A Qualitative Comparative Analysis on Chinese Non-Profit Organizations' Rationalization[1]

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Abstract:

Existing researches about Chinese non-profit organizations' rationalization tended to lay particular stress on specific or "net" effects explained by a particular theoretical perspective, thereby rarely considered from the interrelation of various theoretical perspectives or from the configuration perspective and hereby summarizing the effects of different mechanisms in specific environments as well as their connections or alternatives. As an important methodology and tool which emphasizes combined action of multiple mechanisms, qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) provides a possibility for the study. Through the meticulous sorting and analysis of 14 cases from three areas in Z Province of China by utilizing qualitative comparative analysis, this paper finds two important new findings. First, in terms of facilitating the rationalization of non-profit organizations, the mechanisms of competition, resource, and system are not simply replaceable by each other but complementary in many cases; especially, accordingly configurations are formed between system-related mechanism and resource mechanism and between system-related mechanism and competition mechanism, which constructs the critical path of Chinese non-profit organizations' rationalization. Second, the relationship among the different sub-mechanisms of the same theory is relatively complicated.

Key Words: Non-profit organization, Qualitative comparative analysis, Rationalization, Mechanism

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1. QUALITATIVE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS METHOD

1.1 Theoretical Origins and Mathematical Principles

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), initially launched by Charles Ragin, is a multi-case study methodology, of which the core is to sort out the relevant social mechanism and its combining forms which affect some certain social phenomenon based on the basic idea of multiple causality, so as to solve the conflicts and contradictions between “case-based” and “variable-based” research traditions and methods [1,2,3]. Based on Boolean algebra and the set theory, QCA performs its work with the purpose of systematically comparing the case data, for which the researchers must first produce a truth table and follow the minimal formula and then display the set of variables (conditions) as a list of configurations with the aim to have a better understanding on causality in the sense of the middle-range theory[4]. Considering the critical role, the set theory plays in the method, some scholars take QCA as the set-theoretic method or configurational comparative methods[5,6].

Different from the traditional regression method which emphasizes the effects of a single variable, QCA method highlights causal complexity and multiplicity, the so-called multiple conjectural causation[2], and accordingly stresses that a specific case should be taken as the outcome of a set of configurations. As Fiss[6] pointed out, in terms of causality, QCA method attached importance to that “from the perspective of configuration, it is better to consider an organization as an aggregation of a series of interrelated structures and practices, rather than an entity formed by modular or loose elements”. Specifically, it has the following characteristics:

First, Goertz and Mahoney[7] stated that QCA adopted the logic/natural language as the basis for judging causality, so its causality was not a causal judgment in the sense of statistical inference. Instead, it focused on the sufficiency and necessity of the relevant conditions that produce some certain result. This distinguished it from the regression method which determined the influencing

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[1] Ragin, Charles. "The comparative method: Moving beyond qualitative and quantitative methods." Berkeley: University of California (1987).

[2] Ragin, Charles. Fuzzy-set social science. University of Chicago Press, 2000.

[3] Marx, Axel, Bart Cambré, and Benoît Rihoux. "Chapter 2 crisp-set qualitative comparative analysis in organizational studies." Configurational theory and methods in organizational research. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2013. 23-47.

[4] Crilly, Donal. "Predicting stakeholder orientation in the multinational enterprise: A mid-range theory." Journal of international business studies42.5 (2011): 694-717.

[5] Schneider, Carsten Q., and Claudius Wagemann. Set-theoretic methods for the social sciences: A guide to qualitative comparative analysis. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

[6] Fiss, Peer C. "A set-theoretic approach to organizational configurations." Academy of management review 32.4 (2007): 1180-1198.

[7] Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney. *A tale of two cultures: Qualitative and quantitative research in the social sciences*. Princeton University Press, 2012.

factors of an outcome in the average sense. The distinction can be reflected in their different mathematical forms:

(1) Traditional regression method;

(2) Logic language: () or (A and C and D and E) can produce Y.

It indicates that QCA does not depend on the linear condition, but emphasizes the interaction among the factors.

Second, causality is complex due to multiple concurrency, which means that the same phenomenon can be produced by the combination of various elements. Therefore, the specific situation and conditions come to be important and must be considered in the course of research; meanwhile, when thinking about the relationship between theories and data, researchers must not only emphasize the system analysis, but also pay attention to the meaning of the data, so as to comprehend the factors in the manner of configuration and to understand the social phenomenon from the perspective of limited diversity. From the mathematical point of view, the above discussion can be expressed by the formula ($A*B+C*D \rightarrow Y$) which means that in a social context, as long as Condition A and Condition B are met at the same time, or Condition C and Condition D are met at the same time, Result Y can be produced. In the formula, A and B (similarly, C and D) together constitute the sufficient conditions for the produce of Y.

