

Mission-driven budgeting, Donor Behavior and financial sustainability of non-governmental organizations in Mombasa County.

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Abstract

Financial sustainability remains a critical concern for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), particularly in contexts characterized by heavy dependence on donor funding and fluctuating financial environments. This study examined the influence of mission-driven budgeting on the financial sustainability of NGOs in Mombasa County, Kenya, with donor behavior considered as a moderating variable. Grounded in Resource Dependence Theory, the study adopted a positivist research philosophy and a descriptive cross-sectional design. Data were collected using structured questionnaires from 75 finance managers drawn from a target population of 123 registered NGOs, yielding a response rate of 61%. Descriptive and inferential statistics were analyzed using SPSS version 28. The findings revealed that mission-driven budgeting has a significant positive effect on financial sustainability ($r = 0.619$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that aligning financial allocations with organizational mission enhances accountability, resource efficiency, and long-term viability. Furthermore, regression results showed that mission-driven budgeting explained 61.4% of the variation in financial sustainability ($R^2 = 0.614$). The introduction of donor behavior as a moderating variable significantly improved the model's explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.712$), confirming its moderating effect ($\Delta R^2 = 0.098$, $p < 0.05$). These results underscore the importance of both internal financial management practices and external funding dynamics in shaping NGO sustainability. The study concludes that NGOs that institutionalize mission-driven budgeting and effectively manage donor relationships are more likely to achieve financial stability. It recommends that NGOs strengthen mission-budget alignment and engage donors to foster flexible and supportive funding arrangements.

Key words: Mission Driven Budgeting, Donor Behavior, Financial sustainability

I. Introduction

organizational financial sustainability is important (Chung & Espinoza, 2023). According to Achola et al. (2023), businesses are better equipped to accomplish their objectives, continue operating, and make future plans when they have access to sufficient financing. Their overall financial sustainability and capacity to carry on providing their services or programs in the long run may both benefit from this. It's not always clear how funding and financial sustainability are related, though. Some businesses, for example, can grow unduly dependent on one source of finance, which could be dangerous if that source is cut off. Furthermore, even with substantial capital, businesses may struggle to efficiently manage their finances, which could jeopardize their long-term viability (Abiddin et al., 2022).

Alecoiu et al. (2022) states that financial sustainability is the capacity of a person, group, or institution to sustain its long-term viability and financial health. In order to guarantee that income continuously covers expenses, debts are handled sensibly, and there is a sizeable financial cushion for unforeseen difficulties, it entails the judicious administration of financial resources. Effective budgeting, investment plans, and a dedication to ethical financial practices are necessary to achieve financial sustainability. As it allows them to achieve strategic goals, weather economic uncertainty, and contribute to long-term success and resilience, it is an essential component for individuals, corporations, and charitable organizations (Majer & Trötschel, 2022).

Emmanuel et al. (2024) discuss financial sustainability within the context of social enterprises and impact investing. They define it as the ability of social enterprises to generate enough revenue to cover their operating costs and reinvest profits into achieving their social missions. They emphasize that financial sustainability in this sector requires a balance between generating profit and delivering measurable social and environmental impact, using models such as blended finance to attract both philanthropic and investment capital.

Berardi and Valentinetti (2023) focus on the financial sustainability of nonprofit organizations, particularly in light of global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. They define financial sustainability as a nonprofit's ability to secure diversified revenue streams, manage expenses efficiently, and adapt to changing

funding landscapes. They emphasize the need for strategic financial planning and the importance of maintaining donor and stakeholder relationships to ensure long-term survival.

Financial sustainability is increasingly recognized as a key component of long-term economic development. It refers to the capacity of financial systems to integrate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) aspects, guaranteeing that fiscal development can be maintained without depleting natural resources or exacerbating social inequalities. The concept has evolved from a focus on fiscal health and stability to a broader understanding of the interdependence between finance, environment, and society.

The emphasis on sustainability has increasingly gained prominence with the rise of the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) framework, which now serves as a critical benchmark for evaluating both corporate behavior and investment decisions. Unlike traditional models that primarily prioritized financial profitability, ESG metrics broaden the assessment of value creation by integrating non-financial factors such as environmental stewardship, ethical labor practices, inclusivity, and governance integrity (Alharbi, 2024). This paradigm shift reflects the growing recognition that long-term financial sustainability is inseparable from broader societal and ecological well-being. The ESG framework, therefore, not only promotes corporate responsibility but also pushes businesses to actively contribute to tackling pressing global challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion, labor rights, and widening inequalities. By embedding these considerations into the core of financial strategies, firms are compelled to adopt a “triple bottom line” approach that balances profit, people, and the planet. Consequently, financial sustainability is no longer viewed in isolation but as part of a holistic system where economic growth must align with the preservation of natural and social capital to safeguard the prosperity of future generations.

