

An Exploratory Analysis on Strategic Communications of NGOs in İzmir

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Abstract

The Instigatory Theory of Non-Governmental Organizations' Communication (ITNC) provides a contemporary approach that reunites managerial and communicational skills, which helps create a strategic communication structure for NGOs. Depending on the theorems which are defined as ontological principles and the elements of the theory, this study aims to question the strategic communications of the İzmir-based NGOs. Therefore, elaborating on the concept of civil society, the interlinkage between the NGOs' strategic communication processes and their management functions is scrutinized via content analysis of semi-structured interviews. According to the findings, the theorems about management functions and organizational structures could not be verified with this study, but it was seen that other theorems on which the theory was based were found to be also valid for İzmir-based NGOs.

Keywords: Exploratory analysis, ITNC, NGO, strategic communication.

İzmir'deki STK'ların Stratejik İletişimlerine İlişkin Keşifsel Bir Analiz

Özet

Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlarının İletişiminde Kısıktıcı Kuram (ITNC), sivil toplum kuruluşlarında stratejik bir iletişim yapısı yaratılması için gerekli yönetim ve iletişim süreçlerini bir araya getiren güncel bir yaklaşım sunar. Kuramın ontolojik prensipleri olan teoremlerine ve

unsurlarına dayanan bu çalışmanın amacı, İzmir merkezli sivil toplum kuruluşlarının stratejik iletişimlerini araştırmaktır. Bu kapsamda sivil toplum kavramı irdelenerek sivil toplum kuruluşlarının stratejik iletişim süreçleri, sivil toplum kavramına bakışları, organizasyon yapıları ve yönetim fonksiyonları, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerin içerik analiziyle derinlemesine incelenmektedir. Bulgulara göre, yönetim fonksiyonları ve organizasyon yapıları ile ilgili teoremler bu çalışma ile doğrulanamamış ancak kuramın dayandığı diğer teoremlerin İzmir merkezli sivil toplum kuruluşları için de geçerli olduğu görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ITNC, keşifsel analiz, sivil toplum, stratejik iletişim, STK.

Introduction

The passion and curiosity for “the common good”, which date back centuries ago, paved the way for a structure within civil society. Since ancient Greek times, there have always been organizations that work for the benefit of society backed by a voluntary force. This ongoing process led to the formation of civil society and today, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are one of the main components of it. They are driven by an explicitly public mission and usually further a social cause and/or provide a public benefit. NGOs aim to “serve underserved or neglected populations, to expand the freedom of or to empower people, to engage in advocacy for social change, and to provide services” (McCarthy et al., 1992: 3).

NGOs take their strength from the volunteerism that shapes their financial, organizational, and communicational structures. However, civil society actions and volunteerism needs to be organized, structured, and managed so that they can reach the masses and become vocal. As Çotuksöken mentioned, “the reason why NGOs, as organizations came together, was that citizens become more conscious, and they couldn’t overcome their problems themselves, so they needed each other’s help and support” (Çotuksöken, 1998: 36). To serve society and create a relevant change within, NGOs carry out the mission of being voices of the unheard, both locally and globally. Therefore, strategic communication is of great importance for them. Strategic communication is crucial in the way that it helps organizations to reach their goals. Via effective communication, an organization might inform, educate, or persuade its public, and make them engaged with the relevant issues. Non-profit organizations address the community’s needs and take appropriate action accordingly. Supporters, donors, volunteers, opinion leaders, and community partners are the primary publics for NGOs (Patterson and Radtke, 2009). “To build and act for a common vision, NGOs’ communication strategies must accommodate different stakeholders, to achieve their organizational goals” (Hue, 2017: 122). As Bhati mentioned; “a proper mix of Public Relations tools can help NGOs ensure that all

stakeholders are reached effectively” (Bhati, 2013: 338). Therefore, the success of an NGO depends on how well it manages the organization and carries out its strategic communication.

Strategic communications of NGOs are being studied through various theoretical perspectives. Several media and communication theories such as Cybernetics (Wiener, 1948), The Theory of Collective Action (Olson, 1965), Resource Dependency Theory (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978), Social Network Theory (Castells, 1996), and Communicative Ecology Theory (Tacchi, Slater, and Hearn, 2003) were benefitted as to explain NGO Communication in particular. One of the most recent theories in this field was developed in 2019 by Evandro Oliveira and named the ‘Instigatory Theory of NGO Communication’ (ITCN).