Third, the result from configuration does not mean the end of analysis. With Boolean algebra or fuzzy set, researchers can obtain a logic simplified form and the simplest form of multiple concurrent conditions to ensure that the research conclusions are consistent with the basic principles of the Occam's Razor. Specifically, the following mathematical formula is used: ($A*B+A*b \rightarrow Y=A \rightarrow Y$), that is, if the combination of Condition A and either of two completely opposite conditions B/b can produce Y, Condition B can be considered as redundant, so the formula can be simplified to obtain a more meaningful conclusion.

Finally, it must be pointed out that the key of QCA is to understand the relationship between conditions, which follows the logic rule: ($a \rightarrow y$) cannot be deduced from ($A \rightarrow Y$). This is so-called "asymmetric causality". It extends the researchers' view to a great extent. Based on the theoretical and practical needs, when using QCA, researchers are able to not only analyze the causes of a specific phenomenon, but also explore the root why it does not occur. These features greatly improve the flexibility of analysis, and boost the further development and expansion of the theory as well [6,8].

1.2 Mainstream Technologies and Research Steps

In the early analysis, Ragin focused on the processing methods based on crisp-sets, which is the earliest QCA technology (csQCA)[1], while in resent research, Ragin gave increasing weight to the analysis methods based on fuzzy-sets, thus fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA)

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8 Ragin, Charles C. "Qualitative comparative analysis using fuzzy sets (fsQCA)." Rihoux, B (2009).

came into being[2]. At the same time, with the development of the research object and the gradual expansion of the application, the multivariate qualitative comparative analysis (mvQCA) sitting between csQCA and fsQCA was also formed[5,8]. Since csQCA is first put forward, this method has been widely used in the early stage of social science research, and it is in resent time that fsQCA and mvQCA have witnessed an increasing use in the research on organization and management[9,10]. However, in many other fields, csQCA still occupies a relatively important position[3].

Although there exist significant differences, the three kinds of technologies have a similar data processing process: first, a specific truth table is produced based on the original data, and then the logic redundancy is obtained; second, a specific coefficient is set on the basis of the first step, and then the truth table is simplified based on mathematical principles so as to produce the results. Table 1.1 illustrates and discusses the fundamentals of the three kinds of technologies.

[9] Fiss, Peer C. "Building better causal theories: A fuzzy set approach to typologies in organization research." Academy of Management Journal 54.2 (2011): 393-420.

[10] Rihoux, Benoît, and Axel Marx. "QCA, 25 Years after “The Comparative Method” Mapping, Challenges, and Innovations—Mini-Symposium." Political Research Quarterly 66.1 (2013): 167-235.

Table 1.1 Review of the Three Main QCA Technologies

Methods	csQCA	fsQCA	mvQCA
Theoretical principles	Boolean algebra Crisp-sets	Boolean algebra Fuzzy-sets	Boolean algebra Crisp-sets
Processing path	Construct a data matrix through calibration (the transformation of raw, coded data into crisp-set data), during which fuzzy set methods may be used. Then, recognize the cases from the data matrix into a truth table.	Construct a data matrix through calibration (the transformation of raw, coded data into crisp-set data) and then recognize the cases from the data matrix into a truth table. There are three solution formulas toward the analysis of the logic remainders: the conservative solution, the parsimonious solution, and the intermediate solution.	Construct a data matrix through calibration (the transformation of raw, coded data into crisp-set data), during which fuzzy set methods may be used. Then, recognize the cases from the data matrix into a truth table.
Application condition	Easy configurations and contents of the case are meticulously grasped	Relatively complex configurations and the data can be quantitatively described and is easy to evaluate.	Complex configurations and part of the conditions (independent variables) are multi-types.
Potential limits	Massive Loss of information occurs as a result of all the variables are dichotomous variable.	The evaluation is too optional thus massive sensitivity tests are needed in the later period.	It's, to some extent, the extension of csQCA because its variables are also dichotomous variable.

Date sources: collected by the author

Furthermore, with the introduction of fuzzy set and the development of new paths, traditional QCA research paradigm began to be replaced by more innovative solutions. This is because, based on the theory of combination, csQCA and mvQCA can be regarded as two special types of fuzzy set analysis[5]; This means that csQCA technology can be matched with the latest development of fsQCA technology, so as to process the complexity and diversity of causality with more effective steps and paths[1]. Therefore, this study will introduce the latest research steps on QCA to carry out the analysis, as shown in Figure 5.1.

