 value of 0.602 in the third model generated by the regression analysis. This implies that networking behaviors account for 60.2% of variation in performance of NGOs. Specifically, NGOs networking behaviors such as taking part in professional associations as a means of building new contacts, sharing information with other organizations as well as keeping in touch with their existing contact as a means of maintaining contact, and seeking for advice and support as a way of using contacts, all improves NGOs access to grants, donations, enhanced goodwill, facilitate the enhancement of beneficiaries livelihood as well as the possession of loyal and competent volunteers and employees. Hence, improved performance. Although NGOs are nonprofits, this finding conforms in part to the reports of Naude et.al (2014), who submits that external networking behavior has a positive effect on performance of SMEs and Albourini et.al (2020) who found that networking behaviors positively affects the performance of business startups. In furtherance, the finding of this study, supports the assertion of Leadbeater (1997) who stated that Social entrepreneurs will only succeed if they are good at establishing networks of relationships. Therefore, it can be asserted that the better NGOs get at networking, the more their performance increases. Thus it is recommended that NGOs, increase their participation and membership in professional association as well as sharing information and catching up with existing contacts as these activities have been found to contribute significantly to their performance.

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