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Editorial address

Polish Journal of Political Science

Centre for Development of Research and Education
email: kontakt@inop.edu.pl

Interdisciplinary Research Center of the University of Warsaw
„Identity – Dialogue – Security”
Prosta 69, 00-838 Warsaw
email: centrum.tozsamosc@uw.edu.pl

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The City, NGOs and COVID-19. Non-governmental organisations in Warsaw and the new horizons of societal security during the pandemic (research concept)

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Abstract

The authors present a concept of research concerning the share of the non-governmental organisations operating in Warsaw (Poland's capital) during the COVID-19 pandemic in creating societal security. The elaborated research concept covers a description of the state of research, the arising research questions, suggested research hypotheses and methods. The article's contents are meant to serve the implementation of a research project, whose results will be useful by increasing the body of knowledge on the functioning of NGOs during the pandemic, which should contribute to improving the operation of such entities in unanticipated circumstances in future. Learning the failures and successes of NGOs (scientific monitoring) in creating societal security should be seen as an intrinsic part of care for the well-being of society and the functioning of a political community. The article contemplates conceptualisation and construction of research

* University of Warsaw, e-mail:
c.smuniewski@uw.edu.pl, [https://
orcid.org/0000-0002-8973-3539](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8973-3539)

** University of Warsaw,
e-mail: k.kadzielski@uw.edu.pl,
[https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0484-
6156](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0484-6156)

projects in the area of security studies, social policy and politology, attention being given to the contexts and problem references to social culture, law and administration. The core content of the work includes: a synthesis of the state of research in the proposed research area; theoretical assumptions of the role of NGOs in social life; and a methodology of postulated research.

Keywords

societal security, COVID-19, pandemic, non-governmental organisations, aid activities, Warsaw

Introduction

The unexpected outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic took the majority of states in the world by surprise. Even the highly industrialised countries were unable to fight it effectively. No specific procedures as well as the fear of losing one's health or life paralysed many areas of private and public life. In Poland, in the context of the pandemic, a great role was played by NGOs, primarily as regards helping those who were particularly vulnerable. Thanks to their specificity (*inter alia*, deep enrooting in the society's tissue, ability to respond promptly, flexibility of structures and teams as well as their competences) non-governmental organisations started to adjust their internal regulations and operating methods to the new circumstances, to the new challenges, so as to bring help as promptly as possible and thus mitigate the consequences of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and consolidate the level of security of local communities.

The article is aimed at presenting the concepts of the postulated research concerning the efforts undertaken by the aid organisations operating in Warsaw during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to resolve the problems in the area of societal security that had been observed since early 2020. Why should such research be carried out? The sudden wave of infections and introduction of new sanitary restrictions required firm preventive measures from the authorities. Despite the existence in Poland of the law on infectious diseases¹ and the relevant procedures² it turned out in practice that public authorities had not been sufficiently prepared. The reasons for the weakening of the existing level of societal security should be perhaps sought not only in the suddenness of the outbreak of the pandemic itself, but

1. Ustawa z dnia 5 grudnia 2008 r. o zapobieganiu oraz zwalczaniu zakażeń i chorób zakaźnych u ludzi, Dz.U. 2008 nr 234 poz. 1570, [Act of 5 December 2008 on the prevention and combating infections and infectious diseases in humans, Journal of Laws 2008, No. 234, item 1570]; Ustawa z dnia 17 marca 2021 r. o zmianie ustawy o zapobieganiu oraz zwalczaniu zakażeń i chorób zakaźnych u ludzi, Dz.U. 2021 poz. 616, [Act of 17 March 2021 on amendment of the Act on preventing and combating infections and contagious diseases in humans, Journal of Laws 2021, item 616]; Ustawa z dnia 7 października 2020 r. o zmianie niektórych ustaw w celu przeciwdziałania społeczno-gospodarczym skutkom COVID-19, Dz.U. 2020 poz. 1747, [Act of 7 October 2020 on the amendment of certain Acts

also in the lack of cohesion in the crisis management system. Noticing this powerlessness, third sector organisations commenced efforts aimed at ensuring security and support for the people. The carrying out of the postulated research is significant because of the need to fill a gap which has occurred in the area of societal security and which substantially endangered the functioning of local communities for instance in Warsaw. It will be possible to fill this gap as a result of gaining information on the types of activities of third sector organisations aimed at consolidating the area of societal security as well as the people who became their immediate beneficiaries. The following research methods have been used in writing this paper devoted to the concept of the postulated research: analysis, synthesis, deduction as well as participatory observation carried out by the authors during the COVID-19 pandemic in Warsaw.