Concerning the field studies in Turkey, much academic research has been focused on NGOs’ communication structure and strategies within the frame of Dialogic Communication Theory (Aydın and Aliyeva, 2019; Bozkanat, 2020; Güngör, 2019; Özdemir and Yamanoglu, 2010), or social media analysis depending on case studies (Demirel, 2022; Gümüş and Ağaıı, 2018; Kurt, 2021; Öztürk and Şardađı, 2018; Saatıiođlu, 2017, Tani and Taşkıran, 2018). There are also several studies on NGOs’ media publicity through theoretical frameworks (Akbođa and Arık, 2018; Deren van Het Hof, 2014; Yurttaş and Şışman, 2012). A thorough theoretical approach that analyzes the strategic communications of the Turkish NGOs, seems to be absent in the literature. Therefore, this study aims to question the strategic communications of the Izmir-based NGOs while scrutinizing the interlinkage between their strategic communication processes and management, within the framework of ITCN, the most recent theory in the field.

ITNC does not only bring a new approach to the strategic communication of NGOs; but also describes the management, operational, and conceptual models concerning them. Oliveira (2019) points out the main components of the ITNC as ‘logics and management, ontological principles and perspective of communication’. Subsequently, manageable communication, non-direct management communication, public communication, and legitimation dynamics fill up the frame. Depending on the theorems which are defined as ontological principles and the elements of the theory, the main objective of this paper is to fill in the gap concerning the Turkish NGOs’ strategic communications.

Following a literature review of the historical background of the NGOs in Turkey, the ITCN will be explained in-depth to build up the general perspective of the article. After the conceptual and theoretical backgrounds, the research section will proceed.

Historical Background of the NGOs in Turkey

The historical background of the Turkish NGOs dates to the Greater Seljuq Empire (between 1037–and 1194). The organizations were sustained in different forms in the Ottoman Empire (from the 14th century until 1922) and finally turned into modern organizations in the Republic of Turkey (with the constituency of 1924).

During the establishment of the Turkish Republic, civil society existed as an idea in the new government, focusing on the elaboration of the new regime. “NGOs like community centers, Turkish Language Society (Türk Dil Kurumu) and Turkish Historical Society (Türk Tarih Kurumu) have had important functions in the society at those times” (Kaya and Ayan, 2011: 33). Although the NGOs in the forms of associations, foundations, unions, citizen initiatives, professional organizations, and cooperatives increased in number in the following years, this elaboration was limited due to structural and political circumstances, such as the coups and coup attempts. As Sezik puts forward, because of the socio-economic transformations in the 1980s and 1990s, the functions and role of the state were limited and therefore several roles were transferred to civil society (Sezik, 2019: 118). This was considered a continuum of the political liberalization approach. Together with politics, the rise of Kurdish nationalism, feminism, and Islamic movements became the driving force behind the empowerment of the civil society in Turkey.

In the 2000s, “with Turkey's European Union candidacy process, it is seen that NGOs have gradually increased both the number of their activities and their fields of activity” (Uluç, 2013: 412). Research reveals that “today there are over a hundred thousand NGOs in Turkey” (Demirel, 2022: 309). As Çatal (2022) mentioned, when the fields of activity of these NGOs are examined, it is seen that there are twenty-one different fields in Turkey. According to the data from 2021, professional and solidarity associations were the most common types of NGOs in the country. Additionally, there has been an increase in sports and sports-related associations and humanitarian aid organizations compared to the previous year.

This process enabled the third sector to improve moderately; however, on the way to progress, there are still fundamental obstacles to overcome, such as lack of know-how and democracy; insufficiency of pecuniary funds, and participatory culture. In addition to them, Heper and Yıldırım (2011) mentioned as follows:

“In Turkey, such lingering impediments as populism, clientelism, and opportunism seem to have prevented the members of civil society from entertaining an idea of a common good, and this has become an obstacle to the development of a dynamic consensus when needed. This state of affairs must also have

harmed the development of trust among the members of civil society and, consequently, the building of horizontal linkages among the members of civil society” (Heper and Yıldırım, 2011: 12).

To overcome these problems and establish and maintain legitimacy and achieve their mission, strategic communication management is essential for NGOs (Schwartz and Fritsch, 2014: 161).

Theoretical Framework for Strategic Communication of the NGOs

NGOs are human-based organizations that act in society for strategic aims. Therefore, their communication processes must be compatible with contemporary facts. For this purpose, the communications of NGOs were studied from various perspectives. As Waisbord (2011) mentions NGO communication is related to traditional public relations and government communication from a journalistic perspective. Communication and media theories were used together for explaining NGOs’ strategic communication.

