

Influence of Mobilizing Capability on the Financial Sustainability of Kenyan Non-Profit Organizations

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Abstract

Non-profit organizations (NPOs) in Kenya continue to face persistent financial sustainability challenges due to declining donor funding and intensifying competition for limited grants. As the operating environment becomes more complex, the ability of NPOs to mobilize resources, coordinate stakeholders, and leverage relationships has become increasingly important. However, empirical evidence on how mobilizing capability contributes to financial sustainability within the Kenyan nonprofit sector remains limited. This study examined the influence of mobilizing capability on the financial sustainability of Kenyan NPOs. A descriptive correlational design and quantitative cross-sectional survey were used to collect data from senior leaders of registered NPOs across multiple sectors. Stratified random sampling generated a sample of 323 organizations, and 233 valid responses were obtained through a structured online questionnaire. Ordinal logistic regression was used to assess the relationship between mobilizing capability and financial sustainability. The findings showed that mobilizing capability had a significant positive ($p=.478, p<.001$) correlation with financial sustainability. Organizations with low or moderate mobilizing capability were substantially less likely to achieve higher financial sustainability compared to those with strong mobilizing capability. These results suggest that the ability to share resources with partners, utilize networks, build strong relationships, and reallocate resources flexibly is essential for strengthening financial resilience. The study underscores the importance of developing mobilizing capability as a core organizational competency and highlights the need for supportive practices that enhance collaboration and resource mobilization within the nonprofit sector.

Key Words: Dynamic capabilities, Financial sustainability, Kenya, Non-profit organizations, Mobilizing capability.

Introduction

Non-profit organizations (NPOs) play a vital role in addressing humanitarian, social, and developmental needs, particularly in contexts where communities face recurring crises and limited access to essential services. Over the past several decades, however, NPOs have experienced a sustained decline in donor funding, a trend that intensified after the 2008 global financial crisis (Ebenezer et al., 2020) and was further aggravated by the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical instability in regions such as Ukraine and the Horn of Africa (Development Initiatives, 2023). These disruptions contributed to the highest-ever humanitarian funding shortfall in 2022, leaving many NPOs struggling to secure adequate resources to sustain their operations. In Kenya, this challenge is particularly

pronounced. According to the Public Benefit Organizations Regulatory Authority (PBORA, 2024), most Kenyan NPOs remain heavily dependent on external donors, generate minimal income from local sources, and scored only 45% on the national sustainability index in 2023. This persistent financial vulnerability threatens their long-term viability and their ability to deliver essential services to vulnerable populations.

As the funding environment becomes increasingly volatile, NPOs must develop capabilities that enable them to mobilize resources, coordinate stakeholders, and build strategic partnerships that enhance their financial resilience. Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2007) provides a useful framework for understanding how organizations adjust to turbulent environments by sensing changes, seizing opportunities, and reconfiguring resources. Although originally developed for for-profit firms, the theory has gained prominence in nonprofit research, where scholars argue that NPOs also require dynamic capabilities to maintain service continuity, innovate in program delivery, and mobilize resources in uncertain environments (Kaltenbrunner & Reichel, 2018; Shumate et al., 2017). Within this framework, mobilizing capability is particularly important, as it reflects an organization's ability to leverage networks, build relationships, share resources with partners, and reallocate resources flexibly securing the financial and non-financial inputs necessary for mission delivery (da Costa et al., 2020). For NPOs facing declining donor support and intensifying competition for grants (Ye & Gong, 2021), the ability to mobilize resources effectively may be essential for sustaining financial health.

Despite its relevance, empirical research examining how mobilizing capability influences the financial sustainability of NPOs remains limited. Existing studies have focused primarily on organizational performance, service continuity, or competitive advantage (Son et al., 2024; Kadyrova & Shapira, 2023; da Costa et al., 2020), leaving the financial sustainability dimension underexplored. In the African context, research on dynamic capabilities is scarce (Rifqi et al., 2024), and even fewer studies have examined these capabilities within nonprofit settings. In Kenya, available studies have been constrained by narrow geographical scope, small sample sizes, or a focus on performance outcomes rather than financial sustainability (Shani et al., 2022; Muithya & Muathe, 2020; Wanga, 2022; Njilu & Karithi, 2020). No Kenyan study has examined NPO-specific dynamic capabilities including mobilizing capabilities (da Costa et al., 2020) as predictors of financial sustainability.

Addressing this gap is essential, given the persistent financial vulnerability of Kenyan NPOs and their critical role in national development (Ahawo, 2020). Understanding how mobilizing capability contributes to financial sustainability can provide actionable insights for strengthening organizational resilience, improving resource utilization, and enhancing long-term viability.