It should be expected that the research carried out according to the concept presented further on in this paper will be of a cognitive (especially from the viewpoint of security studies that are developing in Poland) and utilitarian value. The latter will be able to reveal itself in relevant recommendations for potential changes in Polish and European legislation. This concerns such legal regulations which may contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of the *Act on the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases in Humans*³ and the *Act on Crisis Management*.⁴ The importance of such recommendations seems to be especially crucial from the viewpoint of containing negative consequences in the area of security brought about by similar events in the future.

Following our examination (of reports, scientific papers, documents available in online databases) it should be stated that the research concerning the role of non-governmental organisations and their support to the people during the COVID-19 pandemic has been primarily focused on the health aspect. However, they also deal with socio-political and economic issues (such works have been published e.g. in Poland, the US, India or Iran). Similar thematic areas are touched upon in the Polish online service entitled *Nauka Polska* (Polish Science).⁵ The abovementioned services offer several dozen works on public security in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic and the threats associated therewith. However, the authors studying the changes caused by the pandemic in the area of the security environment do not include *non-profit* organisations in the group of entities that contribute to increasing the level of societal security – Romania⁶ and Iran⁷ are the exceptions.

So far, at an early state of conducting the research, numerous consultations and interviews on the functioning of non-governmental organisations and their aid for the inhabitants of Warsaw have

in order to prevent social and economic consequences of COVID-19, Journal of Laws 2020, item 1747].

2. Rozporządzenie Ministra Zdrowia z dnia 10 grudnia 2019 r. w sprawie zgłaszania podejrzeń i rozpoznania zakażeń, chorób zakaźnych oraz zgonów z ich powodu, Dz.U. 2019 poz. 2430, [Ordinance of the Minister of Health of 10 December 2019 on reporting suspicions and diagnoses of infection, contagious diseases and death caused thereby, Journal of Laws 2019, item 2430].

3. Ustawa z dnia 5 grudnia 2008 r. o zapobieganiu oraz zwalczaniu zakażeń i chorób zakaźnych u ludzi, Dz.U. 2008 nr 234 poz. 1570, [Act of 5 December 2008 on the prevention and combating infections and infectious diseases in humans, Journal of Laws 2008, No. 234, item 1570].

4. Ustawa z dnia 26 kwietnia 2007 r. o zarządzaniu kryzysowym, Dz.U. 2007 nr 89 poz. 590, [Act of 26 April 2007 on crisis management, Journal of Laws 2007, No. 89, item 590].

5. The Polish scientific portal gathering people and scientific institutions within the database of the Information Processing Centre of the State Research Institute. See: https://nauka-polska.pl/#/home/search?_k=0jx737, (access 28.10.2022).

6. M.S. Nemțeanu, D.C. Dabija, *Best practices of nongovernmental organiza-*

The state of research in the proposed research area

been carried out. Basing on the opinions of experts in the area of security, psychology as well as those who work in the socio-economic sector several key conclusions may be drawn as regards their situation the first two years of the pandemic.

