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Complexities of Collaborative Crisis Response: Stakeholders' Perception of Coordination Challenges during the Influx of Ukrainian Forced Migrants to Warsaw

Abstract

The article delves into the challenges of multi-sectoral coordination in emergency food relief for forced migrants from Ukraine in Warsaw. Utilising the COM-B model, we analysed interviews with representatives from public authorities, the private sector, and NGOs to identify perceived barriers in capability, opportunity, and motivation affecting collaboration. Our findings indicate a consensus across sectors regarding capability and opportunity barriers. Key capability issues include coordination complexities, communication gaps, and unclear roles, leading to systemic inefficiencies and response delays. Opportunity barriers are predominantly linked to procedural and bureaucratic challenges, exacerbated by conflicting policies and cultural factors. Motivational challenges differ by sector, ranging from frustrations associated with attempts to collect high-quality donations in the public sector, operational risks and misuse concerns in the private sector, to morale decline due to criticism in NGOs.

Keywords: public management, crisis, policy response, multi-sectoral coordination, migration

JEL Classification Codes: H0, H7, H8

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Złożoności współpracy przy reagowaniu na kryzys: Postrzeżenie wyzwań koordynacyjnych przez interesariuszy podczas napływu uchodźców wojennych z Ukrainy do Warszawy

Streszczenie

Artykuł jest poświęcony wyzwaniom koordynacji międzysektorowej w dostarczaniu pomocy żywnościowej dla migrantów przymusowych z Ukrainy przybywających do Warszawy. Wykorzystując model COM-B, przeanalizowaliśmy wywiady z przedstawicielami władz publicznych, sektora prywatnego oraz organizacji pozarządowych, aby zidentyfikować postrzeżenie barier w zakresie potencjału, sposobności i motywacji, wpływające na współpracę między tymi sektorami. Nasze wyniki wskazują na konsensus międzysektorowy odnośnie do barier w zakresie potencjału i sposobności. Kluczowe problemy w zakresie potencjału obejmują złożoność koordynacji, problemy komunikacyjne i niejasny podział ról, co prowadzi do systemowej nieefektywności i opóźnień w reagowaniu. Bariery w zakresie sposobności są związane głównie z wyzwaniami proceduralnymi i biurokratycznymi, pogłębianymi przez sprzeczne podejścia do rozwiązywania problemów i czynniki kulturowe. Bariery w zakresie motywacji różnią się w zależności od sektora: od frustracji związanych z próbami pozyskiwania wysokiej jakości darów w sektorze publicznym, poprzez niegotowość do poniesienia ryzyka operacyjnego i obawy przed nadużyciami w sektorze prywatnym, po spadek moralności w organizacjach pozarządowych w wyniku krytyki.

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie publiczne, kryzys, odpowiedź polityczna, koordynacja międzysektorowa, migracja

Kody klasyfikacji JEL: H0, H7, H8

Introduction

On 24 February 2022, Russia commenced a full-scale aggression against Ukraine. This drastic escalation resulted in a staggering wave of forced migration, with approximately 6.3 million people seeking refuge by mid-May 2022 (UNHCR, 2022). Being the primary recipient of these displaced individuals, Poland found itself at the forefront of an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

In the face of such a daunting challenge, Polish society responded with remarkable solidarity, especially in the initial phase of the crisis. A vast array of actors from the private sector, public bodies, non-governmental organisations, and individuals displayed an impressive readiness to provide relief.

The European Union took rapid action in response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, with the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 activating

the Temporary Protection Directive specifically for people fleeing the war in Ukraine (Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 Activating the Temporary Protection Directive Specifically for People Fleeing the War in Ukraine, 2022). Within this EU framework, individual member states were required to implement the Temporary Protection Directive through their own domestic legislation. In Poland, the government enacted a special law on 12 March 2022 (Act of 12 March 2022 on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of That State, 2022), which formed the crux of the country's policy response to this mass migration. This legislation addressed the legalisation of forced migrants' stay, the organisation and scope of aid, and the formulation of specialised strategies for integrating forced migrants into society. As per the enacted law, coordination responsibility was allocated to the local representatives of the central government, the voivodes. However, considering that neither of the involved stakeholders had prior experience managing such a crisis, Poland became an intriguing case for policy scientists, affording a rare opportunity to scrutinise how coordinating efforts among different stakeholders during a crisis unfolded.