Focusing on mobilizing capability as the independent variable, this study examines the influence of four mobilizing capability on the financial sustainability of Kenyan non-profit organizations through four subvariables: sharing resources with partners, utilizing networks, relationship building and flexible resource reallocation. These subvariables provided a structured basis for understanding the mechanisms through which mobilizing capability may enhance financial resilience in a challenging and rapidly evolving funding environment.

Methodology

The study adopted a positivist research philosophy, which assumes that reality is objective, observable, and measurable, and that knowledge can be generated through systematic empirical

inquiry. Positivism was appropriate because the study sought to test hypothesised relationships between mobilizing capability and financial sustainability using quantifiable indicators derived from established theoretical constructs. The independence between the researcher and the observed reality, the use of structured instruments, and the emphasis on empirical validation align with positivist assumptions.

A descriptive correlational research design was employed to examine the relationship between mobilizing capability and the financial sustainability of Kenyan non-profit organizations. Descriptive correlational designs are suitable when the objective is to determine the degree of association between variables without manipulating them. This design was appropriate because the study aimed to assess how mobilizing capability measured through sharing resources with partners, utilizing networks, relationship building, and flexible resource reallocation, influences financial sustainability without establishing causality. The design also aligns with the quantitative approach used to collect measurable data and generalize findings from a discrete sample population.

The target population comprised knowledgeable respondents of active Kenyan NPOs registered with the Public Benefit Organizations Regulatory Authority (PBORA). These included founders, country directors, or board members, as the people who possess direct knowledge of their organizations' capabilities and financial sustainability practices. PBORA's 2025 registry listed 1,698 active NPOs, which formed the sampling frame. Each NPO constituted a unit of analysis, represented by one knowledgeable respondent as the unit of observation.

A sample size of 323 organizations was determined using Yamane's formula at a 95% confidence level. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure representativeness across NPOs operating in different numbers of sectors. The population was stratified into five groups based on the number of sectors in which each NPO operated, and proportionate allocation was applied to determine the number of organizations selected from each stratum. Simple random sampling was then used within each stratum to select the required units. After data cleaning, 197 valid responses were retained for analysis.

Primary data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire. The instrument consisted of two sections: demographic information and Likert-scale items measuring the study variables. The Likert items used a four-point forced-choice scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree), consistent with recommendations to eliminate neutral responses and improve data quality. Items for mobilizing capability and financial sustainability were adapted from validated scales in prior studies and aligned with the dynamic capabilities model proposed by da Costa et al. (2020). The questionnaire was administered electronically using SurveyMonkey, enabling efficient distribution and follow-up.

A pilot study involving 22 NPO leaders was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the instrument. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, with all sub-scales meeting acceptable or good thresholds. For mobilizing capability, sharing resources with partners ($\alpha = 0.755$), utilizing networks ($\alpha = 0.876$), relationship building ($\alpha = 0.855$), and resource reallocation flexibility ($\alpha = 0.777$) demonstrated strong internal consistency. Financial sustainability sub-scales also exhibited high reliability, with coefficients ranging from 0.815 to 0.872. These results confirmed that the instrument consistently measured the intended constructs.

Validity was assessed through construct, content, and criterion-based approaches. Construct validity was ensured by grounding the measurement items in the dynamic capabilities framework. Content validity was strengthened through expert review and pilot testing, which enhanced clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness. Convergent validity was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all mobilizing capability sub-scales exceeding the 0.50 threshold. Criterion validity was examined using Spearman's correlation coefficients, appropriate for ordinal data.

Data preparation involved coding, cleaning, and screening the dataset before analysis. Questionnaires completed in under seven minutes or with more than 10% missing data were excluded to ensure response quality. Mode imputation was applied to remaining missing values under a Missing at Random assumption. Data were exported from SurveyMonkey to Excel and then to SPSS version 30 for analysis. Latent variable scores were computed using means and categorized into low, moderate, and high levels using percentile cutoffs to preserve ordinal properties.

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics to summarize respondent characteristics and variable distributions. Inferential analysis was conducted using ordinal logistic regression, appropriate for modeling relationships between ordinal predictors and ordinal outcomes. The model assessed the influence of mobilizing capability on financial sustainability. Diagnostic checks were performed to ensure model adequacy, including testing the proportional odds assumption. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board and the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained electronically, and confidentiality was assured.

Results

Descriptive Analysis of Mobilizing Capability

Descriptive statistics were computed to assess respondents' perceptions of the four sub-variables used to measure Mobilizing Capability: Sharing with Partners, Utilizing Networks, Relationship Building, and Resource Reallocation Flexibility. Respondents rated each item on a four-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree).