Powers suggested; that “NGOs most often perform the roles associated with representative liberal and democratic participatory ideals of journalism while marginalizing deliberative and radical traditions” (Powers, 2016: 1070). These various perspectives led to transdisciplinary theories usage for NGOs’ communication. One of the theories that help to explain NGO communication is “Cybernetics” which was developed by Norbert Wiener in 1948. The theory is based on a transdisciplinary approach to understanding the system with its participants, structures, possibilities, and feedback. “The Theory of Collective Action” by Mancur Olson, established in 1965, is also related to the strategic communication of NGOs. The theory explains the action behavior in groups with their aim and causes. As a third one, the “Resource Dependence Theory” by Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald R. Salancik in 1978 could be mentioned here. It explains how the external resources of an organization also affect its behaviors. Likewise, the “Social Network Theory” by Manuel Castells established in 1996, explains strategic communication. It defines how and why some relationships are built. As a final theory, the “Communicative Ecology” developed by Jo A Tacchi, Don Slater, and Greg Hearn in 2003 must be mentioned. It explains in which environment the communication process is occurring.

With this background in mind, it can be said that the Instigatory Theory of Non-Governmental Organizations’ Communication (ITNC) developed by Evandro Oliveira in 2019, is a new approach in the literature regarding the strategic communications of NGOs. Oliveira firstly set ontological principles about NGOs. Then, he explains the main components which

are, logic and management, perspectives of communication, manageable communication, and non-legitimation dynamics. These components are summarized below in Figure 1. Thus, the ITCN does not only bring a new approach to strategic communication but also describes the management, operational, and conceptual models concerning the NGOs.

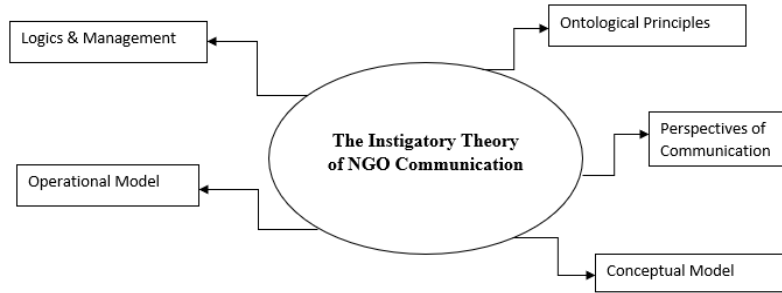


Figure 1. The Conceptual Map of ITNC (Adapted from Oliveira, 2019)

The first main component is “logic and management”. This is the part of the theory where the management skills and processes of an NGO are explained. ITNC suggests that NGOs have a dual management dynamic which means that the constant management process includes two dominant coalitions in it (Oliveira, 2019: 329). One of them is the management process itself and the other one is volunteers. The dominant logic for the management process is the interaction of both sides which also suggests ongoing processes.

Another main component is the “perspectives of communication”. ITNC frames the communication processes of NGOs in four types. These are (1) formal communication that is managed, (2) communication that is not directly managed, (3) public communication and specificities, and finally (4) operational context. Managed formal communication is like corporate communication. It also follows a communication plan and has a planned message for the relationships with the organization’s environment. This communication type includes the organization itself, the market, and public relations. The communication which is not directly managed includes the opinions and world of mouth communications of volunteers and supporters. The third type “public communication and specificities” refers to three public relations advantages; “formal-juridical communication, regulating the relationships between state organizations; service communication and administration of civic communication” (Oliveira, 2019: 100). The final type “operational context” explains mostly the internal communication of the NGO. It includes norms, beliefs, and values of a social group distance by NGOs. This internal communication subsequently affects external communication. The next main component is the conceptual model part of ITNC. It brings the worldview and

management logic aspects together in the frame of management and communication strategies. The management aspect here includes “PR with its two-way asymmetric model and the linguistic turn of management” (Oliveira, 2019: 109).

Following the conceptual model, Oliveira introduces the operational model of ITNC which is another main component. It is framed with dual management dynamics and the Cybernetic Theory. These theories lead to an operational model which is not linear or even stable. The citizens can enter or exit whenever they want from this operation even at different operational levels. Member communication is therefore centralized in the operational model likewise the one-time donation processes that also create an engagement and relationship between the citizens and the organization. The orders and feedback from the operational model can be depicted in a cybernetic journey where management and communication strategies act together (Oliveira, 2019: 239). The last one which is “ontological principles” (OP) gives systematic attention to these strategies. The ontological principles are shown below in Table 1 as can be observed from the table, the sixteen ontological principles depict NGOs’ norms, beliefs, aims, communication, and economic systems in a worldview design.