Addressing a crisis, and particularly the coordination of spontaneous efforts among different stakeholders, presents a wicked problem that embodies a range of intricate and interdependent challenges (Elia & Margherita, 2018; Rittel & Webber, 1973). In the field of public crisis management, the crucial role of cross-sectoral collaboration in emergency relief activities is well recognised. This collaboration involves stakeholders from various sectors, including the government, private sector, and non-profit organisations, who collectively strive to alleviate the crisis impact (Bryson et al., 2006). However, effective cross-sectoral collaboration requires overcoming numerous, often case-specific, challenges (Nohrstedt et al., 2018).

In this paper, we examine cross-sectoral collaboration in creating Warsaw's food relief system that emerged in response to the influx of forced migrants from Ukraine. Our investigation provides a dual contribution to the current body of knowledge. First and foremost, we look at the aspect of the challenges to cross-sectoral collaboration in crisis management that remains less commonly studied, namely the significance of personal experiences, opinions, and perceptions of the stakeholders engaged in the community's response to a crisis. As Emerson et al. (2012) assert, individual participants' perceptions can profoundly influence collaboration effectiveness and outcomes, as they constitute the basis of one of the key components of collaborative dynamics, namely shared motivation. This step is not a mere academic exercise; it is a deliberate choice, steered by the imperative to cast fresh, innovative lenses on existent materials gathered by city authorities and shared with researchers. In simple terms, our paper highlights the importance of micro-level insights into stakeholders'

subjective perceptions of challenges to cross-sectoral collaboration in crisis response and resilience-building, and proposes a way of viewing them not as mere anecdotal accounts but as pivotal evaluative tools. Secondly, the paper provides some new insights into the issue of Poland's response to the influx of forced migrants from Ukraine.

Drawing upon the outlined significance of cross-sectoral collaboration in crisis public management, and the pivotal role of micro-level perceptions and experiences in shaping collaboration effectiveness, as well as the uniqueness and novelty of the case of Warsaw accepting forced migrants from Ukraine, we focus on the following research questions:

- What challenges were encountered by the various stakeholders – public authorities, private companies, and NGOs – in coordinating their efforts to address the crisis?
- Delving deeper, to what extent do the mentioned stakeholders agree in their perception of challenges?

Addressing these research questions will enable us not only to pinpoint specific obstacles faced by stakeholders but also to judge the validity and prominence of these challenges across different sectors.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. We start with presenting briefly the context for the reader to have a better understanding of the crisis being the subject of analysis. The second section provides theoretical background that shapes our comprehension of the challenges associated with coordination of cross-sectoral collaboration in crisis situations. Furthermore, this section provides an operationalisation framework for empirical analysis. In the following section, we detail the research approach, data collection methods, and analytical tools employed in our study, providing a clear overview of how we gathered and interpreted our empirical data. Next section is devoted to the discussion of our empirical findings, revealing the primary challenges to coordination as perceived by representatives of the organisations involved in the creation of a food relief system for forced migrants in Warsaw. Finally, the text ends with a conclusion, encapsulating the reflection on the value of the chosen analytical approach, main findings, as well as some practical implications.

Context

To fully appreciate the complexities of cross-sectoral collaboration in this crisis, it is crucial to understand the broader context of the influx of Ukrainian forced migrants into Poland and the resulting challenges. Recent research has shed light on various aspects of this unprecedented situation, providing valuable insights that inform our study.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, precipitated one of the largest forced migration crises in Europe since World War II, with Poland becoming the primary recipient country. By the end of 2022, more than 8 million Ukrainian forced migrants had crossed into Poland, with over 1 million residing there (Duszczuk et al., 2023). This massive influx presented unprecedented challenges for Poland's social, economic, and administrative systems. The initial response was characterised by widespread grassroots support and spontaneous social initiatives (Fomina & Pachocka, 2024), with Polish society demonstrating remarkable solidarity towards Ukrainian refugees (Bielewska et al., 2024). However, the crisis also highlighted discrepancies between the needs of refugees and the aid offered (Kyliushyk & Jastrzebowska, 2023), as well as disparities in the treatment of refugees from different origins (Stepaniuk, 2022). The spatial distribution of refugees within Poland has been uneven, potentially reinforcing existing demographic trends such as concentration in metropolitan areas and suburbanisation (Wiśniewski et al., 2023). Warsaw, in particular, emerged as the most frequently chosen destination for migrants from Ukraine, with Ukrainians constituting 16% of the city's inhabitants by May 2022 (Research and Analysis Centre, Union of Polish Metropolises, 2022). Despite the challenges, studies have shown high levels of community and societal resilience among both Ukrainians and Poles in response to the crisis (Kimhi et al., 2023).