Relationship Building was the strongest dimension ($M = 3.34$), followed by Sharing with Partners ($M = 3.21$) and Utilizing Networks ($M = 3.19$). Resource Reallocation Flexibility was the lowest ($M = 2.97$) as shown in Table 1. Overall Mobilizing Capability was moderate ($M = 3.25$). These results imply that while Kenyan NPOs are relatively stronger in relationship building, sharing with partners, and utilizing networks, resource reallocation flexibility is a substantial limiting element in their mobilizing capability.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Mobilizing Capability

Sub-variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Relationship Building	197	3.34	0.599
Sharing with Partners	197	3.21	0.666
Utilizing Networks	197	3.19	0.606
Resource Reallocation Flexibility	197	2.97	0.610
Mobilizing Capability	197	3.25	0.522

Inferential Analysis

Correlation Between Mobilizing Capability and Financial Sustainability

The Spearman’s rank-order correlation shown in Table 2 revealed a moderate, positive, and statistically significant association between Mobilizing Capability and Financial Sustainability ($\rho = .478$, $p < .001$). This finding suggests that mobilizing capability is positively associated with financial sustainability, indicating that higher levels of this capability tend to correspond with stronger financial sustainability among Kenyan NPOs.

Table 2

Correlation Between Mobilizing Capability and Financial Sustainability

			Financial Sustainability	Mobilizing Capability
Spearman's rho	Financial Sustainability	Correlation	1.000	.478**
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001
	Mobilizing Capability	N	195	192
		Correlation	.478**	1.000
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.
		N	197	197

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Chi-Square Test of Independence

The chi-square test results presented in Table 3 showed a statistically significant association between Mobilizing Capability and Financial Sustainability ($\chi^2 = 55.814$, $p < .001$). Higher mobilizing capability was associated with higher financial sustainability. This result implies that differences in mobilizing capability are meaningfully associated with variations in financial sustainability among Kenyan NPOs.

Table 3

Chi-Square Test for Mobilizing Capability and Financial Sustainability

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	55.814 ^a	4	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	54.339	4	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	43.768	1	<.001
N of Valid Cases	197		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 19.7.

Kruskal–Wallis Test

The Kruskal–Wallis H test results presented in Table 4 confirmed significant differences in financial sustainability across mobilizing capability levels ($H = 43.754$, $p < .001$). Organizations with high mobilizing capability had the highest mean rank. This finding indicates that financial sustainability tends to differ systematically across levels of mobilizing capability, with higher capability corresponding to more favorable sustainability outcomes among Kenyan NPOs.

Table 4

Kruskal–Wallis H Test Results

	Mobilizing Capability	N	Mean Rank
Financial Sustainability	Low	62	64.80
	Moderate	73	97.60
	High	62	126.99
	Total	197	
			Financial Sustainability
Kruskal-Wallis H			43.754
df			2
Asymp. Sig.			<.001

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Mobilizing Capability

Ordinal Logistic Regression Assumptions

The proportional odds assumption was met ($\chi^2 = 4.472$, $p = .107$), as the non-significant Chi square indicated that the assumption of equal slope coefficients across response categories was not violated, thus validating the use of ordinal logistic regression. The model significantly improved prediction over the intercept-only model ($\chi^2 = 49.867$, $p < .001$). Nagelkerke Pseudo $R^2 = .257$ indicated moderately strong explanatory power. Also, both Pearson ($\chi^2 = 4.570$, $p = .102$) and Deviance ($\chi^2 = 4.472$, $p = .107$) tests were non-significant, indicating good model fit.

Parameter Estimates

As shown in Table 5, the negative β coefficients indicate that lower levels of Mobilizing Capability substantially reduce the likelihood of an NPO achieving higher Financial

Sustainability. The coefficient for low Mobilizing Capability ($\beta = -2.585, p < .001$) reflects a very strong negative effect, meaning that organizations with low mobilizing capacity have markedly lower log-odds of reporting higher Financial Sustainability compared to those with high Mobilizing Capability. Likewise, the coefficient for moderate Mobilizing Capability ($\beta = -1.254, p < .001$) shows that even moderate levels of mobilizing strength are associated with considerably reduced odds of achieving stronger financial outcomes. These values demonstrate that as Mobilizing Capability decreases—from high to moderate or low—the probability of an organization attaining higher Financial Sustainability declines meaningfully. These results imply that lower mobilizing capability significantly constrains the likelihood of achieving higher financial sustainability among Kenyan NPOs.

Table 5

Parameter Estimates for Model Predicting Financial Sustainability from Mobilizing Capability

		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Threshold	[Financial Sustainability= 1.00]	-2.073	.301	47.394	1	<.001	-2.663	-1.483
	[Financial Sustainability= 2.00]	-.435	.255	2.907	1	.088	-.936	.065
Location	[Mobilizing Capability=1.00]	-2.585	.385	45.055	1	<.001	-3.340	-1.830
	[Mobilizing Capability=2.00]	-1.254	.344	13.262	1	<.001	-1.929	-.579
	[Mobilizing Capability=3.00]	0 ^a	.	.	0	.	.	.