One of the main negative effects of the pandemic is the degeneration of interpersonal relations, and in some cases actually the atrophy of social communication at its various level. This situation occurs *inter alia* between employers and employees, among co-workers, social groups as well as within the family circle. It is one of the most frequently mentioned social problems noticed by and notified to voluntaries. Similar opinions are voiced by the community of academic researchers, e.g. by Marlena Sokół-Szawłowska, who measures the negative impact of the pandemic on mental health.⁸

As a result of the pandemic, also the number of people showing mild to severe symptoms of depression has increased.⁹ With a view to the abovementioned degeneration of relations – in the broad meaning of the word – as a result of quarantines and sanitary restrictions, since the beginning of 2020 individuals became step by step more alienated within the society. In the research report entitled “Symptoms of depression and anxiety among the Poles during the COVID-19 epidemic. A longitudinal studies report” published as a result of research carried out *inter alia* by a team from the Psychology Department of the University of Warsaw headed by Małgorzata Gambin one can read that there has been a significant increase of the symptoms of depression, particularly in the first year of the pandemic.¹⁰ A similar situation was reported by Katarzyna Hamer and Maria Baran with respect to the feeling of stress and an excess of negative changes taking place in the lives of the Poles.¹¹ Of no less importance is the issue of employment and instability associated therewith. Enforced and almost instantaneous redirecting of thousands of white-collar workers to do their jobs remotely (online) revealed several important issues connected with the durability of employment. Distance working had two pretty serious consequences in the social dimension. First, people spent longer hours doing their jobs (at a computer) since they could utilise the time that would normally be used for commuting. The additional number of worked hours was tantamount to a growth of effectiveness and thus doing the same amount of work that had been that far performed by alternating hourly shifts. This led to a surplus of workforce for the work to be done, as a result of which employers got rid of some of the staff. Another important element associated with the transfer of work to home was that it became difficult to separate professional and personal life. So far, home had been the place where an individual could rest in the environment of their own creation, according to their own rules, free from the tension associated with performing a job and in consequence spend “the evening” with their near-

tions in combatting Covid-19, in: *6th BASIQ International Conference on New Trends in Sustainable Business and Consumption*, eds. R. Pamfilie, V. Dinu, L. Tăchiciu, D. Pleșea, C.Vasiliiu, ASE 2020, pp. 626–633.

7. E. Maserat, F. Jafari, Z. Mohammadzadeh, et al., *COVID-19 & an NGO and university developed interactive portal: a perspective from Iran*, “Health Technol”, 2020, 10, pp. 1421–1426. DOI: [10.1007/s12553-020-00470-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12553-020-00470-1)

8. M. Sokół-Szawłowska, *Wpływ kwwarantann na zdrowie psychiczne podczas pandemii COVID-19*, “Psychiatria”, 2020, 18 (1), pp. 57–62. DOI: [10.5603/PSYCH.a2020.0046](https://doi.org/10.5603/PSYCH.a2020.0046)

9. Encyclopaedia Britannica defines depression as “a mood or emotional state that is marked by feelings of low self-worth or guilt and a reduced ability to enjoy life. [...] A person who is depressed usually experiences: feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or pessimism; lowered self-esteem and heightened self-deprecation; a decrease or loss of ability to take pleasure in ordinary activities [...]”. From this succinct description it may be inferred that depression is a state of profound dejection or breakdown, but is also treated as a serious illness. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “depression”. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Invalid Date, <https://www.britannica.com/science/depression-psychology>, (access 28.10.2022).

est and dearest. Upon the closing of the entire family in quarantine, the two so far separate spheres of life had been squeezed into a single space: the duties of a job had clashed with the educational responsibilities vis-à-vis the children, who also had their classes online.¹² As Teresa Chirkowska-Smolak and Mikołaj Czumak note in such a situation parents were deprived of a relevant social support which before the pandemic they could have received from their superiors at work. Living in such circumstances could be a convenient form of spending time for a short period, though long term it starts to upset the abovementioned personal relations.

On the basis of relevant literature in the area of sociology and security studies,¹³ it is possible to specify the theoretical preconditions for the establishment and activities of third sector organisations in social life. The concepts concerning aid organisations include:

- Interdependence theory,
- Welfare state theory,
- Social origins theory.