Given this complex and rapidly evolving situation, effective cross-sectoral collaboration became crucial for managing the crisis. To better understand the dynamics of such cooperation, we now turn to the theoretical background of cross-sectoral partnerships in crisis management, which will form our analysis of the Warsaw case study.

Theoretical Framework

The scholarly discourse on cross-sectoral collaboration in crisis management is extensive and multifaceted. Effective crisis management, whether it is related to health pandemics like COVID-19 or humanitarian emergencies, often surpasses the capacity of a single organisation or sector. As such, cross-sectoral partnership, involving public, private, and non-profit organisations, has become a vital facet of crisis management. As it was mentioned above, our approach is based on the fundamental assumption that the efficacy of cross-sectoral collaboration is ultimately the result of engagement of the individuals involved.

Indeed, a significant body of research emphasises the critical role that individuals play during crises. Some studies investigate the capacity of public managers to function effectively within complex, uncertain contexts. These capacities are influenced

by various factors including the severity of the problem, managerial competencies, organisational capacity, and agency structures (McGuire & Silvia, 2010). Concurrently, recognition is given to the valuable contribution of diverse actors, including non-state participants, to collaborative governance during crises (Parker et al., 2020). The sophisticated dynamics among these actors, their ability to navigate rapid changes and uncertainties, and their collective capacity to articulate and pursue shared objectives are all pivotal elements in successful crisis management. A few researchers emphasise the role of boundary spanners, whose work entails negotiating the complex terrain of inter-organisational relationships amidst the volatile and uncertain environment of a crisis (Kalkman, 2020).

At the same time, much attention is paid to the structural issues. Scholars underscore the importance of governance strategies that afford public administrators the flexibility to adapt to the dynamic conditions inherent in crises (Nolte & Lindenmeier, 2023). There is also a focus on the emergent collaborative structures that supplement pre-existing mechanisms for crisis management (Antonsen et al., 2023). The recurring theme in this research stream is the adaptability of existing structures.

To merge the insights from both individual competencies and structural issues, we propose adopting a *behavioural lens* to examine cross-sectoral collaboration. Such approach conceptualises collaboration as a behaviour driven by individual characteristics and the nuances of the environment. To practically apply this perspective, we utilise the *COM-B model*, designed as a systematic approach to understanding and analysing behaviour (Michie et al., 2011). According to this model, behaviour is influenced by three primary components: capability, opportunity, and motivation. Capability refers to an individual's psychological and physical capacity to engage in specific behaviour, encompassing the necessary knowledge and skills. Opportunity relates to external factors that either facilitate or obstruct behaviour, such as the physical and social environment, as well as available resources and support. Motivation involves the conscious and unconscious processes that energise and guide behaviour. Let us look at existing literature on barriers to cross-sectoral collaboration in crisis management through this perspective.

Capability, within the COM-B framework, encompasses the psychological readiness and practical skills necessary for stakeholders to engage effectively in collaborative endeavours. Bauer et al. (2023) and Soininen (2014) underscore the importance of understanding and navigating the complexities of cross-sectoral dynamics, suggesting that collaborative efficacy is contingent on stakeholders' cognitive aptitudes and operational competencies. In the context of crisis management, capability extends to professional competencies in communication, as highlighted by Nohrstedt and Bodin (2014), Johansson (2017), and Fischer (2016). These competencies are par-

amount in establishing and maintaining effective communication channels, a cornerstone of successful collaboration. Consequently, our investigation will probe the extent of stakeholders' knowledge, expertise, and communication skills, seeking evidence of both psychological preparedness and physical capacity to engage in and sustain collaborative efforts.

