

Strategic Communication and Sustainability: A Qualitative Study of Ngo Operated Malaysian Aged Care Centers

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Abstract - A significant increase in Malaysia's elderly population is causing a surge in demand for aged care centers run by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As a result, effective communication is essential for NGOs in driving sustainability, particularly by strengthening transparency, building trust, and engaging stakeholders. This study investigates the link between communication strategies and sustainability of Malaysian aged care centers of NGOs. To achieve better understanding, data collection was conducted using a qualitative research strategy with semi-structured interviews. The study's sample consisted of ten (10) aged care centers located in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, Malaysia. The findings indicated that NGOs have incorporated effective communication tactics into their organizations, resulting in a greater impact on their sustainability. According to the findings, organizations that execute communication strategies that are targeted, transparent, and participative are in a better position to gain the trust of donors, attract volunteers, and establish long-term partnerships. A recommendation plan has been developed based on the findings. This study proposes a system that incorporates effective communication strategies in aged care centers run by Malaysian NGOs. Therefore, identifying communication methods that are relevant to Malaysia will contribute to the current body of knowledge, and these insights are critical for NGO boards and legislators concerned with sustainability over the long term and public accountability.

Keywords: Non-governmental Organization (NGOs), Elderly Care Centers, Communication, Sustainability

I. INTRODUCTION

The swiftly aging population in Malaysia has become significant as a result of the continual growth in the number of elderly people present in Malaysia (Tan et al., 2025). According to forecasts by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), Malaysia will become an aging nation by the year 2030, when 5.8 million people, or 15 percent of the total population, will become senior citizens. (Shamin et al., 2024) indicated that the life expectancy of people in this country who are currently 60 years old is steadily increasing. This means that the life expectancy of these individuals is

rising. Consequently, the significance of the role that NGOs play in providing services to the elderly segment of our population is becoming more critical. Nonetheless, as the number of NGOs in Malaysia providing care services to the elderly grows, a number of concerns may occur. The factors connected with the sustainability of NGOs may be particularly pertinent to these issues. Effective communication is one of the variables recognized as having a bearing on the long-term viability of these NGOs involved in the aged care sector. However, despite increasing pressure for sustainability (Salleh et al., 2024), most NGOs seem to exhibit a lack of communication between the board of trustees and the beneficiaries. There is still a lack of study that focuses on the communication aspects of NGOs, even though it is common knowledge that NGOs employ a wide variety of communication strategies to exert influence over society (Okpodu et al., 2024). Many studies have not been done on how the administration of NGOs uses communication with their staff and other beneficiaries to accomplish their goals and to satisfy their mission.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the approach by which NGOs deal with the process of handling communication issues for elderly care centers managed by them. Additionally, there was no research found in the prior literature regarding NGOs managing aged care centers in Malaysia, which was specifically focused on the importance of communication. In this study, therefore similar elements will be investigated from a Malaysian perspective, in particular looking at the role that NGOs play in handling communication issues related to the running of aged care centers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 NGOs Sustainability

In recent years, the concept of sustainability has gained increasing prominence in research and policy discussions.

Sustainability refers to the means of satisfying our current demands without jeopardizing future generations' ability to meet their own needs (Moore et al., 2017). On the other hand, the notion of sustainability may be slightly different between "for-profit organizations" and "non-profit organizations" (Singh & Mthuli, 2021). In the context of non-profit organizations, sustainability can be seen as the capacity of an organization to endure and ensure that it continues to provide services to its members (Abidin, Ibrahim, and Abdul Aziz, 2022). In doing so, NGOs can keep their pledges to their customers, patrons, and the society in which they operate, which enables the organizations that rely on them to put their faith in the commitments that they have made (Ijon et al., 2024). A crucial factor in the long-term viability and operation of NGOs is achieving financial sustainability, which enables them to reliably provide services to their communities despite significant fluctuations in financing (Ijon et al., 2024). According to the findings of (Alnamrouti et al., 2022), the relationship between donors and NGOs is one of the most important organizational resources for the development of NGOs' operations and growth, which ultimately leads to long-term sustainability (Slaiby et al., 2025; Alnamrouti et al., 2022) highlighted that transparent communication, robust motivation, and supervisory roles can be effectively employed to enhance sustainability efforts. This perspective is further endorsed by (Singh & Mthuli, 2021), who assert that effective communication strategies between donors and NGOs can foster and sustain long-term relationships, thereby ensuring ongoing financial support (Ayaz, 2019). Therefore, NGOs need to employ effective communication strategies to establish a positive connection with donors. This will result in increased donor loyalty, which is essential for securing long-term support (Okpodu et al., 2024).