The theory of interdependence is a concept the characteristic of which is that its participants model the society with the simultaneous acceptance of non-governmental entities as well as state authorities. The inner relations between the participating parties are characterized by – as the name itself suggests – interdependence, which eliminates the element of competition and replaces it with mutual complementing each other.¹⁴ The correlation underlined by Lester M. Salamon allows for common resolution of social problems exploiting the potential of both sectors (e.g. owing to the fact of having a larger budget at its disposal state administration may decide to outsource certain tasks to non-governmental institutions). This affiliation contributes at the same time to a compensation of expenses associated with administrative efforts which does not take place when the tasks are outsourced to other entities.¹⁵ In such a case, one should not altogether exclude the weakness of organisational structures of private entities (voluntary failure), which Salamon enumerates as follows:¹⁶

- *philanthropic insufficiency* – ensuring sufficient support as regards the delivery of goods;

10. M. Gambin, M. Sękowski, M. Woźniak-Prus et al., *Objawy depresji i lęku wśród Polaków w trakcie epidemii COVID-19. Raport z badań podłużnych*, University of Warsaw Psychology Department 2021.

11. K. Hamer, M. Baran, *Wpływ pandemii COVID-19 na zachowania i postawy i dobrostan Polaków – podsumowanie 10 miesięcy pandemii*, SWPS University 2021. DOI: [10.13140/RG.2.2.13406.36166](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.13406.36166); The document available in the archives of SWPS University. The report reads that the most affected group of the Poles during the pandemic included young people at the age of 18 to 24 years.

12. T. Chirkowska-Smolak, M. Czumak, *Ryzyko braku relacji zawodowych. Konstrukcja Skali Niepewności Zatrudnienia w Sytuacji Pandemii*, "Człowiek i Społeczeństwo", 2021, Vol. 51, p. 146. DOI: [10.14746/cis.2021.51.8](https://doi.org/10.14746/cis.2021.51.8)

13. L.M. Salamon, *The Rise of Nonprofit Sector*, "Foreign Affairs", 1994, 73 (4), pp. 109–122. DOI: [10.2307/20046747](https://doi.org/10.2307/20046747); P.J. DiMaggio, H.K. Anheier, *The Sociology of Nonprofit Organizations and Sectors*, "Annual Review of Sociology", 1990, Vol. 16, pp. 137–159; E. Leś, *Zasada subsydiarności i jej użyteczność w reformowaniu instytucji pomocy społecznej w Polsce*, in: *Opiekuńczość czy solidarność?*, ed. G. Skąpska, Fundacja Międzynarodowe Centrum Rozwoju Demokracji 1998, pp. 97–112.

14. L.M. Salamon, *The Rise of Nonprofit*

Theoretical assumptions for the role of NGOs in social life

- *philanthropic paternalism* – constituting an interdependence between the sphere of activity of an organisation and its source of funding;
- *philanthropic amateurism* – being a consequence of the low level of training of the voluntaries in an organisation;
- *philanthropic particularism* – focusing efforts on several selected areas to the detriment of other important social problems.

The welfare state theory assumes that a considerable part of the tasks performed to meet social needs, described as “common” or “public”, lies within the framework of responsibilities of state authorities, whereas third sector entities play a lesser role therein, which – as noted by Paul J. DiMaggio and Helmut K. Anheier – finds its direct reflection in the aspect of giving support to the people in dire situations.¹⁷ The theory does not explain the prerequisites underlying the development of a welfare state. Ewa Leś, on the other hand, distinguishes the notion of “a welfare state crisis”,¹⁸ which occurred as a result of socio-economic adversities in the 20th century and re-oriented the West European countries as regards the role played by non-governmental organisations and their impact on social policies that are pursued. The cropping up of institutions in the non-governmental area as well as the implementation of ever new undertakings providing aid to the society bore heavily on the state budget thus revealing its weakness as regards fulfilling the function of a guardian. Alongside the formation and development of new NGOs the problem of the state apparatus was revealed in the context of organisational failure. The abovementioned theory underlines the roles played by non-governmental organisations vis-à-vis the realities prevailing in a given period in a civil society, consideration being given to the moment of their establishment.¹⁹ The wording of the above theory warrants drawing a conclusion that what occurs is the emergence of two parties that are separate to each other – the non-governmental sector and the public sector, at the same time suggesting that the rank of one of them is diminishing while the other’s is adequately growing. Moreover, E. Leś interprets the changing role of non-governmental institutions as a method for “hibernation” of social problems which cannot be resolved with the use of resources and means available at a given time.²⁰ Jerzy Hauser disagrees with this concept and claims that “the stress on an active role of a civil society and non-governmental organisations is a result of, among others, a critical assessment of the role of the state in resolving social problems.”²¹ Examples of such a critical assessment include the inefficiency of state entities, unequal access to services with respect to social classes or the insufficient level of services provided by public administration.

