

**International Conference on Public Policy & Social Sciences 2023**

13-15 September 2023

Organised by Faculty of Administrative Science & Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Seremban Campus, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, and International University of Sarajevo (IUS), Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Non-Governmental Organizations: Social Mobilization and Empowerment for  
Community Health Promotion**

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**Abstract**

The emergence of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Malaysia is important as they are part of agents for social mobilizing in the community development field. Those NGOs play a greater role in helping the government by encouraging civic engagement in terms of community health promotion. This qualitative content analysis article, review the issue of social mobilization and empowerment. There are several roles of NGOs in Community Health Promotion (CHP) including advocacy and standard-setting, health service delivery, community mobilization, and information exchange. The roles by NGOs in promoting healthy lifestyles have a direct impact on the level of national health and morbidity.

**Keywords:** Empowerment; Healthy Lifestyles; NGOs; Social Mobilization

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/e-bpj.v9iSI22.5847>

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**1.0 Introduction**

Several social workers contend that the discipline of social work is predicated on the idea of resilience, while not expressly named. An analysis of the historical background and theoretical framework of social work has shown that this statement is in line with social work philosophy (VanBreda, 2001; Flynn et al., 2022). According to VanBreda (2001), the social work philosophy primarily adopts a pathologic worldview and takes the client's characteristics and resources into account. Social work's commitment to resilience and strengths has been seen in many ways throughout time. Social work has always functioned based on resilience, even if it is not formally acknowledged as doing so. An analysis of the development of social work philosophy shows a notable shift from the initial focus on improving the skills and talents of individuals in the client group to professional image (Bader et al., 2023). Social work seeks to improve its professional standing by working in collaboration with psychoanalysis and using the pathological perspective it offers. In the 1930s, the field of social work aimed to enhance its standing in the professional sphere by incorporating the prevailing resilience theory into its theoretical framework. Coping is the deliberate and intentional self-management of one's challenges in a manner that is mutually dependent (Bader

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et al., 2023). While, the strengths perspective is a contemporary and comprehensive paradigm in social work theory and practice that focuses on clients' strengths rather than their challenges (Saleebey, 2021). This approach emphasizes the positive traits and skills that social workers have for mobilizing communities. Social workers are recognized for their skills and talents in resilience, adaptation, stress management, trauma recovery, personal growth through challenges, and seeking social support for constructive behavior.

Assisting other people without anticipating any direct rewards is an example of pro-social behavior, as outlined by psychological theory (Baron and Byrne, 2021). This situation includes the case even if the individual assisting is putting themselves in danger. The act of demonstrating selfless care for the well-being of other people is the definition of altruism. The goal of both pro-social behavior and altruism is to secure the well-being of other people; hence, these two principles are associated with each other's. Cultivation of helping behavior is possible via moral integrity, which is impacted by both inherited characteristics and learning experiences. From the perspective of Baron and Byrne (2021), moral integrity is defined as the motivating factors that have the potential to influence pro-social behavior. Motivation may originate from several sources, including environmental variables, influences from family, and the altruistic qualities of a person. The study on community health promotion could benefit from the idea of pro-social behavior. To effectively promote community health, one must demonstrate a high commitment to assisting people, especially in organizing outreach programs. As a consequence of a dearth of people supporting Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) in executing outreach programs, the implementation is both ineffective and inefficient. The most important objective is to ensure that communities are mobilized for improved health conditions and that they are well informed about the significance of healthcare in the prevention of illnesses.