2.2 Communication in NGOs

Communication serves as a mechanism for fostering and enhancing understanding, rather than merely conveying information, which underpins development. (Taufiq et al., 2024). Furthermore, communication must incorporate the

interpretation of social interactions that exist between individuals. Additionally, communication must incorporate the understanding of social relations between the parties involved. NGO communication is primarily focused on two basic goals: the first is to equip employees with the necessary information to carry out the project responsibilities of their operations, and the second is to urge stakeholders to participate in the activities on an individual level (Okpodu et al., 2024). The current working environment in NGOs is evolving swiftly. NGOs have a responsibility to acknowledge the challenges associated with the rapid transmission and reception of information that is both strategically significant and accurate (Mary et al., 2023; Alnamrouti et al., 2022) demonstrated that trust correlates with dependable knowledge exchange. The higher levels of confidence in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) show that there is more communication between persons, organizations, and stakeholders in which they are engaged (Singh & Mthuli, 2021). Furthermore, the top management of any NGO is required to utilize communication as a development plan both within and outside of the organization (Okpodu et al., 2024). The ability to communicate effectively with employees and other stakeholders has the potential to increase the level of involvement in the organization, which in turn contributes to the enhancement of its overall performance (Noor, 2025). Effective communication is a concern for NGOs today as it is considered the cornerstone of a growth strategy and serves as a crucial instrument for structuring and sustaining successful social and professional relationships (Tung et al., 2024). To address organizational issues, a continuous exchange of ideas and interactions among individuals is necessary, with effective communication regarded as an essential component of community functioning (Abdi & Bashiir, 2025; Baros, 2020). Today, in every program operated by NGOs, the value of effective communication between employees and other stakeholders is unquestionable. In Fig 1 to encourage stakeholders to participate in beneficial ways while allowing stakeholders to take ownership of the development efforts, NGOs should continuously establish and employ effective ways to communicate within the organization (Taufiq et al., 2024).