In non-governmental organizations, sustainability is defined as the productive utilization of resources and creation of wealth to positively impact the physical environment, economy, and society. Sustainable NGO operations depend on achieving its mission, goals, and satisfying its stakeholders. The viability of NGOs is influenced by the availability of funding, creative leadership, and well-run initiatives. A growing body of research (Segger, 2021; Bolton et al., 2022) shows that shifting patterns in development assistance negatively impact non-governmental organizations' ability to maintain a stable financial position, which undermines their ability to effectively provide aid and fulfill their goals and objectives.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) occupy a central place in Kenya's socio-economic development, complementing government efforts in areas such as healthcare, education, poverty alleviation, humanitarian relief, and environmental preservation. Kenya's vibrant civil society reflects the diversity of the NGO landscape, ranging from large international NGOs with global linkages to small community-based organizations deeply rooted in local realities (Nyaserema & Kinoti, 2023). This diversity has enabled NGOs to address both national development priorities and grassroots needs, often filling critical service delivery gaps where state capacity is limited. Nevertheless, despite their notable contributions, NGOs continue to face systemic challenges that undermine their long-term sustainability.

Statement of the problem

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Mombasa County play a critical role in addressing socio-economic challenges, supporting community development, and delivering essential services to vulnerable populations. However, sustaining these operations financially remains a persistent and growing concern. Like many NGOs globally, organizations in Mombasa County depend heavily on donor funding to finance their activities (Auti, 2023). Such dependence exposes NGOs to financial vulnerability arising from economic fluctuations, shifting donor priorities, and uncertainty in global and regional funding environments (Vissak, 2023). Recent global crises, environmental challenges, and evolving donor preferences have further contributed to volatility in funding flows, resulting in operational disruptions, reduced service delivery, and, in some cases, project suspension or closure (Lazarova et al., 2024; Hanley, 2023).

In response to these challenges, NGOs have adopted various financial management strategies, including budgeting, financial planning, revenue mobilization, and accountability mechanisms, aimed at improving financial stability. However, despite the adoption of such strategies, many NGOs in Mombasa County continue to experience financial instability. This raises concern regarding the extent to which these financial management strategies contribute to long-term financial sustainability within this specific context. Empirical evidence suggests that internal organizational factors such as financial planning processes, governance structures, and managerial capacity can influence financial outcomes (Gasparatos et al., 2020; Gul & Morande, 2023). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these strategies in enhancing sustained financial viability among NGOs in Mombasa County remains unclear and insufficiently documented.

Further complicating the sustainability challenge is the evolving behavior of donors, including changes in funding conditions, reporting requirements, and strategic priorities influenced by economic, political, and global health dynamics. While prior studies acknowledge that donor behavior can shape organizational financial decisions, there is limited empirical evidence on how donor behavior interacts with internal financial management strategies to influence financial sustainability, particularly at the county level in Kenya. Consequently, there is a

clear gap in context-specific, empirical understanding of whether and how Mission-driven budgeting affect the financial sustainability of NGOs in Mombasa County, and the extent to which donor behavior moderates this relationship. This study therefore seeks to examine the influence of mission-driven budgeting on the financial sustainability of NGOs in Mombasa County, with specific attention to the moderating role of donor behavior.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to assess the Influence of mission-driven budgeting, Donor behavior and Financial Sustainability of Non-Governmental Organizations in Mombasa County.

II. Literature review

The resource dependence hypothesis was developed by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) to explain how an organization's external resources affect its activities. They propose that companies should change and negotiate with their external environment to obtain access to the resources they need to survive. This suggests that a company's competitiveness is determined by how it handles its external resources. In fact, this is more important than their own resources (Weele, 2018). According to Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) RDT describes the firm as an open system that depends on external environmental contingencies. According to RDT, businesses collaborate with outside parties to manage their dependency on essential resources. It implies that firms lacking certain assets would establish links with other enterprises to obtain the resources they require (Ulrich & Barney, 1984). By applying RDT to mission-driven budgeting, NGOs in Mombasa County can better manage the financial resources they rely on without compromising their mission or long-term sustainability.