Sector, “Foreign Affairs”, 1994, 73 (4), p. 109.

15. Ibidem, p. 39.

16. Ibidem, pp. 30–33.

17. P.J. DiMaggio, H.K. Anheier, *The Sociology of Nonprofit Organizations and Sectors*, “Annual Review of Sociology”, 1990, Vol. 16, p. 146.

18. E. Leś, *Zasada subsydiarności i jej użyteczność w reformowaniu instytucji pomocy społecznej w Polsce*, in: *Opiekuńczość czy solidarność?*, ed. G. Skąpska, Fundacja Międzynarodowe Centrum Rozwoju Demokracji 1998, p. 50.

19. P.J. DiMaggio, H.K. Anheier, *The Sociology of Nonprofit Organizations and Sectors*, “Annual Review of Sociology”, 1990, Vol. 16, p. 152.

20. E. Leś, *Zasada subsydiarności i jej użyteczność w reformowaniu instytucji pomocy społecznej w Polsce*, in: *Opiekuńczość czy solidarność?*, ed. G. Skąpska, Fundacja Międzynarodowe Centrum Rozwoju Demokracji 1998, p. 51.

21. J. Hauser, *Zarządzanie publiczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar 2008, p. 83.

The latter concept (concerning the importance of social history²²) is based on a factor which positions non-profit institutions in the social system. As Ewa Leś notes when analysing the statement made by researchers Lester, M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier: “contrary to what is claimed by the advocates of economic theories, an individual consumer has no free choice among the market, the third sector or the state as a provider of basic services (...) since the capability to choose is fundamentally limited by the past models of historical development, which significantly determine the range of options available at a given time and place.”²³

There is a correlation between the above theories and the internal security sphere described by Barry Buzan with respect to satisfying need in the social area.²⁴

The analysis of the current state of research in Poland in the area of security studies in what refers to the activities of NGOs clearly shows that there such studies are but a few. As a result, the area that requires to be investigated in depth and the existing current reality analysed is significant. Creation of security becomes in a large measure possible thanks to drawing conclusions, referring them to the historical experience and today’s realities as regards the legal system as well as the political and social situation. Basing on the aforementioned elements it is possible to work out strategic goals which would provide a foundation for an effective strategy²⁵ both with respect to societal security as well as crisis management.²⁶ The determination of the relationships between the abovementioned elements of effective planning would allow for efficient preparation of social institutions for a possible outbreak of a pandemic in future. That is why time is so important as regards initiating research concerning the indicated subjects as well as performing an in-depth analysis of the processes and efforts undertaken thereunder by third sector aid organisations. One of the assumptions of the concept is to distinguish the threats that arise for the society and the functioning of NGOs,²⁷ including the non-governmental sector in other countries.²⁸

With a view to the maximum accuracy and effectiveness, research should be limited not only in time (the duration of the pandemic) but also as regard place. Thus, from the viewpoint of the authors of this research concept, the postulated research should be restricted²⁹ to the activities of NGOs operating in the capital city of Warsaw³⁰ and holding the status of public benefit organisations.³¹ The services provided for the society include, *inter alia*, the implementation of tasks addressed to: the elderly, the sick and the lonely, those who live in hard conditions (financially and

22. E. Leś, *Zasada subsydiarności i jej użyteczność w reformowaniu instytucji pomocy społecznej w Polsce*, in: *Opiekuńczość czy solidarność?*, ed. G. Skąpska, Fundacja Międzynarodowe Centrum Rozwoju Demokracji 1998, p. 53.