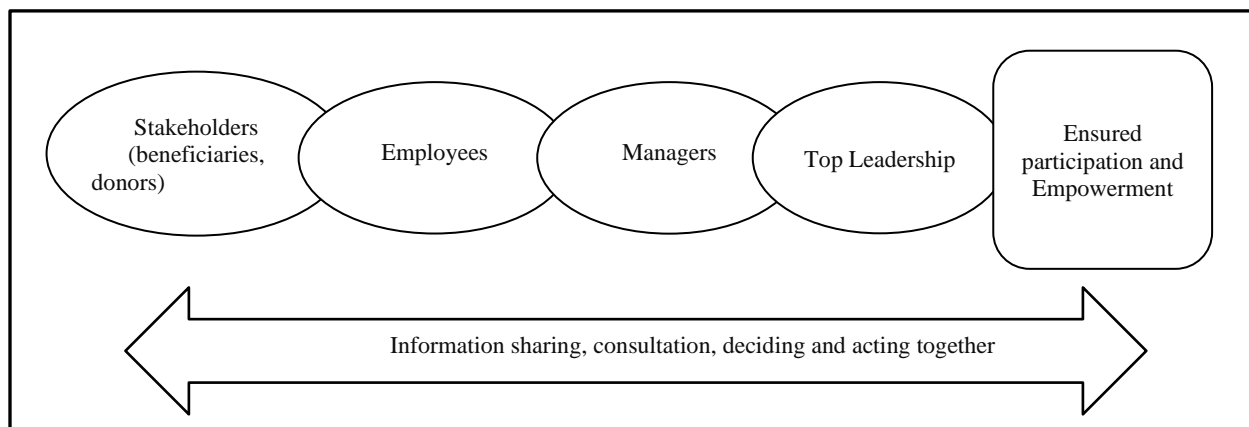


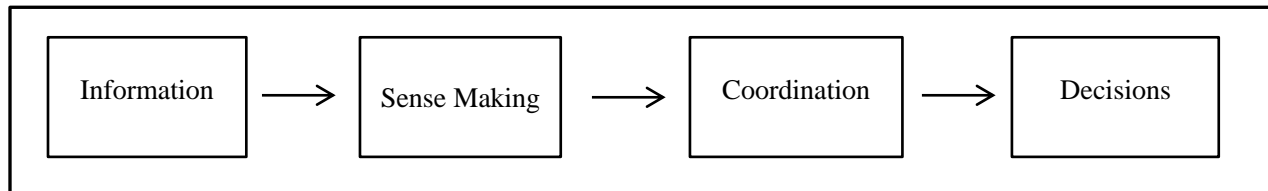
Fig. 1 Flow of Communication in NGOs

2.3 Theoretical Review of Communication

2.3.1 Organizational Information Theory

Karl Weick posits that organizational information theory focuses on the importance of knowledge sharing and fostering relationships among individuals (Czarniawska, 2005; Taufiq et al., 2024) observed that a significant concern in NGO management is navigating through ambiguous messages and information. Given the nature of their operations, NGOs primarily depend on effective communication and knowledge sharing (Najar et al., 2025). On top of that, both the staff and stakeholders play a crucial role in facilitating knowledge sharing within the NGO sector (Baggyalakshmi et al., 2024; Noor, 2025) expressed that mismanagement of information can sometimes result in minor confusion, which can have an impact on the

functioning of NGOs. Hence, a systematic work plan and professional relationships will enhance the effectiveness of NGOs due to the level of positive engagement between the NGO and society (Gomes et al., 2024). Consequently, this idea can be employed by NGO leaders to enhance engagement with donors. (Noor et al., 2023) observed that organizational information theory can serve as a tool for enhancing the interaction between stakeholders and NGOs. In Fig 2 it is expected to provide a framework for examining employee retention strategies, because understanding how NGO leaders create and execute communication strategies will allow present and potential NGOs to establish positive relations in the process of interacting with employees, resulting in an increase in donor retention rates. (Najar et al., 2025). In light of this, the organizational information theory constitutes the most important aspect of this study.



(Source: Adapted from Karl Weick (1969))

Fig. 2 The Process of Organizational Information Theory

III. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research design, conducting semi-structured interviews with ten (10) respondents from various aged care centers affiliated with Malaysian NGOs (Musa & Mohamad, 2018). Participants included owners, directors, and chairpersons, aimed at assessing the availability and implementation of effective communication within their organizations. The study was carried out in ten (10) aged care centers managed by NGOs in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This study focused on aged care centers due to their size and economic circumstances. Malaysia is encountering several challenges in the management and administration of elderly care, particularly regarding their living arrangements and the integration of effective communication within the centers (Al-Jubouri, 2022). The selection of respondents was conducted in accordance with recommendations by (Creswell, 2013), who indicated that a range of between 5 to 25 respondents is adequate for phenomenological studies. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, with each

session lasting around 50 to 60 minutes. As noted by (Bryman, 2008), it is essential to use plain language and to exclude any adverse data from the interview guide. In addition, the secondary analysis of published electronic newspapers, websites, and other pertinent information enhanced the discussions and findings of this study regarding the current state of effective communication in aged care centers operated by Malaysian NGOs. The data obtained from secondary sources underwent qualitative analysis through thematic content analysis. Semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed multiple times, with themes organized based on the data collection method to uncover any discrepancies or contradictions. This study employed the technique for thematic analysis developed by Braun & Clarke, 2006) for further exploration, which includes the following steps: (1) familiarization with the data; (2) generation of initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the report. The questions used during the interview sessions are reproduced below.

TABLE I INTERVIEW QUESTIONS CORRESPOND TO RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To investigate the communication strategies implemented in the aged care centers of Malaysian NGOs.	
Type of respondent	Interview question
Chairman/Owner/ Director	Flows
	(1) Do you communicate the strategic goals and direction of the organization to your staff?
	(2) Do you engage in discussions with your staff regarding their roles and responsibilities within the organization?
	(3) Are staff members provided with the opportunity to express and address their concerns to higher management?