1. Civic relations are a social-communicative function of an agent that directly or indirectly performs the civic exercise of pursuing and seeking the common good.
2. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are formal, independent, societal, voluntary, and civic groups of people that pursue the common good for the interests of nonmembers.
3. NGOs are driven by an interpretation dynamic as an intermediary actor of civil society. They aim to develop a democratic society by performing civic relations, as well as maintaining the values of democracy: liberty, equality, diversity, participation, and solidarity.
4. NGO strategic communication is the practice of symbolic social action (communication) to reach set goals, create the organization, perform civic relations and fulfill its mission.
5. NGOs are booming agents focusing on reflexive self-identity and overcoming the sense of fragmentation and dispersal.
6. NGOs have a link with coordinated engagement on a global level. NGOs drive the post-scarcity system.

7. NGOs are collective actors, and when individual actors reproduce the structure they are at the same time communities of interpretation.
8. NGOs are communities of social integration and perform reflexive self-regulation of the system.
9. NGOs are innate system integrators and constitute entities of social change, they are the natives of social change. They are the being; the doing and the acting.
10. NGOs can be framed within the concepts of substantivism and within an actor analysis of NGOs as collectivities and individuals acting in the name of an organization, falling into one of three categories: market, redistribution, and reciprocity.
11. NGOs can be framed within the market, non-market and non-monetary economies, and act in the interplay of that triad.
12. NGOs are economic collectives contributing to the prevention of a market society, meaning they keep alive the idea that the nature of the earth is not produced by mankind, as labor cannot be stored or detached from life, and that money is a creation of banking and state finance and is fictitious.
13. Donating, volunteering, participation, and involvement in political questions or advocacy are key dimensions of prosocial behavior by individuals.
14. Division between the act of donating once and donations that are given under relational premises demands a breakdown of the stakeholders' monetary donors.
15. The distinction between a supporter or volunteer who only donates time, support, and money and a person that only makes the transaction in terms of the value they receive in return calls for a division of the group of stakeholders that are donors in a broad sense into different subgroups.
16. Donations are social facts moved by conviction, such as beliefs, values, and attitudes that encourage altruism, and by the community, such as social pressure and solicitations for contributions.

Table 1: Ontological Principles of ITNC (Oliveira, 2019: 93)

As an outcome from ITNC, Oliveira mentioned that;

“NGOs are living, changing systems and they find their survival in the possibility of reinventing themselves. Therefore, the call for action directed toward all NGOs and scientists is to keep discussing, trying out, and researching features beyond the proposals included in the ITNC” (Oliveira, 2019: 239).

Following the traces of the ITCN the following research tries to shed a light on the perspectives of the Turkish NGOs’ strategic communications while contributing to the appropriateness and heuristic value of this comparatively new theory.

Methodology

The starting point for this research was curiosity concerning the Turkish NGOs’ communication management approaches. The lack of primary information regarding this subject encouraged searching for the existence of strategic communications of the NGOs.

Objective

The objective of this research is to question the strategic communications of the Izmir-based NGOs while scrutinizing the interlinkage between their strategic communication processes and management. In doing so, the article tends to unveil the following three issues: (1) the structures and perspectives of the NGOs’ strategic communications, (2) the NGOs’ viewpoints concerning the concept of civil society, and (3) their management processes. The importance of the research relies on its theoretical background. The ITNC, which is a new approach in the literature regarding the strategic communications of NGOs was not utilized as a frame in the Turkish context, at the time this research was accomplished. The research questions for this study correspond to the ontological principles of the ITNC. Respectively eight research questions, based on these premises, are posed as below.

RQ1: Do the NGOs practice strategic communications to reach their internal and external goals?

RQ2: Is Public Relations seen as an important key for NGOs’ communication by the practitioner?

RQ3: Are the NGOs using a strategic communication plan, which is flexible enough to be rebuilt according to the demands of the society?

RQ4: Are self-regulation, social integration, and flexibility essential in NGO management?

RQ5: Are social behaviors such as donating, volunteering, and participation reflected and protected in the organization of the NGOs?

RQ6: Are the NGOs against the sense of fragmentation and dispersal in society?

RQ7: Do the NGOs act according to local and global responsibility while leading social change?

RQ8: Are the NGOs, with their stakeholders and donors, a part of a market, non-market, and non-monetary economic system?