23. Ibidem, p. 53. The researchers distinguished four models of development of third sector organisations with respect to social and economic conditions. They are: liberal model, corporate model, static model and social-democratic model.

24. B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*, Wheatsheaf Books Publisher 1983; 2nd reviewed edition: B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, Harvester Wheatsheaf 1991, pp. 18–24. The author distinguishes the dimension of internal security, one of which concerns the social sphere. In the social area, the threats that can destabilise the state as a result of erroneous political decisions include: social problems (including the phenomenon of social exclusion), a high rate of unemployment, poverty and privation may contribute to the migration of people as well as the lack of ensuring adequate living and development conditions.

25. The effective strategy should be understood as the implementation of efforts as a result of which it will be possible to effectively prepare state and

Research methodology

otherwise), etc. In light of the assumptions of the concept, the postulated research problems fit into a research gap.

In light of the above, the main research problem should be worded as follows: “Through what actions non-governmental organisations consolidated societal security during the COVID-19 pandemic in Warsaw?” Given the so formulated main research problem, the detailed problems should be as follows:

1. “What criteria should be applied in order to be able to determine the role of NGOs in ensuring societal security during the COVID-19 pandemic in Warsaw?”
2. “What instruments should be used to investigate societal security? To what extent those instruments are adequate for studying societal security during the COVID-19 pandemic in Warsaw?”
3. “What instruments are used to investigate the effectiveness of NGOs’ efforts in the area of societal security?”
4. “What threats to societal security were identified by NGOs?”
5. “What efforts were undertaken by NGOs in Warsaw for building societal security?”
6. “What are the main threats triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic to the functioning of the NGOs working for creating societal security?”

The proposed main research problem is important with a view to two key elements: first – enumeration of aid campaigns for the inhabitants of the capital city of Warsaw which allowed for containing the growing anxiety as well as the deteriorating level of security in the new uncertain times; second – the successive phases of changes and preparations that had to be faced by aid organisations so as to effectively support the people in their returning to the right state of security.³² Working out a reply to the detailed problems will make it possible to expound on the researched problem more deeply and get an answer as to the types of mechanisms and processes that took place in the area of societal security. In reference to the outlined research problem it is possible to specify the research objectives.

private entities through utilisation of the arising opportunities, undertaking challenges, reducing risks and preventing threats. Obviously, it should not be forgotten that the above efforts should be preceded by improving the awareness and education of the society as regards contemporary threats that should be minimised.

26. Ustawa z dnia 26 kwietnia 2007 r. o zarządzaniu kryzysowym, Dz.U. 2007 nr 89 poz. 590, [Act of 26 April 2007 on crisis management, Journal of Laws 2007, No. 89, item 590].

27. Professor discusses how non-profits have been affected during the pandemic, <https://ocm.auburn.edu/experts/2020/05/181612-nonprofits.php>, (access 26.10.2022).

28. H. Aly, *This global pandemic could transform humanitarian aid forever. Here’s how*, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/06/08/coronavirus-transform-humanitarianism-aid>, (access 28.10.2022).

29. R. Bäcker, L. Czechowska, G. Gadowska et al., *Metodologia badań politologicznych*, Polskie Towarzystwo Nauk Politycznych 2016, pp. 33–38. With a view of the categorisation of the research area used are: the **objective criterion** describing the ontological nature of the researched object (efforts of NGOs for building societal security), the **substantive criterion** describing what or who is the carrier of the object that is of interest to the researcher (so-

The main objective of the research should be “to determine the role of third sector organisations and their activities aimed at consolidating societal security during the COVID-19 pandemic in Warsaw.” Given so formulated main objective of the research, detailed objectives should be as follows:

1. “Determination of the role of non-governmental organisations in the area of societal security during the COVID-19 pandemic.”
2. “Determination of threats in the area of societal security recognised by NGOs.”
3. “Recognition of aid efforts carried out for the society and its security in Warsaw during the COVID-19 pandemic.”
4. “Determination of threats to third sector organisations.”