	(4) Do you allow your staff to share their views and ideas to participate in the decision-making process? Is it solely the engagement of the board? Do you offer a platform for staff to submit complaints and suggestions?
	(5) Do you communicate with stakeholders, including donors, beneficiaries, and communities, regarding ongoing issues and new developments within the organization?
	Tools
	(6) What methods do you use to convey information to your staff? Such as WhatsApp, email, etc.
	(7) Regarding the activities and programs involving your stakeholders, what sources do they utilize to obtain information about your organization?
	(8) Do you conduct a fundraising campaign to enhance revenues? Which medium are you utilizing? Such as via telephone communications, online platforms, social media channels, public relations initiatives, events, and more.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondents' Information Profile

The respondents' profiles are delineated in Table I. A total of ten (10) respondents were chosen from aged care centers run by NGOs in Malaysia, the majority of whom were Malays,

followed by Chinese and Indians. The majority of the respondents possessed either a Bachelor's degree or a Diploma and comprised seven (7) males and three (3) females.

TABLE II PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

No.	Organization code	Position	Qualification	Gender	Ethnicity
1.	C01	Executive Director	Bachelor of Finance (Hons)	Male	Malay
2.	C02	Vice Chairman	Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons)	Male	Malay
3.	C03	Executive Director	Diploma	Male	Malay
4.	C04	Executive Director	Bachelor's Degree	Male	Indian
5.	C05	Executive Director	Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons)	Female	Malay
6.	C06	Owner	Diploma	Female	Malay
7.	C07	Owner	Diploma	Male	Chinese
8.	C08	Owner	Bachelor of Quantity Surveying (Hons)	Male	Malay
9.	C09	Owner	Bachelor's degree	Male	Malay
10.	C10	Owner	Diploma in Nursing	Female	Malay

Respondents' Feedback on Communication Flows in NGO Management

The top management was questioned regarding the communication strategies that were utilized in their NGOs (Table II). In Fig 3 the most respondents place a high priority on open communication and involvement within their organizations, as well as allowing the community to express their opinions and ideas, the sharing of organizational requirements and issues with staff, and the sharing of strategic goals and direction with the community by NGOs. In addition to having a clear understanding of the work or instruction that has been provided, there are nine respondents who have shared the strategic goals with the staff and management. Further respondents commented that the board gets regular updates from staff on issues affecting the organization. In addition to this, they disclosed that they provide the community with regular updates regarding development plans, programs, and activities, and that they also organized awareness and special events with their community. As a last point of discussion, the respondents went on to debate the possibility of regularly scheduled meetings with relevant stakeholders. All the respondents provided the responses that are listed below verbatim.

"We shall go through all the chores and responsibilities that have to be done when we hire fresh staff members. Their responsibility is therefore obvious, and they know what has to be done. Looking after the elderly is different from looking after children. We also make sure that any issues developing inside our company with our staff are resolved".

"We have fostered an open communication and involvement for the staff and volunteers. We provide a channel for them to share their concerns and issues as the individuals who came to us are diverse; our organization provides a forum for people to share their perspectives. We must leverage this potential and recognize everyone based on their contribution"

"We occasionally organize events, such as Maulidurasul." As many as 10,000 individuals will journey from various states to participate with us. We also organize a town hall meeting, offer breakfast, and commence discussions regarding our strategy and direction. We shall apprise them of the latest advancements within our organization and any ongoing issues occurring in our facility. The purpose of our special events is to foster a sense of connection between our donors and the organization.