Incorporating pro-social behavior into NGOs' operations to enhance community health might boost volunteer participation. To increase the number of volunteers, the following measures must be taken: 1) Acknowledging the issue; 2) Obtaining a precise comprehension of the circumstances; 3) Taking responsibility for offering assistance; 4) Choosing a feasible plan of action; and 5) Volunteering or reacting. Many entities, such as NGOs, mass media, policymakers, and communities, must educate and increase awareness about the importance of healthcare. This may be achieved with the help of the mainstream media. The NGO may coordinate programs to educate the public on disease prevention in residential areas, schools, and universities. The NGO representative must clearly and simply describe the poor situation of health promotion during the explanation session. The community should be prepared to participate in initiatives aimed at achieving social advancement. Communities should adopt the new community development perspective, which focuses on empowering the community and highlights the increasing involvement of communities in promoting local health awareness programs. Once communities have a thorough grasp of their obligations, they may take specific actions to effectively meet the needs of marginalized individuals, particularly by assisting them. A grasp of the notion of community health promotion is required for communities to recognize that it involves addressing needs and adopting preventive measures.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Social Mobilization as Empowerment Process

A key component of social mobilization is the empowerment of the underprivileged by utilizing their resources, expertise, and organizations. Consequently, social mobilization entails the empowerment of communities and guaranteeing equitable opportunities for self-development for every person (Laverick, 2021). There is a recognition of the value of women's participation in community development via the process of social mobilization, which is an empowering process. To empower women, policies should go beyond shifting economic priorities and emphasize improving social dynamics, notably in the field of education. Social mobilization in education may influence individuals, families, or communities to prioritize essential educational duties. Thus, effective communication within the community is essential for social mobilization. Concerning social mobilization, the use of the media as the main communication medium is necessary. To educate illiterate individuals, visual communication mediums that employ images to promote universal comprehension are necessary. The transmission of a message using spoken means might sometimes result in a lack of reception. The process of social mobilization, which may take place on several levels, is an essential component in the development of capabilities, organizations, and institutions, particularly in the context of marginalized groups. In most cases, the word is used to describe activities that take place inside local communities; nevertheless, it is also capable of being applied to community mobilization when it is concentrated in a particular region. According to the viewpoints of some individuals, social mobilization is mostly comprised of top-down social movements that use techniques of manipulation and persuasion to accomplish goals on a large scale and in a short amount of time. A spontaneous grassroots movement incorporates self-help and small-scale undertakings and is generally referred to as community mobilization for involvement is typically considered to be a grassroots movement. Cohen (2021) stated that community involvement and social mobilization are two concepts that may be combined to establish a unified process of social change. In this context, community mobilization is seen as the community component of the process of national development.

According to Laverick (2021), the sense of local ownership is a significant component that plays a significant role in the efficacy and sustainability of health promotion cooperation. Next, empowerment comprises a feeling of ownership and the capacity to determine one's destiny (Kirk et al., 2021). The study findings show that facilitators may discover valuable resources and assets for health promotion inside the community by showing respect for local underprivileged individuals (Bader et al., 2023). Therefore, the resources and assets including the people's knowledge, talents, and social ties should be utilized in the empowerment process. Various community health partnerships have been examined, revealing connections between health workers and the populations they cater to in community health promotion programs. Indigenous partners highly value the abilities and expertise of healthcare professionals in many technical and social aspects when it comes to promoting healthcare awareness (Bader et al., 2023). Thus, NGOs concentrate on activities that enhance capacity-building and self-reliance to promote sustainable community development. NGOs aid in community development by

equipping individuals with the resources needed to enhance their skills and capacities (Flynn et al., 2022). Therefore, NGOs are praised for helping community-based organizations and using participatory methods to promote community self-reliance and empowerment. NGOs prioritize programs that focus on promoting literacy in health care and basic care in impoverished urban and rural areas. The current situation in community health promotion requires the development and execution of optimal health promotion strategies that are effective, economical, and enduring. These techniques include empowering individuals to enhance their control over their health and the factors that impact their level of wellness.