The COM-B model identifies *opportunity* as a critical component shaped by external circumstances that can either facilitate or hinder collaboration. Vogel et al. (2022) and Mendoza (2009) highlight how institutional and organisational disparities, such as governance structures, resource allocation, and conflicting objectives, pose substantial barriers, framing the 'opportunity' for collaboration. Particularly in logistical coordination during crises, external constraints become exceedingly pronounced. Balcik et al. (2010) and Gündoğan and Ata (2021) discuss the challenges in humanitarian relief chains, pointing to environmental chaos and resource management hurdles as significant impediments. These studies suggest that 'opportunity' is often at the mercy of external variables, unpredictable and beyond the immediate control of the collaborating entities. Our empirical exploration will, therefore, focus on identifying these external factors within the crisis management landscape. We will examine how physical environments, institutional frameworks, resource availabilities, and socio-political dynamics influence the opportunity component, either propelling stakeholders towards, or deterring them from, collaboration.

Motivation within the COM-B model refers to the processes that energise and direct behaviour, both at conscious and unconscious levels. Kousgaard et al. (2019) illuminate the discrepancy often observed between systematic and ad-hoc collaboration, suggesting an underlying motivational gap. This gap can stem from disparities between policy vision and actual implementation, ultimately affecting stakeholders' drive to engage in collaborative efforts. The literature suggests that motivation is multi-faceted, and influenced by personal, organisational, and broader societal values and objectives. In analysing barriers to collaboration, our research will delve into the motivational undercurrents guiding stakeholder behaviour. We aim to uncover the incentives, beliefs, and value systems that motivate entities to pursue collaboration, despite inherent challenges, or conversely, contribute to reluctance or withdrawal from collaborative initiatives.

Moving to the empirical section, we will examine which of these components most significantly influenced the coordination of establishing an emergency food relief system for forced migrants from Ukraine in Warsaw. Our primary focus is on discerning the level of consensus or divergence among stakeholders from different sectors in identifying these challenges.

Methodology

Our research is rooted in the analysis of nine interviews commissioned by the Warsaw City Hall in the spring of 2022. It is important to note that we did not influence the planning or execution of these interviews. However, given the unique circumstances surrounding their conduction and the impossibility of replicating such a study, we approach them as invaluable existing materials.

The interviewees comprised four representatives from public authorities, two from the private sector (specifically the HoReCa sector), and three from non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The primary objective of these interviews was to conduct a comprehensive review of the operation of two reception points for forced migrants in Warsaw. One was situated at the Western Railway Station, and the other at the Central Railway Station. These reception points served as critical hubs for incoming migrants, providing essential information, directing them to accommodation facilities, and, importantly, supplying food.

In both instances, the reception points emerged spontaneously at the onset of the forced migration crisis. Upon the implementation of a special law making the voivode (the local representative of the central government) accountable for the overall coordination of such initiatives, the voivode began to play an active role. Despite this, both situations provide intriguing case studies from the standpoint of coordination efforts among all engaged entities.

The interviews were processed with the help of MaxQDA Analytics Pro 2022 software. In the first step, we conducted a qualitative coding of interviews. Within the ‘capability’ category, we were looking for segments that highlighted concerns pertaining to skillsets and competencies, capacity to deal with available resources, information management, technical proficiencies, as well as training and development. For the ‘opportunity’ category, segments touching upon challenges posed by bureaucratic structures, the overarching policy environment, cultural factors, and prevailing public sentiment were searched. Lastly, under the ‘motivation’ category, we focused on fragments that signalled issues concerning incentives, stakeholder beliefs and attitudes, perceptions of costs and benefits, risk awareness, emotional influences, and the juxtaposition of long-term versus short-term goals.

In the second step, we analysed coded fragments to identify patterns and insights related to our research objectives.

Analysis of Results and Discussion

Stakeholder Perspectives

Tables 1 and 2 provide an illustrative breakdown of the barriers perceived by stakeholders across the three sectors, categorised under the classification of capability, opportunity, and motivation barriers.