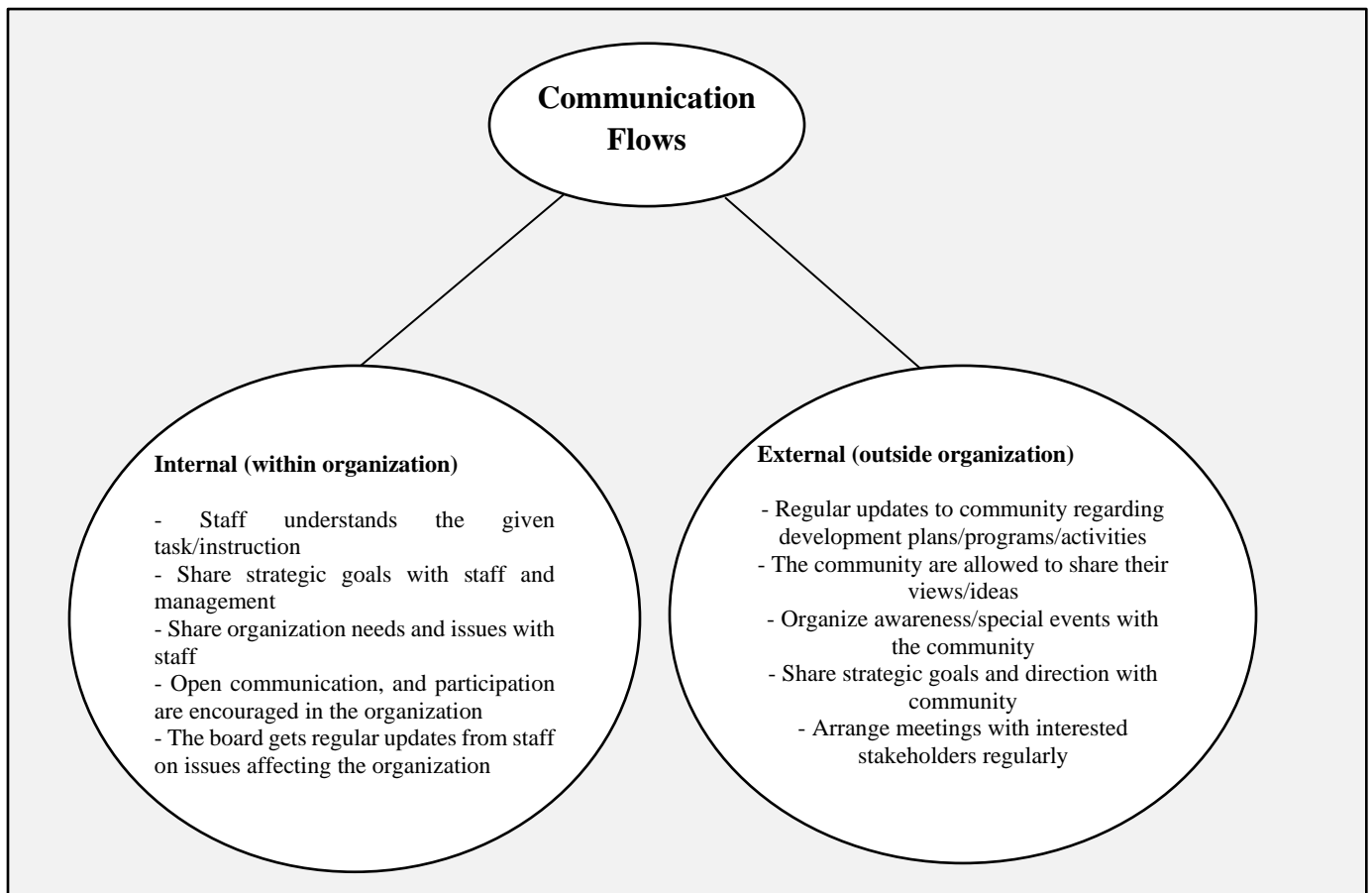


Fig. 3 Mind Mapping depicts the representation of information from all centers concerning “Flows”

Respondents' Feedback on Communication Tools in NGO Management

The top management was questioned about the communication tools that they were utilizing in their NGOs during the interview process. In their responses, most respondents stated that they interacted with their personnel and other important stakeholders within their organizations through the use of WhatsApp and face-to-face meetings. The respondents disclosed how they communicate with their staff using email. Additional respondents provided feedback

regarding the ways in which they communicate with their stakeholders regarding NGOs via means of mail, phone calls, and their websites. In Fig 4 the six of the respondents mentioned how they make use of the newspaper, and most of the respondents mentioned their booklets as one of the instruments that they use to introduce the background of their organizations. On the other hand, they went on to discuss how NGOs can disseminate information through their various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The following is a list of the responses that were received from the respondents.