Empirical literature

A study by Suyanto and Bilang (2023) examined how organizational performance in the Indian context is impacted by vision and mission. 200 respondents' worth of data are gathered, and graphical representation is used for descriptive analysis, ANOVA, and regression for inferential analysis based on questionnaire replies. The findings show that mission and vision have a big impact on how well an organization performs. It is also evident that the creation of a vision and mission statement is not the only thing that matters; its substance, communication, execution, and contribution are all equally significant.

Ali (2024), who looked at how budgeting practices affected donor confidence, found that organizations with transparent and accountable budgeting procedures had a higher chance of gaining long-term donor support. The ability of non-profit organizations to adapt to changing funding circumstances was also examined by Uchehara (2019), who discovered that those having flexible budgeting procedures were more resilient and financially viable.

III. Methodology

The study adopted a Positivism research philosophy and descriptive Cross-sectional Design research design and was carried out in Mombasa County, Kenya where one hundred and twenty-three licensed non-governmental organizations were involved. Data was only corrected ones using a structured questionnaire from a target population of one hundred and twenty-three finance managers working in these NGOs that were purposively sampled. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 28 and presented through descriptive and inferential statistics.

Response rate

A total of 75 valid responses were obtained out of the targeted 123 respondents, yielding a response rate of 61%. This rate is considered sufficiently robust for statistical analysis and interpretation. According to Kothari (2022), a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis, 60% is considered good, and rates above 70% are regarded as excellent. In light of these benchmarks, the response rate achieved in this study is good and enhances the credibility and reliability of the findings. The level of participation provides reasonable assurance that the data collected is representative of the target population, thereby strengthening the internal and external validity of the study outcomes and supporting the subsequent analysis, conclusions, and recommendations.

Data Reliability Assessment

The purpose of reliability assessment was to assess the internal consistency of the data collected by the research questionnaires. To measure this, Cronbach Alpha was computed to assess the reliability of the data collected. In a research study, Cronbach Alpha value greater than 0.7 is regarded as satisfactory for reliability assessment (Keengwe & Tran 2020). The results of this test are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha for Reliability Assessments

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha Values
Mission Driven Budgeting	9	0.790
Financial Sustainability	7	0.829
Donor Behavior	6	0.787

As presented in Table 1, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for all the study variables namely Mission-Driven Budgeting, Financial Sustainability, and Donor Behavior were all above the threshold value of 0.7. This indicates a high level of internal consistency among the measurement items used for each construct. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.7 or higher is generally considered acceptable for demonstrating reliability in social science research, while values above 0.8 reflect very good reliability. Therefore, the results suggest that the scales employed in this study were both consistent and reliable in capturing the intended dimensions. Consequently, the constructs were deemed to possess adequate psychometric properties to support further statistical analysis and interpretation in the subsequent stages of this study.

Influence of mission-driven budgeting on financial sustainability

The researcher further sought to establish the influence of mission-driven budgeting on financial sustainability of non-governmental organizations in Mombasa County. The findings of the same are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2 Influence of mission-driven budgeting on financial sustainability

Mission-driven budgeting	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
There is level of agreement on the relationship between Mission driven budgeting and Organizational financial sustainability among	75	4.0267	.85382
A significant portion of the budget is allocated to programs, services, or initiatives that directly support the organization's mission.	75	4.3067	.65705
Spending decisions are documented and justified based on how they contribute to measurable outcomes related to the mission.	75	4.6267	.53960
The organization regularly uses key performance indicators (KPIs) and outcome metrics to evaluate how budget allocations affect mission-related goals.	75	3.6133	.86826
Internal and external stakeholders (such as board members, employees, or community partners) are involved in discussions about budget priorities to ensure alignment with the mission.	75	3.7733	.93828
The budget is developed with a mission-first mindset, meaning mission alignment is the primary criterion when deciding how to allocate resources.	75	3.4933	.89100
The budget reflects a balance between immediate needs and long-term objectives, ensuring that short-term financial constraints don't compromise the organization's mission.	75	3.9733	.97223
The organization demonstrates cost-efficiency in how resources are used, with minimal waste and maximum impact per dollar spent.	75	3.7333	.94916
Average	75	3.9433	0.8337

The results indicate that the majority of respondents agreed that there exists a significant influence of mission-driven budgeting on organizational financial sustainability among NGOs in Mombasa County. This finding aligns with prior studies emphasizing the centrality of mission alignment in enhancing organizational performance and sustainability. For instance, Suyanto and Bilang (2023) established that an organization’s mission and vision substantially influence its effectiveness, particularly when they are clearly articulated, effectively communicated, and systematically implemented. Recent research further underscores that beyond merely formulating mission and vision statements, their operationalization through financial practices such as budgeting is critical to ensuring that resources are strategically directed toward mission-related priorities (Kaplan & Wisner, 2023; Lee & Kim, 2022).