The Method

In this research, the semi-structured interview method is preferred as the primary technique. As Barribal and White (1994) mentioned, “this method is well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enables probing for more information and clarification of answers” (p. 330). The interview questions are also created in this accordance with the research questions, considering the ontological principles. Table 2 illustrates the connection between the ontological principles of the ITNC, the interview questions, and the research questions.

Ontological Principle Number	Research Question Number	Interview Question Number
OP4	RQ1	IQ1,2,4
OP4	RQ2	IQ1
OP1	RQ3	IQ3
OP7	RQ4	IQ10
OP3,5,8,13,16	RQ5	IQ5,6
OP2,3,9,10	RQ6	IQ8
OP6	RQ7	IQ7
OP11,12,14,15	RQ8	IQ9

Table 2: Correspondence of Ontological Principles and Questions

For defining the research universe and then, the sample, the database, and contact e-mails of the NGOs in Izmir were obtained from the Administration of Civil Society Relations from Izmir Province (İzmir İl Sivil Toplumla İlişkiler Müdürlüğü). The main list from this database included 6.604 NGOs that were active in Izmir. After reaching the database, the NGOs which were not based in Izmir, that had their headquarters in another city, and that have not declared their e-mail addresses to the administration were eliminated. Consequently, the final

list of 2.947 active NGOs was constituted. At the beginning of December 2020, twenty-three NGOs from different fields and different structures, which were considered appropriate to reflect the diversity, were selected from the final list and were invited to an interview via e-mail. Eleven of them accepted the invitation. Nine of the interviewees were reached via Zoom and the interviews were made digitally interactive, where two participants requested to send written replies first. After their relevant emails, some answers were clarified in phone calls. The average duration of the interviews was calculated as 40 minutes.

Concerning the validity and the reliability of the obtained data, this research depends on the insights of Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Başkale, 2016: 22) who suggested “considering ‘trustworthiness’ in qualitative research, rather than the former two concepts”. Başkale also mentioned that;

“regarding the concept of trustworthiness, internal validity can be proved with the interview’s conditions. The voluntary participation, permission for recording the interview, the order of the asked research questions and, similar answers at the end of the process contribute to the internal validity of this analysis” (Başkale, 2016: 24).

Each participant was informed about the academic usage of the attained data. They also acknowledged that the information would not be shared with third parties. Entire research questions were asked in the same order. All participants declared their consent to recording the interview sessions, which enhances the internal validity of the research.

Then, the interviews were completed in two months and transcribed manually. The content of the transcribed texts is analyzed. Thus, content analysis was the second research method in this study. Within the content analysis initially, the units and the categories were defined based on the research questions. To enhance the internal validity, two answer papers were initially coded by two researchers, and the results were compared with each other. The units and categories were then adjusted according to the answers and the standardized excel sheet was finalized. Each answer sheet was read more than once and coded to the proper unit by two coders. There was a rapport contingency of 85,71% between the units. The reasons for the contingency and the final decisions about them were discussed. The final criteria of trustfulness for this analysis, which is confirmability are supplied with this step because, as Başkale mentioned; “the prejudgments of the researcher are to a bare minimum” (Başkale, 2016: 24). The following section indicates the findings of the study.

Findings

This sub-title will introduce the findings of the content analysis of the interviews which were done to unveil the strategic communication approaches of the NGOs. Before getting into the relevant findings, the participant NGO's fields, each interviewee's position, and the channel where the interview was taken are explained in Table 3. As Elo et al (2014) mentioned, "from the perspective of establishing credibility, researchers must ensure that those participating in research are identified and described accurately" (Elo, 2014: 2). As the table below describes, the NGOs which participated in the interview were working in different areas such as agriculture, publicity, advertisement, business, education, help-based fields, and youth-based fields. Due to the research ethics, the answers of participating NGOs will be processed anonymously. Therefore, the participants are coded with the character "P".

Participant	Channel	NGO's Field	Interviewee's position
P1	Zoom Meeting	Education	Press & PR Specialist
P2	Zoom Meeting	Youth-based	Chairperson
P3	Written Answer	Environmental	Press & PR Specialist
P4	Zoom Meeting	Help-based	Chairperson
P5	Zoom Meeting	Agriculture	Press & PR Specialist
P6	Zoom Meeting	Publicity	Press & PR Specialist
P7	Zoom Meeting	Agriculture	Chairperson
P8	Written Answer	Business	Secretariat
P9	Zoom Meeting	Youth-based	Chairperson
P10	Zoom Meeting	Advertisement	Board Member
P11	Zoom Meeting	Business	Assistant Secretary-General