“Most community is already familiar with our organizations because of our Facebook page, website, and YouTube channel. People will occasionally search for senior citizen’s facilities to donate or arrange an event. As a result of their

search on one of these three platforms, those individuals will contact us and come here to visit or donate.”

“On our Facebook page, we do ask for donations, but the amount of people who come forward to give is low. Therefore, to raise money, we send an official letter to commercial organizations or financial institutions.”

“We have a WhatsApp group for the Board of Directors to address any issues or concerns that may arise inside our organization. Additionally, the employees themselves have a group and a channel of communication, such as regularly communicating with one another through WhatsApp. Alternatively, we will hold meetings in person. Our ability to communicate has not been a problem up until this point.”

“We frequently appear in the press or newspaper, and partner with other NGOs which allows the public to become acquainted with us directly.”

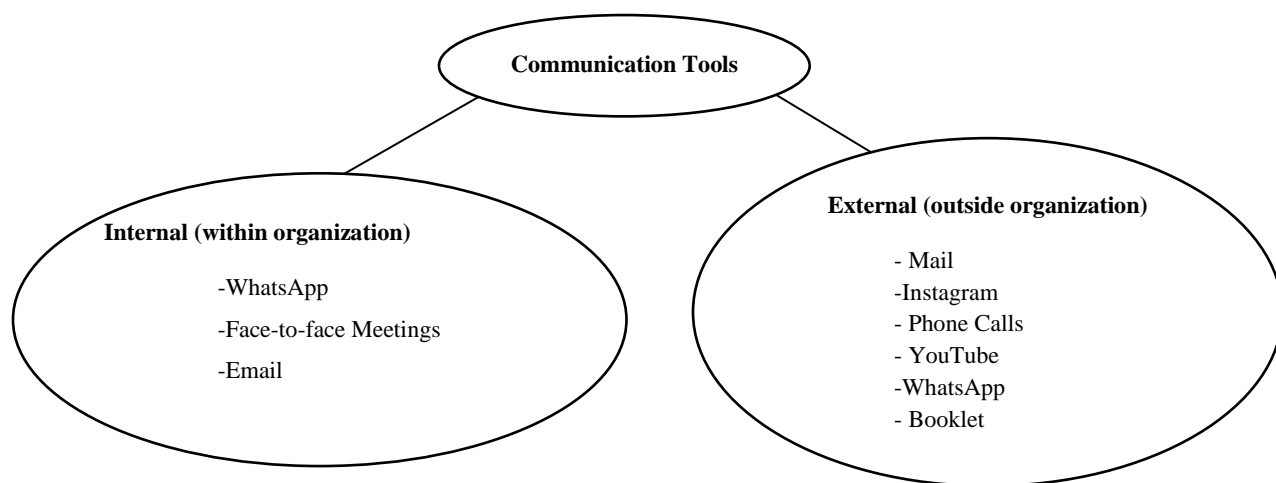


Fig. 4 Find Mind Mapping regarding Communication Tools Correspond to Research Objective

Mind Mapping depicts the representation of information from all centers concerning “Tools”

4.2 Discussion

This study was conducted to explore the strategies for communications that affect the sustainability of NGOs, particularly in the Malaysian aged care industry. The current study identified the communication approaches adopted by NGOs, which included the components of flows and tools. The study's findings aligned with existing literature, indicating that organizational communication serves as the cornerstone for building and influencing an organization's environment (Taufiq et al., 2024). It was discovered that improving NGOs' ability to communicate openly might be one of the measures that could be employed to improve their sustainability. Moreover, the study's results suggest that NGO boards are more inclined to pursue financial support from a diverse array of stakeholders via leveraging social media and organizing events. This aligns with previous research (Singh & Mthuli, 2021; Tung et al., 2024), as such events may engage several corporate entities, universities, and governmental bodies to promote transparency and accountability among NGOs. This will encourage the board to actively engage in strategic decisions related to enhancing their NGOs' accountability (Tan et al., 2025). Aside from that, (Dumitrica, 2021) indicated in their research that communication strategies employing social media have heightened the demand for transparency and accountability from NGOs. Furthermore, this study found that most NGOs utilized various new media platforms internally, such as WhatsApp, in a manner analogous to their face-to-face interactions.