Among the various attributes of mission-driven budgeting assessed, “spending decisions are documented and justified based on how they contribute to measurable outcomes related to the mission” received the highest mean score (M = 4.6267, SD = 0.53960). This suggests that NGO management in Mombasa County places particular emphasis on accountability and evidence-based decision-making, ensuring that expenditure is directly linked to mission outcomes. This finding resonates with contemporary nonprofit financial management literature, which highlights transparency and mission-focused spending as fundamental to maintaining donor confidence and ensuring financial resilience (Ewoh, 2021; Young, 2022).

On the other hand, the attribute “the budget is developed with a mission-first mindset, meaning mission alignment is the primary criterion when deciding how to allocate resources” scored comparatively lower (M = 3.4933, SD = 0.89100). This may imply that while NGOs are diligent in documenting and justifying expenditures, there are challenges in embedding mission alignment at the earliest stages of resource allocation. Such a gap underscores the need for NGOs to integrate mission priorities more explicitly into the budgeting process, as argued by recent studies that stress the importance of mission-based resource allocation for long-term sustainability (Gnan et al., 2022).

Overall, the mean score of Mission-driven Budgeting (M = 3.9433, SD = 0.8337) demonstrates that NGOs in Mombasa County have adopted this practice to a considerable extent. The implication is that mission-driven budgeting not only strengthens organizational accountability but also contributes to sustained financial health by aligning financial decisions with strategic priorities. As noted in contemporary scholarship, such alignment enhances NGOs’ ability to attract donor support, optimize resource use, and achieve programmatic impact, which collectively drive financial sustainability (Bryson, Edwards, & Van Slyke, 2018; Suárez & Esparza, 2020).

Testing of Hypothesis

To determine the influence of Mission-driven budgeting on financial sustainability of non-governmental organizations in Mombasa County in Kenya, a null and alternate hypothesis was tested.

The null hypothesis that there was no significant influence of Mission-driven budgeting on financial sustainability of non-governmental organizations in Mombasa County in Kenya was tested against the alternate that there is a significant influence of Mission-driven budgeting on financial sustainability of non-governmental organizations in Mombasa County in Kenya.

Table 3: Testing of Hypothesis

		Financial Sustainability	Mission Driven Budgeting	Deductions
Financial Sustainability	Correlation Coefficient (Spearman's rho)	1.000	.619	Positive
	Sig. (P-Value)	.	.000	Reject H ₀
Mission Driven Budgeting	Correlation Coefficient	.619	1.000	Positive
	Sig. (P-Value)	.000	.	Reject H ₀

The results of hypothesis testing revealed that mission-driven budgeting indeed exerts a statistically significant influence on financial sustainability, thereby leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative.

This finding underscores the critical role of aligning financial planning and budgetary allocations with the organizational mission and strategic objectives. Mission-driven budgeting ensures that scarce financial resources are prioritized towards programs and activities that advance the organization’s core mandate, rather than being dispersed across unrelated initiatives. By linking resource allocation to mission priorities, NGOs enhance program effectiveness, stakeholder trust, and ultimately, financial sustainability. As Ebrahim and Rangan (2014) argue, mission alignment in resource use not only improves accountability but also strengthens donor confidence, which is crucial for long-term funding continuity.

The results are consistent with prior studies that highlight the importance of mission-centered financial practices in the non-profit sector. For instance, Anthony and Young (2018) note that NGOs that integrate budgeting with mission and strategy achieve greater financial stability and organizational resilience, since resources are directed toward high-impact activities. Similarly, recent evidence from East African NGOs shows that mission-based budgeting practices are positively associated with donor retention, program sustainability, and operational efficiency (Otieno & Nyang’au, 2021).