Table 3: Definition of the Participants

The first category from the content analysis is "Strategic Communication". This category encapsulates the research questions between one and three. The findings for this category are mentioned in Table 4. As the table shows, "The demands of society" and "Organization's Goals" are the most mentioned units in this category. These findings show that most of the participants agreed about the demands of society and their organization's goals

were important for their strategic communication process. Whereby the “Strategic Communication Plan” unit was mentioned just by eight participants, the lowest mentioned unit was “Role of PR”. The organization in which the participant who mentioned this category works, frequently uses the press, and writes down press releases about their campaigns. They also have a printed magazine where they describe themselves and their actions. The remaining ten participants did not mention the use of PR explicitly, however, they explained the role of PR which is to inform, educate, and create an understanding between the parties, in their answers.

Strategic Communication	n	%
Strategic Comm. Plan	8	72,7
Inhouse	6	54,5
Outsourcing	4	36,3
Role of PR	1	9,09
Demands of Society	10	90,9
Campaign Management	6	54,5
Organization's Goals	10	90,9
Organization's Vision	8	72,7
Organization's Beliefs	6	54,5
Fundraising (donations)	2	18,1
Supporters	3	27,2

Table 4: Content Analysis Findings of the Category Strategic Communication

In the line with these results, research questions one, two, and three can be affirmatively answered. The findings indicated that the practice of strategic communication was seen positively correlated with organizational goals with ten remarks of the participant NGOs. Also, the internal goals which are related to their visions and beliefs are remarked by more than half of the participants. These two aspects made the positive answer for the first research question: “Do the NGOs depend on strategic communication to reach their internal and external goals?”. The second research question which is “Is Public Relations taken as an important key for NGOs

communication by NGOs management?”, is also affirmatively answered. The reason for it is that there is a role of PR in strategic communication processes in each organization even if ten of them do not recognize it and call it PR. The reductionist and old fashion perspective of PR by the interviewees shows that the awareness of the term is not high among participants. The term ensures media relations, press relations, and connection with organizations’ audiences. Furthermore, this fact will be discussed in the conclusion part. The reason for the positive answer to the third research question is that the “The demands of society” unit that was built upon the answers concerning this question, was one of the most remarked ones. The ontological principles one and four of ITNC, which were related to this category, are provided by Izmir-based NGOs.

The second category from the content analysis is “Responsibilities of an NGO”. This category encapsulates research question seven. The findings for this category are mentioned in Table 5. As the table shows, ten of the participants mentioned that NGOs have a responsibility toward both society and the world. Only P2 mentioned none of the units which are in this category and said “I believe that the responsibility of NGOs is no longer valid. According to me, the reason might be that in Turkey and the geography nearby the responsibilities of NGOs are decreasing. The economic conditions of NGOs are the main reason for it. I believe that social enterprises will take the place of NGOs”.

Responsibilities towards	n	%
The world	-	-
The society	-	-
Both above	10	90,9
Public agenda	3	27,2

Table 5: Content Analysis Findings of the Category ‘Responsibilities of an NGO’

It reflected the answer for the seventh research question, which is “Do the NGOs consider their local and global responsibilities while leading the social change?” with an answer of 90,9 % affirmatively from the interviewees. This result also shows that the sixth ontological principle of ITNC, which was related to this category, is provided by Izmir-based NGOs.

“Structure of an NGO” is the third category of content analysis. This category encapsulates research questions one and five. The findings for this category are mentioned in Table 6. The unit “Corporate Structure” is the most remarked one with 81,8 % in this category.

This unit is followed by the units “Civil Society Perception” and “Volunteering”. “Donation Actions” was just remarked by one participant.

Structural Components	n	%
Internal Communication Plan	7	63,3
Civil Society Perception	8	72,7
Social Harmony	4	36,3
Social Values	4	36,3
Social Beliefs	3	27,2
Volunteering	8	72,7
Donation actions	1	9,09
Motivation of goals	5	45,4
Corporate Structure	9	81,8

Table 6: Content Analysis Findings of the Category ‘Structure of an NGO’

The first research question, which is “Do the NGOs depend on strategic communication to reach their internal and external goals?” and related to the unit “Internal Communication Plan” is answered by 63,36 % affirmatively. The internal communication plan and with it, internal goals are supplied by participant NGOs. The fifth research question which is “Are social behaviors such as donating, volunteering, and participation reflected and protected in the organization of the NGOs?”, is partially confirmed. As the results indicate, volunteering was answered by 72,7 % affirmatively and participating was reflected by the answers of the participant NGOs. These behaviors are protected by civil society perception, which was answered by 72,7 % affirmatively, inside their organization. However, donating was mentioned by just one participant (9,09 %) with the economic consequences instead of values. These results could be wrapped up as the third, fifth, eighth, and thirteenth ontological principles which were related to this category, are validated by Izmir-based NGOs. However, the sixteenth one is as; “Donations are social facts moved by conviction, such as beliefs, values, and attitudes that encourage altruism, and by the community, such as social pressure and solicitations for contribution” (Oliveira, 2019: 93), not validated for Izmir based NGOs.