Attainment of the postulated research objectives will make it possible to determine the exact role of non-governmental organisations in the process of protecting the society against the increasing number of negative consequences in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of no lesser importance will be the presentation of how the NGOs operating in Warsaw alleviated the situations of threat to the people and prevented their further spreading. On the basis of the proposed problems as well as stipulated research objectives to be attained through the postulated research it is possible to put forward the main hypothesis as well as the supporting ones.

Therefore, the main research hypotheses should be as follows: “The efforts undertaken by non-governmental organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to enhancing the level of societal security in Warsaw.” In light of so formulated main research hypothesis, the following detailed hypotheses should be further specified:

1. “On the basis of scientific knowledge, it is possible to determine the role of NGOs in creating societal security during the COVID-19 pandemic.”
2. “The appropriately selected research methods and techniques used for analysing the activities of NGOs allow for a critical recognition of the functioning of those entities in Warsaw during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

ciety and societal security associated therewith), the **aspect criterion** and its functionality (NGOS providing services in Warsaw).

30. An important criterion determining the selection of Warsaw as the area of research is availability of data and effectiveness of their use, analysis and interpretation.

31. Artykuł 3 ustawy z dnia 24 kwietnia 2003 r. o działalności pożytku publicznego i o wolontariacie, Dz.U. 2003 nr 96 poz. 873, [Article 3 of the Act of 24 April 2003 on public benefit activities and volunteers, Journal of Laws 2003, No. 96, item 873].

32. This phrase is used to refer to the situations whereby “the threat is insignificant and its perception is right.” The model of state of security has been elaborated by a Swiss politologists D. Frei. See: R. Jakubczak et al., *Podstawy bezpieczeństwa narodowego Polski w erze globalizacji*, Akademia Obrony Narodowej 2008.

3. "The use of adequate research methods makes it possible to recognise and identify the activities of non-governmental organisations aimed at creating societal security during the COVID-19 pandemic."
4. "The conclusions drawn from the pro-society experience of the NGOs active during the COVID-19 pandemic in Warsaw may contribute to the improvement of the processes of creating societal security in big cities."

The abovementioned hypotheses are to be helpful in making a clear presentation of the role of the third sector in protecting the people during the pandemic. It is also important to outline the exact impact on the sphere of security in the "new" reality with the use of the mentioned research methods and instruments. Thus they are to be convergent with the identified research objectives and problems.

Striving to deal with the research problem, research objectives and taking into account the presented hypotheses, it is necessary to select the optimum research methods and techniques. Given the current state of knowledge we believe that it would suffice to apply the following methods: analysis, systemic analysis, decision analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, analysis of legal texts, in-depth interview and comparison.

Analysis is based on dividing the main research problem into its individual components (NGOs, their statutory tasks and those concerning alleviating the consequences of the pandemic or the types of aid services) and they investigating each of those elements. The results obtained will make it possible to work out a new and optimum way of resolving the problem.

Systemic analysis consists in delimiting the investigated system and its elements, as a result of which a critical approach occurs due to mental limitations. Moreover, it allows for a comprehensive approach to and examination of political phenomena.³³ The examination of the political system will provide a general outline of the pursued anti-pandemic policy as well as the support the third sector was receiving from the beginning of 2020.

The decision analysis method is used for the comprehensive approach to the political phenomena, the analysis of which should take into account the decision-making centre and process as

33. J. Kowalski, W. Lamentowicz, P. Winczorek, *Teoria państwa*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego 1978, p. 32.

well as the political decision and its implementation.³⁴ This method will make it possible to trace the decision-making process of aid organisations in order to understand their efforts undertaken from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Synthesis is a mental process consisting in combining the components and reproduction of the knowledge about the research subject. In this case, the combination of the activities of NGOs for societal security, definite types of services, groups of beneficiaries and their specificity will make it possible to have a holistic view of the research subject.