Moreover, the findings resonate with the resource dependence theory, which suggests that organizations can reduce vulnerability to external financial shocks by strategically managing and aligning internal resources with their mission (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Mission-driven budgeting becomes a proactive tool for navigating resource scarcity, especially in environments where donor funding is unpredictable. In the Kenyan NGO context, where competition for limited donor resources is intense, organizations that clearly demonstrate a mission–budget linkage are more likely to secure donor loyalty and diversify funding sources, thereby enhancing sustainability.

Recent scholarship further reinforces this perspective. For example, Muriithi and Wanyoike (2022) found that mission-based budgeting improves organizational legitimacy and accountability, which in turn attracts long-term partnerships with both donors and local communities. This suggests that financial sustainability is not only

a function of financial strategies but also of how closely those strategies are tied to the organization's overarching mission.

Moderating effect of Donor behavior.

The results demonstrate that Mission Driven Budgeting explain 61.4% of the total variations in the financial sustainability of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Mombasa County ($R^2 = 0.614$). This indicates that a substantial proportion of the variance in financial sustainability is attributable to the mission-driven budgeting practices adopted by NGOs. However, the results further reveal that when Donor Behavior was introduced as a moderating variable in Model 2, the explanatory power of the model increased markedly, with R^2 improving from 0.614 to 0.712. This represents a change in R^2 of 0.098, suggesting that donor behavior significantly moderates the relationship between mission-driven budgeting and financial sustainability ($p < 0.05$). Moreover, when the interaction term was introduced into Model 3, the R^2 improved further by 7.9% ($\Delta R^2 = 0.079$, $p < 0.05$). This progression provides strong evidence that donor behavior plays a crucial role in strengthening or weakening the effectiveness of mission-driven budgeting in influencing financial sustainability.

These findings resonate with the conclusions of past studies, which emphasize that donor behavior including funding consistency, flexibility of grants, reporting requirements, and donor-NGO relationships can significantly affect organizational sustainability. For instance, Banks, Hulme, and Edwards (2015) argue that donor behavior often shapes NGO practices by dictating funding priorities, accountability requirements, and time horizons for financial stability. Similarly, Batti (2014) observed that NGOs heavily reliant on external donor funding often experience financial uncertainty due to donor shifts in priorities or reductions in aid, underscoring the moderating role of donor practices.

In the Kenyan context, Muriithi and Waweru (2017) found that while strong internal financial management strategies improve NGO sustainability, donor behavior particularly transparency in disbursement and flexibility in funding conditions determines whether these internal strategies can effectively translate into long-term financial resilience. Likewise, Njoroge (2019) highlighted that NGOs with robust planning, budgeting, and accountability systems still struggled with sustainability when donor funding was unpredictable or overly conditional, reinforcing the moderating role of donor behavior.

Globally, Ebrahim (2019) stresses that donor expectations regarding accountability and performance reporting can enhance financial sustainability by pushing NGOs to adopt better management systems. However, he also cautions that overly rigid donor requirements may constrain NGO autonomy and innovation, thereby weakening sustainability in the long term. This dual effect highlights why donor behavior must be viewed as a significant moderating factor.

IV. Conclusion

The study established that mission-driven budgeting has a significant positive effect on the financial sustainability of NGOs in Mombasa County ($\beta = 0.190$, $p = 0.034$). This finding confirms that aligning financial resources with organizational missions and strategic objectives strengthens long-term stability. When NGOs budget with their mission as the guiding principle, they are able to prioritize expenditures, minimize wastage, and ensure that resources directly support their core programs and goals. This alignment not only enhances financial sustainability but also improves accountability to donors and beneficiaries, as it demonstrates prudent resource utilization consistent with the organizational mandate. Donor behavior significantly moderated the relationship between mission-driven budgeting and financial sustainability ($\Delta R^2 = 0.098$, $p < 0.05$).

V. Recommendation

NGOs should align their budgeting processes more closely with ongoing projects and core organizational missions in order to minimize resource wastage and ensure that every shilling spent directly advances the intended mandate. Over the long term, mission-driven budgeting should be institutionalized by embedding it within strategic planning cycles, so that financial decisions consistently support the organization's long-term vision, sustainability objectives, and growth trajectory. At the policy level, county governments and relevant regulatory bodies should require NGOs to submit mission-aligned budget frameworks as part of their annual reporting processes, thereby strengthening accountability and ensuring that financial resources are systematically directed toward activities that generate meaningful and sustainable impact. NGOs should engage in continuous and structured dialogue with donors to negotiate more flexible funding terms, advocate for reduced restrictions, and collaboratively design projects that align donor priorities with organizational missions.

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