Table 1. Frequency of mentioning specific types of barriers to cross-sectoral collaboration

	Public sector	Private sector	3rd sector
Capability barriers	42	15	36
Opportunity barriers	41	8	40
Motivation barriers	10	6	19

Source: own elaboration.

Table 2. Frequency of mentioning specific themes corresponding to specific types of barriers to cross-sectoral collaboration

	Public sector	Private sector	3rd sector
Capability barriers			
Inadequate division of responsibilities between stakeholders	6	3	14
Lack of professionalism	0	5	0
Insufficient competences & skills	4	1	1
Issues with donations	11	4	10
Issues with storage	4	0	0
Issues with information flow	17	2	11
Opportunity barriers			
Bureaucratic hurdles	36	0	22
Inadequate engagement of public authorities	0	7	9
Different approaches to problem-solving	3	0	8
Cultural differences	2	1	1
Motivation barriers			
Conflicting priorities of stakeholders	8	1	15
Lack of trust between stakeholders	1	2	2
Emotions dominated over logic	0	1	1
Inadequate expectations from recipients	1	2	1

Source: own elaboration.

Table 1 offers a “panoramic view”, charting the overall distribution of these barriers among representatives from public authorities, private companies, and NGOs. An immediate observation from this figure is the predominance of capability and opportunity barriers as being most frequently cited across the sectors. Table 2, on the other hand, presents a granular exploration of the aforementioned barriers. It dissects each category into specific themes that resonated throughout the interviews. We shall now delve into the substantive concerns that are hidden behind these themes.

Capability Barriers in Crisis Response Cross-Sectoral Coordination

Our empirical investigation uncovered significant capability barriers that impeded the effective coordination of emergency food relief efforts. These barriers, manifesting distinctly across public, private, and third sectors, primarily revolved around deficiencies in coordination skills, resource management, and operational systems necessary for crisis response.

Public sector. The data reveals a deficit in coordination skills within governmental entities. This inadequacy was particularly evident in the absence of clear guidelines delineating stakeholder responsibilities during crises. Furthermore, the sector grappled with the inability to establish robust information and communication systems, crucial for managing volunteer verification, donation logistics, inventory uncertainties, and overall stakeholder communication. This inefficiency created a split between the assistance demand and the help offers provided, exacerbating the logistical challenges.

Private sector. Entities in the private sector highlighted the public authorities’ inability to institute effective systems and processes as a fundamental barrier. This organisational void led to confusion, resource misuse, and challenges in ensuring food safety, owing to unreliable suppliers. Additionally, linguistic disparities emerged as obstacles, complicating the provision of aid during the crisis.

Third sector. The findings from the third sector mirrored the private sector’s frustrations, underscoring the public authorities’ inability to provide coordination and leadership as a catalyst for chaos in aid provision. There was a palpable need for a clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities among aid providers to prevent confusion and conflict. The sector also identified a critical gap in the monitoring and management of aid activities, emphasising the necessity for a designated supervisory entity from the outset. Lingual differences further strained coordination efforts, coupled with issues related to management of available resources, including essentials like clean water, hygiene facilities, and sufficient food and shelter.

Opportunity Barriers in Crisis Response Cross-Sectoral Coordination

Opportunity barriers emerged as significant obstacles that restricted the effective implementation of relief activities across sectors.

Public Sector. A recurrent theme in our findings was the obsolescence and inadequacy of existing institutional procedures, which frequently fell short of meeting the dynamic demands of the crisis. Additionally, the fragmented nature of public institutions, each restrained to its distinct objectives and encumbered by its own procedures, precipitated conflicting methodologies in aid provision. This lack of alignment was further compounded by difficulties in communicating with external stakeholders.

Private Sector. Voices from the private sector underlined an absence of support from local governmental bodies. Such deficiency not only impeded their relief efforts but also hindered them from navigating the complexities of the crisis. Furthermore, there was a visible dissatisfaction with political leaders, with many expressing concerns over the lack of necessary leadership.