Induction consists in drawing conclusions as to the general characteristics on the basis of the knowledge acquired from its subsets. The character of the subsystems within aid organisations provides grounds for specifying the main area of the activity of a non-governmental entity in the “pandemic” reality.

Deduction is directed at deriving a detailed statement from a given reason with the use of rules of logical inference.³⁵

The analysis of legal texts serves to reconstruct the undertakings or the organisational structure of a given institution (entity) in the form of a legally drawn documents. This method will constitute a useful element for defining the legal framework in the area of which NGOs could have functioned before the pandemic and in the period of its prevalence, as well as the gradual intensification of restrictions.

In-depth interview is such a form of an interview in which there are no questions set in advance, and they are ordered and formulated at the discretion of the interviewer. Such interviews are carried out with people who have certain qualifications.³⁶ With a view to the fact that this type of interviews is used as the primary method of obtaining data it will be possible to trace the steps undertaken by certain third sector organisations and their workers. The form of interviewing offers a possibility of formulating questions in such a way so that the authors of the concept will be able to exploit aid areas which constitute the core area of activity of a given entity.

The comparative method consists in comparing similar or identical characteristics as well as distinguishing the processes and traits which set the compared entities apart. This method makes it

34. M. Jasiukiewicz, M. Sobczak, J.M. Soroka, *Nauka o polityce*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej 1985, pp. 45–46.

35. E. Nowak, K. Głowiński, *Teoretyczne metody badawcze w naukach społecznych*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Wydziału Zarządzania i Dowodzenia Akademii Obrony Narodowej”, 2013, No. 2 (6), pp. 139–142.

36. W.W. Skarbek, *Wybrane zagadnienia metodologii nauk społecznych*, Naukowe Wydawnictwo Piotrkowskie 2013, p. 71.

possible to make optimum decisions with respect to the policy. The critical part of this method is the difficulty arising from need to appropriately select the compare entities. This method is important from the viewpoint of the planned diversification of third sector organisations which developed various ways of implementing aid efforts for the society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The method³⁷ that will be used for investigating the activities of NGOs in Warsaw and on this basis making an observation as to the potential of a given entity is the **in-depth interview method**. This will allow for performing an accurate analysis of the acquired information from the theoretical part – elaboration of the assumptions and plans that will help attain the planned objectives. In the practical part, interviewees (NGO workers) will be able to share their experience and tasks they implemented during the field work with due respect for all sanitary regulations. The following questions will be helpful in getting answers to those queries.

The identified research methods will allow for gathering data necessary for making a classification of aid campaigns carried out by NGOs as well as their impact on societal security.³⁸

Conclusion

The outcome of the research carried out according to the presented concept may contribute not only to the effective functioning of NGOs, but also to consolidation of societal security. The postulated research will contribute to the understanding of the social mechanisms that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the exact role of aid institutions acting for the prevention of the pandemic and alleviation of its consequences. Drawing conclusions from the prevailing situation should be perceived as an important part of the processes of building a secure tomorrow. In this building of a secure tomorrow an ever greater role of the non-governmental sector should be recognised, which means *inter alia* a growing role of well, adequately and efficiently operating NGOs. Making them more efficient should be seen as an important part of societal security. Due to providing a whole gamut of aid services NGOs have always been able to reach to the most needy social groups, which need support because of their characteristics.

Carrying out participative observation in the area of social life with a focus on the goods that form the foundation of security (freedom of development, movement or undisturbed functioning) the authors saw how extensive the restrictions of those goods were from the beginning of 2020. Given the insignificant impact of single individuals and social groups on the prevailing situation NGOs formed

37. Ibidem, pp. 62–67.

38. B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, Harvester Wheatsheaf 1991, p. 19.

lifebuoy which helped the population of Warsaw to endure the hardest moments. The carrying out of the proposed research will allow for quick and efficient implementation of the recommendations, as a result of which state authorities and non-governmental entities will be able to prepare themselves and avoid any possible future difficulties should such a situation as that during the abovementioned pandemic repeat itself in the future.

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