This study demonstrated that, irrespective of differing group sizes, NGOs information sharing on platforms such as WhatsApp was essential for assessing the genuine impact of communications with staff, as it significantly contributed to informing, fostering community, and serving as a crucial element for NGOs to achieve their mission. Conversely, the data revealed that the community can articulate their perspectives and insights regarding the issues and advancements of NGOs. This indicated that NGOs upheld transparent communication with their respective

stakeholders. The importance of sharing perspectives and opinions has also been supported by scholars (Abdi & Bashiir, 2025; Mary et al., 2023; Okpodu et al., 2024). The study revealed that while the majority of NGOs strive to engage with the communities they serve about their developments and activities, only a small minority communicate regarding their financial affairs. Therefore, this study recommends that NGO boards should diligently provide information, especially regarding their financial data, to diverse stakeholders. This may not only persuade prospective donors to increase their contributions but also enhance the accountability and transparency of NGO operated aged care centers, potentially impacting the sustainability of these organizations. This aligns with the findings of (Abiddin et al., 2022; Alnamrouti et al., 2022), who identified that inadequate information undermines organizational sustainability.

In addition, this study recommends that NGOs implement a monitoring and feedback mechanism. In Fig 5 approach enables NGO staff, beneficiaries, and the general public to assess and criticize the overall operations of the organizations, serving as a communication platform for both internal and external interactions. For example, the NGOs may establish a mechanism for reporting and addressing concerns. By employing this approach, a staff member of an NGO or public entity can submit or lodge a complaint concerning inappropriate behavior occurring within the organization, as well as any corrupt practices that may be occurring within the NGOs. Besides, it serves as a platform to collect feedback on project activities from pertinent stakeholders and beneficiaries. These recommendations have also been supported by prior scholars (Noor, 2025; Tung et al., 2024). As a result of the findings, it has been demonstrated that NGOs must implement an essential organizational strategy that enables them to successfully carry out their mandate and builds long-term confidence in the organizations. This strategy involves preserving transparency in communication with diverse stakeholders. It was also revealed that effective communication methods

between NGOs and their key stakeholders are essential for establishing positive relationships, which in turn will boost donors' loyalty, which is necessary for obtaining sustainable funding in its entirety. On top of that, the findings indicated effective communication strategies that have been used in the aged care centers of NGOs. These strategies fall into two emerging types, which are communication flows and

communication tools, as shown in Fig 5. An illustration of communication strategies in Malaysian NGOs that provide care for the elderly provides a concise summary of the interaction between the key stakeholders. This relationship is evident in the communication that takes place between the board, staff, donors, and other stakeholders.