Third Sector. The sector's narrative revealed that current procedural frameworks lacked clarity in delineating tasks, roles, and responsibilities, rendering the identification of responsible entities for funding and decision-making elusive. Bureaucratic entanglements and a scarcity of government funding posed significant challenges to coordination efforts. The sector also brought to light a systemic oversight: the efforts of individual contributors and smaller organisations often went unrecognised or inadequately acknowledged by public authorities. Moreover, inherent cultural differences were identified as barriers, as they often perpetuated entrenched attitudes resistant to change.

Motivation Barriers in Crisis Response Coordination

In the realm of motivation barriers, we noticed various internal and external factors that impeded the collective spirit and determination of stakeholders across the sectors.

Public sector. Central to the public sector's challenges was the hard task of inspiring individuals to donate goods of high quality, reflecting a potential lack of trust or understanding of the urgency of the crisis. Additionally, there was an observable hesitation to make decisions that carried inherent risks, thereby stalling pivotal actions. This is associated with the mentioned bureaucratic procedures that engendered differing priorities among participating institutions, leading to internal disagreements, and building tensions.

Private sector. Uncertainties arose within the private sector following certain decisions made by public authorities. The abrupt cessation of specific programs, for instance, sowed confusion among stakeholders. Coupled with the overwhelming workload and instances of negative feedback, the morale of those in the private sector was frequently jeopardised. Moreover, the inherent risks associated with the relief campaign led to reservations among some suppliers of necessary resources. A particularly concerning revelation was the opportunistic behaviour exhibited by a subset of volunteers, whose actions resulted in resource misappropriation and theft.

Third sector. The narrative from the third sector was full of instances of declining motivation. Coordination challenges, coupled with ambiguous decision-making structures, adversely impacted the enthusiasm and morale of volunteers. There was intense discontent with religious organisations, particularly regarding their approach to aid distribution. A consistent sentiment echoed throughout was the perceived lack of appreciation and gratitude for the efforts of volunteers.

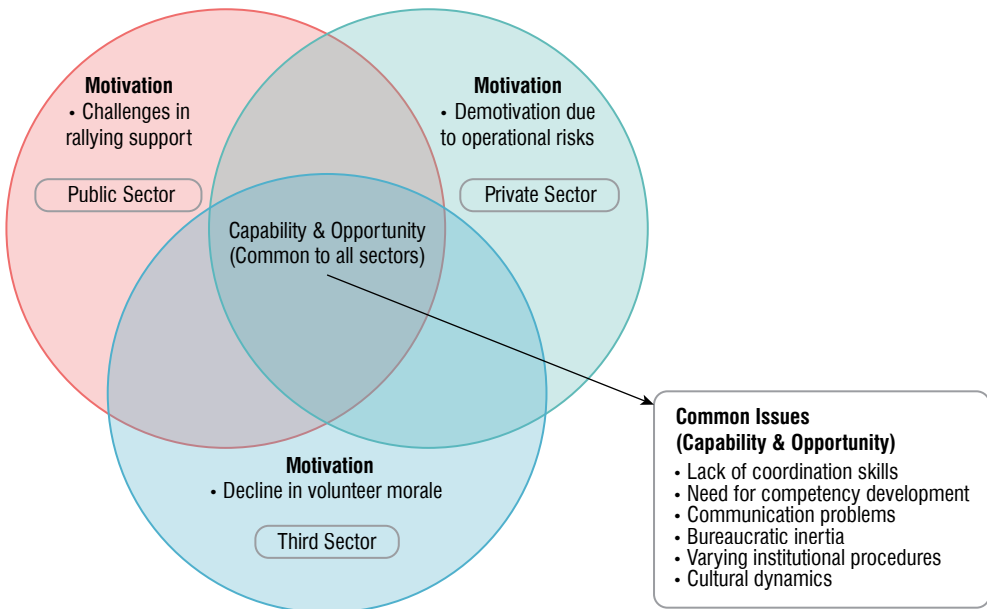
Comparison of Perceptions

The analysis of the barriers as experienced by different sectors reveals complicated dynamics when viewed through the lens of the COM-B model. The shared and unique challenges identified across the public, private, and third sectors offer insights into the capability, opportunity, and motivation components that influenced behaviour during the crisis response (see Figure 1 for schematic representation).