The findings of the fourth category which is “the Management of an NGO” are mentioned below, in Table 7. This category conceptualizes research question four and therefore the seventh ontological principle. The units “participant” and “democratic” were the most mentioned ones by the interviewees. Whereby the less mentioned one was the unit “code and rules” with one mention.

Management Components	n	%
Innovative	6	54,5
Participant	8	72,7
Professional	5	45,4
Democratic	8	72,7
Honest	2	18,1
Transparent	6	54,5
In line with vision & mission	5	45,4
Equitable	3	27,2
Traceable	2	18,1
Code & Rules	1	9,09

Table 7: Content Analysis Findings of the Category ‘the Management of an NGO’

Regarding these findings, the fourth research question which is “Are self-regulation, social integration, and flexibility essential in NGO managements?” is partially confirmed. Self-regulation and social integration were answered by 72,72 % affirmatively of the unit participant. These were essentials for Izmir-based organizations. However, flexibility was not mentioned by any of the participant NGOs. Instead of flexibility, transparency was answered by 72,72 % affirmatively. This result could be associated with the conditions in Turkey and will be discussed in the conclusion part. The seventh ontological principle which is “NGOs are collective actors, and when individual actors reproduce the structure, they are at the same time communities of interpretation” (Oliveira, 2019: 93) is also partially confirmed by these results. The participant NGOs assert themselves as individual actors, however, they were not communities of interpretation.

“Economic System of an NGO” which is the fifth category includes the answers for research questions eight and the ontological principles 11,12,14 and 15. The most mentioned unit here was “Pecuniary Resources” whereby the less mentioned one was “Continuity of Donation”. These findings show that all of the NGOs’ representatives have agreed upon the fact that pecuniary resources are needed for continuing the campaigns and goals of their organization.

Economical System Components	n	%
Pecuniary Resources	10	90,9
Spiritual Resources	5	45,4
Donors	5	45,4
Supporters	6	54,5
Continuity of Donation	4	36,6

Table 8: Content Analysis Findings of the Category ‘Economical System of an NGO’

The findings of this category showed that pecuniary resources, answered by 90,9 % affirmatively, were more important for the participant NGOs. ‘Supporters’ category was considered more important by 54,5% affirmatively, than the ‘donors’ category (by 45,4%). The findings for continuity of donations by 36,6% affirmatively, revealed that participant NGOs found or created their resources and worked rather project-oriented. The research question, related to this category is “Are the NGOs, with their stakeholders and donors, a part of a market, non-market and non-monetary economic systems?” answered by 90,9 % for pecuniary resources and supporters by 54,5% affirmatively. This fact shows also that the ITNC describes the economic system likewise the Izmir-based NGOs with the ontological principles 11,12,14 and 15.

The sixth and final category was “NGO’s Benefits to Society”. This category included the answer for the research questions sixth and is related to the ontological principles 2,3,9 and 10. “Voice Creation” was the most mentioned unit for this category which is followed by “Common Well Being. The least mentioned unit here was “Information Contribution”.

Benefits to Society	n	%
Common well being	6	54,5

Solutions for problems	5	45,4
Attention for problems	5	45,4
Voice creation	7	63,6
Development	3	27,2
Democracy	5	45,4
Non-profit	2	18,1
Information contribution	1	9,09

Table 9: Content Analysis Findings of the Category ‘NGO’s Benefits to Society’

The sixth research question which is, “Do the NGOs withstand the sense of fragmentation and dispersal in society?” was related to these findings. By working to withstand the sense of fragmentation and dispersal in society, NGOs created voices in society and helped so their audiences could be understood. The unit voice creation was answered by 63,6 % affirmatively. The other units which were related to withstanding the sense of fragmentation and dispersal in society were answered by 45,4 % affirmatively by participating NGOs. This shows also that the ontological principles 2,3,9 and 10 are validated by Izmir-based NGOs.