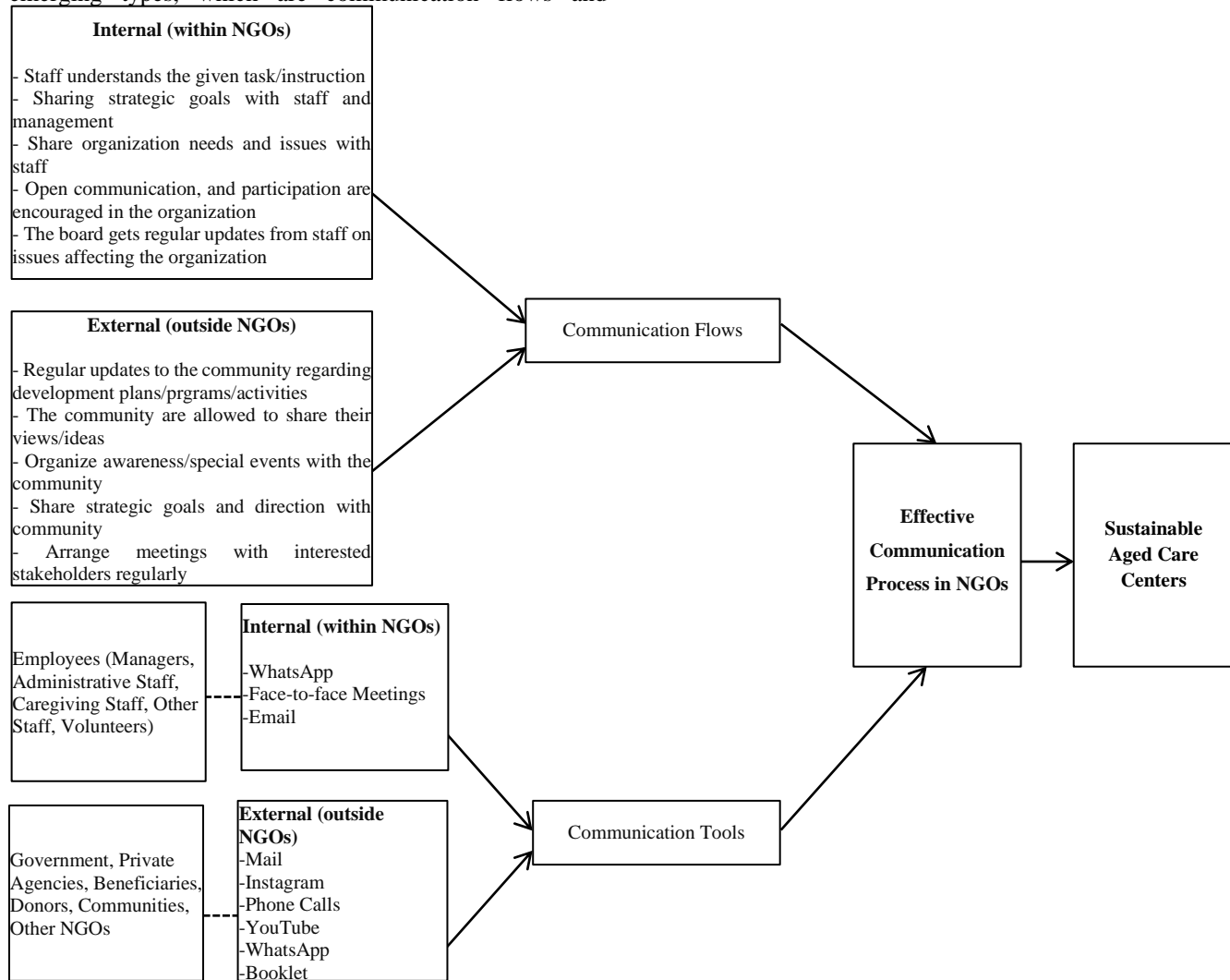


Fig. 5 Effective Communication Strategies in Aged Care Centers of Malaysian NGOs

V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore communication strategies appropriate for the sustainability of Malaysian aged care centers operated by NGOs. This study provides evidence that it is essential to use best practices of communication to improve the long-term viability of NGOs. The findings of this study indicate that NGOs in Malaysia have successfully implemented the relevant communication strategies within their respective organizations. A significant contribution has been made in the realm of communication by these findings. To facilitate the process of creating an understanding between NGOs, it is essential that there exists communication

in both directions between NGOs and key stakeholders. These same stakeholders will be able to communicate their expectations as regards to their requirements, their motives for contributing, and their thoughts on the organization. Not only will it help the organizations to determine who they should be targeting for financing, but it will also allow those same stakeholders to contribute their insights. This will benefit both parties involved. The significance of communication in this study contributes to the understanding of whether or not the organization has the potential to be developed over an extended period, while also promoting societal sustainability through inclusive and transparent engagement with stakeholders (Shahidi Hamedani et al.,

2025). In conclusion, it is hoped that the findings of this study will be of assistance to the top management of NGOs, particularly those working in the field of aged care, when it comes to the process of making strategic decisions regarding communication strategies. This is done with the intention of enhancing the performance of their organizations and in ensuring that they will continue to function over the long term. This study may assist policymakers in formulating strategies for NGOs to enhance their regulatory frameworks, aligning them more closely with those employed by NGOs in other jurisdictions.

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