Link function: Logit.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

Discussion of Results

The findings of this study provide strong evidence that Mobilizing Capability significantly influences the financial sustainability of Kenyan NPOs. Descriptively, organizations rated themselves as moderately strong in relationship building, network utilization, and resource sharing, with Relationship Building emerging as the highest-performing dimension. Sharing with Partners and Utilizing Networks also showed solid capability levels, while Resource Reallocation Flexibility recorded the lowest mean, indicating that internal agility in shifting resources remains comparatively underdeveloped. These patterns suggest that Kenyan NPOs excel in relational aspects of mobilization but face challenges in internal resource flexibility.

Inferential results reinforced the centrality of this capability. Organizations with low or moderate mobilizing capability had substantially reduced odds of achieving higher financial sustainability compared to those with high capability. The model demonstrated statistically significant improvement over the null model. The alignment between moderately high descriptive scores and the model's moderate explanatory strength indicates that mobilizing

capability is both well developed and highly consequential for financial resilience in Kenyan NPOs.

These findings align with the conceptualization of mobilizing capability as the ability to secure, coordinate, and deploy resources to sustain mission-critical activities (da Costa et al., 2020). In Kenya's resource-constrained nonprofit environment—marked by intense competition for donor funding and shifting stakeholder expectations—effective mobilization of financial, human, and informational resources is not merely advantageous but essential for organizational survival.

The study's operationalization of mobilizing capability is well supported in the literature. Strong performance in resource sharing converges with Waerder et al. (2022), who found that collaborative sharing enhances resilience and access to expertise. This also aligns with Tryapkin et al. (2024), who linked collaborative orientation to innovation in nonprofit settings. However, the limited use of mechanisms for tracking shared outcomes diverges from Alderwick et al. (2021), who emphasized the importance of measuring joint impact.

Network utilization showed moderate performance, with organizations leveraging networks for information, advocacy, and in-kind support. This partially aligns with Özman and Gossart (2024), who highlighted the value of strategically integrated networks. However, the Kenyan context diverged from Ihm (2024), who emphasized adaptive communication strategies—an area where many NPOs in this study showed room for improvement.

Relationship building emerged as a relatively strong dimension, consistent with Aboramadan et al. (2021), who linked trust and communication quality to donor credibility and long-term engagement. However, the limited use of structured communication and storytelling strategies diverges from Stühlinger and Hersberger-Langloh (2021), who identified these as critical for building legitimacy and attracting resources.

Resource reallocation flexibility was the weakest dimension, reflecting challenges in shifting resources swiftly in response to emerging needs. This partially aligns with Lovallo et al. (2020), who emphasized the performance benefits of timely resource reallocation. However, the Kenyan NPOs diverged from Chang and Matsumoto (2022), who highlighted resource fungibility and decomposability as key enablers of dynamic allocation—features that were largely absent in this study.

The strength of mobilizing capability as a predictor also suggests important interdependencies. Studies such as Garousi Mokhtarzadeh et al. (2020) and Aujirpongpan and Hareebin (2020) show that mobilizing capability enhances innovation and strategic agility, indicating that its influence may extend beyond direct resource acquisition to shaping broader organizational adaptability. This is particularly relevant in Kenya, where NPOs must continually adjust to shifting donor priorities and community needs.

Overall, this study contributes new empirical evidence by validating mobilizing capability within the Kenyan nonprofit sector. While prior research has focused largely on for-profit firms or community-based organizations in other regions, the present findings affirm that mobilizing capability is a critical determinant of financial sustainability for mission-driven organizations in Kenya. The results underscore the need for NPOs to strengthen strategic partnerships, deepen network integration, enhance relationship management, and build more flexible resource systems to thrive in dynamic environments.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Descriptive results showed that Kenyan NPOs generally perceive themselves as strong in the relational and network-based aspects of mobilizing capability. They also reflect a sector that excels in outward-facing mobilization but faces constraints in internal resource agility. Inferential statistics showed that Mobilizing Capability is strong predictor of financial sustainability. Additionally, the study concludes that mobilizing capability differentiates more strongly between low and moderate levels of financial sustainability than between moderate and high levels, implying that improvements in mobilizing capability may be especially impactful for financially vulnerable organizations.

Taken together, these findings indicate that mobilizing capability is a foundational and high-impact driver of financial resilience. It enhances an organization's ability to leverage networks, cultivate strategic relationships, share resources, and adapt resource flows to emerging needs. While its influence is strengthened when complemented by other dynamic capabilities, mobilizing capability stands out as the capability closely tied to financial sustainability. For Kenyan NPOs, investing in mobilizing capability, particularly through deeper network utilization, stronger relationship management, and more flexible internal resource systems represents a powerful and evidence-based pathway for strengthening long-term financial sustainability.

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