Capability. Representatives of all three sectors agree that public authorities – correctly regarded as the most adequate player to play a coordinating role in managing crisis situations – lacked adequate skills to perform this task. This finding underscores a pressing need to enhance systemic and individual competencies in crisis management, communication, and role clarity to foster more effective multi-sectoral collaboration.

Opportunity. The perceptions of challenges associated with widely understood operational environment, also appear to be similar across all three sectors. Issues like bureaucratic inertia, varying institutional procedures, and cultural dynamics are regarded as important factors hampering effective collaboration.

Motivation. Motivational barriers manifested distinctly in each sector, revealing intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influenced stakeholder engagement. The public sector faced challenges in rallying support and quality contributions, the private sector was demotivated by operational risks and internal exploitations, and the third sector experienced a dip in volunteer morale due to criticism and lack of appreciation. These insights indicate a complex interplay of personal attitudes, risk perceptions, and external incentives that impacted stakeholder motivation.

Figure 1. Comparison of perceptions between sectors

Source: own elaboration.

Conclusion

Our research offers valuable insights into stakeholders' subjective perceptions of challenges to cross-sectoral collaboration in crisis response, employing the COM-B model as a framework for analysing qualitative data. This approach not only illuminates the practical challenges faced by different sectors but also contributes to the theoretical understanding of collaborative governance in crisis situations.

The application of the COM-B model to categorise stakeholders' perceptions of challenges in crisis management collaboration proved to be a valuable theoretical lens, albeit with some complexities in implementation. While categorising interview fragments as expressions of capabilities, opportunities, or motivation was not always straightforward, it provided a structured approach to understanding the multifaceted nature of collaboration barriers. This application of the COM-B model in the context of crisis management extends its utility beyond individual behaviour change, demonstrating its potential as a framework for analysing complex organisational and inter-sectoral dynamics.

In response to our research questions, we found that all three sectors – public authorities, private companies, and NGOs – faced multifaceted challenges in their collaborative approach to the crisis. Significantly, there is an alignment of views

across sectors concerning capability and opportunity barriers, while motivational challenges varied. This finding contributes to the theoretical discourse on collaborative governance by highlighting the importance of considering both shared and sector-specific barriers in crisis response.

Our findings suggest that the capability challenges, primarily revolving around coordination, communication, and role clarity are particularly crucial in crisis situations, when rapid response and clear communication are paramount. We demonstrate that the opportunity barriers, stemming from procedural and bureaucratic impediments, manifest themselves across sectors during a crisis, suggesting a need for more flexible and adaptive governance structures in emergency situations. Finally, our findings illustrate how sector-specific motivational factors can impact the overall effectiveness of collaborative efforts.

These theoretical insights pave the way for some preliminary recommendations and future research directions. Coordination of cross-sectoral collaboration during a crisis is undeniably complex. Echoing the ideas of Boone and Snowden (2007), in these situations, leadership shifts from a strictly “algorithmic”, data-driven approach to fostering environments conducive to experimentation and emergent patterns. Given this, addressing the challenges within the capability barriers is paramount, considering that in the long run establishing effective policies and procedures (part of opportunity) is a function of the skills (part of capability) of those who design such policies and procedures. Public authorities, both in their own view and in the eyes of other sectors, naturally assume the role of coordinator. As such, a valuable course of action would be to invest in holistic training programmes for the public sector. These would emphasise crisis management, effective communication, and clear role definitions, aiming to bridge the capability gaps discerned across sectors.

Future research could further explore the interplay between the COM-B components in crisis management, potentially developing a more specialised framework for understanding cross-sectoral collaboration in emergencies. Additionally, longitudinal studies could investigate how these barriers evolve over the course of a prolonged crisis, contributing to a more dynamic understanding of collaborative governance in emergency situations.

In conclusion, this study not only provides practical insights for improving cross-sectoral collaboration in crisis management but also contributes to the theoretical understanding of collaborative governance by applying and extending existing frameworks to the specific context of emergency response. By bridging the gap between empirical observations and theoretical constructs, we hope to stimulate further research and discussion on enhancing the effectiveness of cross-sectoral collaborations in crisis situations.

Author Contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of Interest

The author declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Ethics Statement

The author certifies that the research published in the text was carried out in accordance with the research ethics of the affiliated university.

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