## 2.2 Community Health Promotion

Health promotion entails empowering individuals to enhance their influence over factors affecting their health and enhance their overall well-being (WHO, 2021). Promoting wellness is a multifaceted social and political process that seeks to enhance individuals' abilities and address social, environmental, and economic factors to reduce their impact on public and individual health. A comprehensive and organized strategy is created to encourage long-lasting changes in health behaviours by impacting community norms via education and community mobilization. Research indicates that the majority of Americans are interested in living well and are motivated to enhance their quality of life (International Union for Health Promotion and Education, 2021). Many people consistently try to alter undesirable behaviours but often do not succeed (Bader et al., 2023). Health promotion tactics help individuals modify health risk behaviours via methods such as disseminating self-help resources, offering one-on-one counselling, conducting group educational meetings, organizing support groups, and offering health risk evaluations. Community-based health promotion necessitates collaborative efforts from all community sectors to effectively impact changes in health behaviours. Strategies should provide individuals with health information, chances to make and implement healthy choices, community support for these decisions, and economic incentives and policies that encourage healthy behaviours. Community-based health promotion entails fostering public engagement in decision-making and collaborating to identify successful methods for their community. Engaging all community sectors in developing and executing programs fosters collaboration and coherence, which are crucial for the effectiveness of health promotion initiatives.

Comprehending community engagement is crucial for advancing health in various developing countries and highlighting pertinent alternatives (Flynn et al., 2022). In nations with decentralized governance systems that provide administrative and political responsibility to local bodies like municipalities, promoting community engagement in mainstream healthcare is most achievable (Hidayah et al., 2022). These entities are formally responsible and empowered to include communities and supervise contributions from development stakeholders for local development plans. Authorities may integrate health treatments with broader development goals by connecting them to initiatives that provide livelihood support, education, savings, and credit crucial for local progress (Flynn et al., 2022). Community health promotion involves advocating for improved behaviours and better health throughout society while also emphasizing community empowerment. Strengthening the community through health promotion increases awareness among its members. This will create an educated and health-conscious society which will result in less disease transmission. Governmental and non-governmental organizations in the health sector use community empowerment in community health promotion as a preventive strategy (Bader et al., 2023). Communities should prioritize raising health awareness due to the rising prices of pharmaceuticals, which need more resources to cover expenses. Therefore, it is essential to inform people about community health promotion and emphasize the importance of their participation in these initiatives.

## 3.0 Methodology

A qualitative technique is used to investigate the functions of NGOs in advancing community health via social mobilization and empowerment. The content analysis technique was used, using data, text, and empirical evidence. Therefore, it follows specific and customized methods. The approach included using coding systems, researching the origins of codes, and analysing historical data. Categories in classical content analysis are directly extracted from the text data (Mayring, 2022). The research starts by analysing appropriate prosocial behaviour as the basis for the first categorization. Summative content analysis involves quantifying and contrasting phrases or information, and then examining the context in which they are used. The authors provide tailored analytic procedures for each approach and technique to ensure the reliability of the sources. The search parameters were expanded to include NGOs, social mobilization, community empowerment, and health promotion for coding in the study. Data was collected from databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and Open Access Publications. Mayring (2022) suggests using qualitative content analysis to explore research objectives by analysing communication content. Highlighting communication is crucial for achieving the research objectives related to examining the actions of NGOs in fostering social mobilization and community empowerment for health. The search is tailored to ensure that the communication is suitable for the study of this research, focusing on a specific collection of speeches by a political leader from printed and electronic news sources. Secondary data will be collected only from 2020 to 2022 to guarantee data precision. This ensures that the constraints of using secondary data for research may be effectively addressed to provide credible analysis.

## 4.0 Findings

NGOs function as social organizations that enable collective actions, and the coordination of people is crucial in empowering the community to ensure the effectiveness of community health promotion initiatives. Next, NGOs play a crucial role in promoting community involvement to enhance the effectiveness of healthcare outreach programs for disadvantaged and rural populations in attaining healthcare equity. The Ottawa Charter describes health promotion as the process of empowering individuals or communities to enhance their health by gaining control over it (Bader et al., 2023). Furthermore, in order to achieve holistic well-being, individuals or communities

must acknowledge, meet their needs, and adapt to and manage their surroundings. Thus, the presence of NGOs will assist communities in attaining overall well-being via their health services and community mobilization efforts.