The following sub-title will conclude the study and discuss the findings with a focus on the ontological principles of ITNC and the appropriateness and heuristic of the theory.

Conclusion

Depending on the ontological principles and the outcomes of the Instigatory Theory of NGO Communication (ITNC), the main objective of this article was to question the strategic communications of the NGOs in the Turkish context. Scrutinizing the interlinkage between their strategic communication processes and management functions, the findings obtained from the content analysis of the semi-structured interviews confirm that the participant NGOs’ approaches to their strategic communication processes are in line with the claims of the theory. According to the findings, the theorems about management functions and organizational structures could not be verified with this study, however, it was observed that other theorems on which the theory was based were valid for İzmir-based NGOs. This finding has a potential value to contribute to the appropriateness of the ITNC.

The ITNC describes the management process of an NGO with the concepts of self-regulation, social integration, and flexibility. Although the participants mentioned self-

regulation and social integration, flexibility was remarked only within their communication actions and strategies for the demands of society. Instead of flexibility, terms like honesty, transparency, equitability, and traceability were pointed out by the interviewees. All these cited terms will be recuperated hereafter as the “credibility” of an NGO. The results indicated that the credibility of an NGO seems more important for the participant NGOs than their flexibility. This result may relate to the perspectives of NGOs in Turkey and their environmental and social conditions. As entire participant NGOs mentioned, economical resources have critical importance for an NGO to ensure continuity; they also remarked, that the governmental and private sector supports for NGOs was limited. Therefore, NGOs have to find resources for their campaigns in collaboration with other NGOs, and the majority, from international funds. The credibility of the NGO plays an important role in finding these resources. Another reason for more mentions of credibility could be the fact that the civil society culture in Turkey still needs to improve and mature. Hence, more credible NGOs have also more interplay with society. This finding is also in line with the concerning literature.

The second discrepancy regarding the theorems of ITNC was about the structure. As the ITNC suggested, participating and volunteering were reflected by the participant NGOs and protected by civil society perception inside their organizations. However, according to the theory, the donation is a value of the civil society culture both for citizens and NGOs. The interview answers revealed that only one of the participants mentioned donating with an economic aspect instead of a value in the structure of an NGO. This outcome might be potentially linked to the civil society perception in Turkey, in which donation was not perceived as an intrinsic value within the civil society, and it is rather perceived as an economic resource.

In connection with these findings, there are several results regarding NGOs' communication strategies: the first one is that; Public Relations (PR) is taken in an old-fashioned and reductionist way except for one of the participating NGOs. Most of the participants mentioned their use of PR as only the creation of understandable and mutual messages for informing and educating the public. PR is still seen as synonymous with media and press relations. The second result is that the participating NGOs try to use effective communication skills even if they are not holding a strategic perspective. The participants believe that organization's goals can be achieved more easily with strategic communication; however, they are not capable of utilizing strategic communication tools the way ITNC describes. This reflects the lack of communication expertise within the civil society organizations in Turkey, which might be discussed as an obstacle to their effectiveness in

society at large. Communication and PR professionals should better take active roles in the NGOs, either paid or voluntary. The final finding is that none of the participant NGOs describe communication actions and skills as in the theoretical framework the ITNC suggested. Instead, they described communication from a journalistic perspective with the main aim of resource mobilization.

In a conclusion, the theorems about management functions and organizational structures could not be verified with this study, but it was observed that other theorems on which the theory was based were also valid for İzmir-based NGOs. Accordingly, NGOs that use strategic communication tend to have more innovative and participatory management and are leading to a change in society. With these results in mind, it would be best for NGOs to give importance to all relevant managerial tenets and integrate them into a sustainable model for their organization.

The limitation of this article is a comparatively small research universe, which is İzmir-based NGOs. After the data elimination process on the obtained database from the Administration of Civil Society Relations from İzmir Province (İzmir İl Sivil Toplumla İlişkiler Müdürlüğü), NGOs were selected from the final list according to their availability and convenience which will not enable generalizable results. As to have generalizable results, the preliminary data from this research can be tested with a greater and more representative sample chosen from all over the country. However, as the findings of this article display, the ITNC builds a conceptual framework for NGOs and includes many aspects for researchers. Alongside strategic communication, managerial, economic, and structural aspects can be researched as intertwined concepts of an NGO. The conceptual map of the ITNC, which is added in the theoretical background part of the article, can be used for it. Further research about this topic will help us to understand the operational and conceptual models of NGOs, and research from Turkey will help to expand the literature from a developing country's perspective.

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