#### *4.1 Health Service Delivery*

NGOs in Asia and Latin America have helped to boost service demand, raise public awareness of community needs, and pilot innovative service delivery. These community based methods that were ultimately adopted by the government to ensure health aid can reach to the underprivileged communities. The government implemented community-based ways to guarantee assistance reaches poor populations. African NGOs have helped the government incorporate evidence-based health planning and community decision-making into its responsibilities. The state may make agreements with non-governmental organizations to provide health services. NGOs often assist marginalized individuals in accessing healthcare services and support governments in health-related initiatives such as treatment campaigns, disease prevention programs, pharmaceutical distribution, and serving disadvantaged communities. They also help develop innovative methods for managing illnesses (Hidayah et al., 2022). NGOs enhance healthcare by offering tailored services to address community needs, advocating for fair health policies, facilitating communication between communities and the government, reaching remote and underserved areas, and delivering cost-effective and efficient services. NGOs provide expertise in several fields, including service design and delivery. They create and provide innovative techniques to other non-governmental organizations or the government sector. NGOs increase public awareness and knowledge. This might improve the communication between doctors and patients and empower the public to have more control over health initiatives. NGOs' services provided outside of government control may differ in quality and extent, perhaps leading to less adaptability to the local community and increased dependence on international financial support (Flynn et al., 2022). Numerous national non-governmental organizations have challenges in acquiring public funding, efficiently administering and sustaining programs, dealing with negative attitudes and low involvement among health professionals, tackling poverty and other social concerns, and developing robust links with their members. NGOs have a competitive edge when they can acquire resources unavailable to the government or address unmet needs, such as extending coverage (Gordon, 2021). NGOs are evolving to meet the demands of the modern world, although their fundamental purpose of delivering services to communities remains unchanged. The organization should take the lead in providing help to individuals while simultaneously focusing on community participation and empowerment. Thus, NGOs will continue to be crucial in promoting community health through their health service delivery outreach initiatives.

#### *4.2 Community Mobilization*

Establishing a robust grassroots organization with local accountability is essential for social mobilization to advocate for the community and achieve common goals, such as improving the healthcare system (Hidayah et al., 2022). This organization's governance allows the community to autonomously choose the management of its resources such as human resources and funds. Members of these organizations should be diverse with a focus on gender equality and economic status, prioritizing women and those experiencing extreme poverty. This to ease NGOs provide roles in healthcare services to communities and participate in decentralized planning procedures with community involvement. NGOs often provide healthcare services in distant and disadvantaged regions. Services relying on user fees may not be sustainable in the long run. NGOs must interact with local communities at the grassroots level to empower them via efficient representation and address their health issues. Self-reliance is an essential factor in community advancement and is strongly associated with ideas such as mutual assistance, self-sufficiency, indigenous community engagement, and rural development (Hidayah et al., 2022). Self-reliance promotes the utilization of local resources, abilities, and personal belongings to enhance one's situation (Bader et al., 2023). Self-reliance is becoming more popular as a method for communal development. It involves people depending on their resources instead of relying on external funding (Flynn et al., 2022). The self-reliance plan depends on the local community's willingness and ability to rely on resources and technologies that they can manage and control. Embracing a self-reliant strategy involves using all available human, natural, and technological resources. Community workers and NGOs need to acknowledge and enhance their abilities to achieve self-sufficiency. They should then create inventive techniques to use these abilities as assets for the advancement of society. Thus, NGOs need to motivate and mobilize individuals to attain self-reliance and engage in development initiatives (Bader et al., 2023). The strategy to achieve this involves enhancing individuals' abilities to address their own needs via self-reliant community initiatives. The primary issue faced by a village or community while using the self-reliance approach is local inertia. Conventional practices, isolation, and ignorance hinder the latent energy inside a community. NGOs may assist the community in overcoming inertia by teaching, organizing, raising awareness, offering microfinance, and bringing new technologies to help people achieve their potential. The goal is for community self-help initiatives to maintain after NGO support ends with a focus on local self-reliance. NGOs should enable local communities to effectively mobilize. This empowerment will result in self-sufficiency and a deeper understanding of healthcare. Thus, NGOs should operate at the grassroots level and include local communities in their health outreach programs. This will enhance cultural awareness as advised by the World Health Organization (WHO).

### **5.0 Discussion**

NGOs are expanding their responsibilities, particularly in healthcare, to match the country's rapid advancement towards developed status. There are several ways to enhance the competitiveness of Malaysian NGOs and acknowledge the important role of civil society and community organizations in driving the nation's development. The government should see NGOs as valuable partners for cooperation but should refrain from utilizing them arbitrarily, particularly for disseminating political ideologies. NGOs strive to guarantee that assistance reaches the most fundamental level of society inside the country. Government agencies and NGOs collaborating may

improve the nation's well-being by working together effectively as a unified entity (Bader et al., 2023). Moreover, the government has to shift its focus to the emerging community development model, which views civil society as a catalyst for transformation. The government should implement the idea of modern social mobilization, in which communities actively exchange information and provide support to those in need of aid. It is time to implement these adjustments. The lack of community engagement in health promotion has hindered the attainment of empowerment in Malaysia (Hidayah et al., 2022). Therefore, it is essential for NGOs to be involved in empowerment for health promotion to achieve total wellness among communities.

Federal and state governments need to have a mutual understanding with NGOs that are dedicated to community empowerment via social work. Authorities should recognize NGOs as a legitimate form of community service (Hidayah et al., 2022). Moreover, many individuals in the business sector see NGOs as entities that may inspire companies to improve their social responsibility and align their objectives accordingly (Kirk et al., 2021). NGOs may influence corporations to shift their social responsibility strategy from charity-oriented to community empowerment-oriented. Their strong links to local communities make them more successful in partnering with companies to improve community development efforts (Flynn et al., 2022). Historically, the connection between the business world and civil society has been strained. However, modern political dynamics and demands from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have impacted how the commercial sector views NGOs. Businesses are becoming more open to partnering with NGOs for community development projects. Several multinational corporations (MNCs) are backing local communities around their operations with programs focused on community health, clean water and sanitation, agriculture, and the creation of small businesses (Bader et al., 2023). Either the corporate foundations of businesses or their community relations departments provide this assistance. Corporate sector participation in community programs is crucial for providing financial and intellectual resources. In Malaysia, there is little private-sector support for NGOs, particularly in the area of community health promotion (Hidayah et al., 2022). Government organizations and ministries often spearhead community health promotion initiatives with little involvement from the business sector. It is essential to educate the business sector about cooperating with NGOs to protect community health. One of the example is businesses may avoid polluting the river and safeguard the health of the residents by not dumping their garbage into the water. This indirectly supports NGOs in promoting health and wellbeing by increasing community knowledge of comprehensive health.

## 6.0 Conclusion& Recommendations

Communities' empowerment relies significantly on the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in mobilizing social efforts to promote community health. Historically, local communities thought that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were exclusively in charge of promoting community health. A new paradigm has evolved due to developments in social mobilization, where local people actively participate in established projects. An innovative technique for social mobilization is shown by increasing opportunities for civil society involvement in health promotion. After social mobilization, a strong framework must be established to improve the health and well-being of communities. Given the situation, it is highly recommended that everyone enhance their support at the local level for the mobilization efforts in health promotion. It is crucial for all individuals in society to recognize the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and to take preventative actions to avoid major illnesses, including heart attacks, renal failure, and high blood pressure. This study is crucial since a substantial number of patients die from these illnesses annually, monthly, and even hourly due to infection. It is crucial to improve the interaction between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and communities to address these illnesses and other health issues effectively. Community empowerment is crucial for achieving this objective, and NGOs must fulfill their responsibilities by promoting community health through campaigns, setting standards, delivering healthcare, mobilizing communities, and disseminating information.

## Acknowledgement

Praises and thanks to Allah SWT for His showers of blessings throughout the writing of this paper. I would like to express my gratitude to the Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, UiTM, and Research Institute for Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore, UUM. I also would like to thank our Dean, Head of Department, and colleagues who provided insights, before during, and after the course of this paper

## Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper provides insights on scientific research in social works specifically related to community health promotion

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