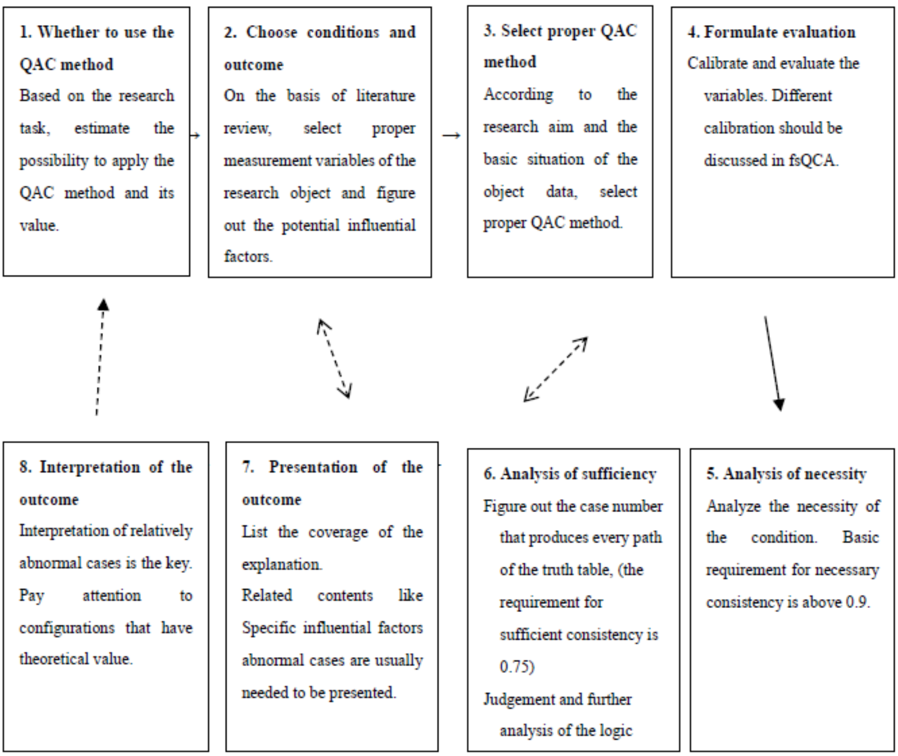

Figure 1.1 Concrete process of QCA method

In Figure 1.1, the most important point lies in the "calibration" of concepts, that is, the specific delineation of the threshold value, which affects the reliability of the results. In many cases, QCA technology is criticized by scholars because the process of valuation fails to be completely

[1] Misangyi, Vilmos F., et al. "Embracing causal complexity: The emergence of a neo-configurational perspective." *Journal of Management* 43.1 (2017): 255-282.

objective and measurable, which makes it difficult to judge its soundness[2]. Therefore, researchers need to invest considerable time at this stage to ensure its rationality; besides, in many studies, it is necessary to substantially adjust the calibration to adapt to the whole analysis.

Based on the calculation and simplification of the truth table, the results related to necessity and sufficiency can be obtained. It is necessary to highlight consistency and coverage, two important indicators which help to determine the value of configuration. Consistency refers to a coefficient that indicates the relation between the two sets of research cases. For example, if the corresponding set of Result Y is a subset of the corresponding set of Condition X, the corresponding necessity can be expressed as:

Consistency $(Y_i \leq X_i) = \Sigma[\min(X_i, Y_i)]/\Sigma Y_i$;

If the consistency of necessity is less than 0.9, X cannot be regarded as a necessary condition of Y.

Similarly, the consistency of sufficiency of X to Y can be expressed as:

Consistency $(X_i \leq Y_i) = \Sigma[\min(X_i, Y_i)]/\Sigma X_i$;

It is generally believed that the threshold of sufficiency consistency should not be less than 0.75. In many studies on organization and management, the threshold is usually raised to 0.8, sometimes even more than 0.9 [5]. It is also necessary to show the coverage of configuration, which indicates explanatory power of X (configuration) for Y (result). The coverage can be subdivided into raw coverage, solution coverage, and unique coverage, respectively, explaining the explanatory power of each path for the results, all paths for the results, and each path itself for the results.

2. THEORIES AND CONDITION SELECTION

This part will outline the social mechanisms and the representative conditions/variables that affect the rationalization of non-profit organizations by reviewing the theories, so as to lay a foundation for the following calibration and calculation. Generally, there is no fixed pattern for the variable selection of QCA method. Instead, the researchers have to select appropriate variables according to their theoretical expectations and related empirical rules[8]. In light of this, we try to explain the potential mechanisms from two theoretical perspectives: instrumental interpretation and institutional interpretation. More specifically, instrumental interpretation includes two major theoretical traditions, economic perspective and resource dependence, in which competition mechanism (quasi competition mechanism) and power mechanism are involved, while institutional interpretation, as mentioned above, includes cultural cognitive mechanism and normative mechanism (Since it is often difficult to distinguish imitation mechanism from instrumental interpretation, imitation mechanism is not included here), and

[2] Skaaning, Svend-Erik. "Assessing the robustness of crisp-set and fuzzy-set QCA results." *Sociological Methods & Research* 40.2 (2011): 391-408.

correspondingly, it is also related to some variables, which actually affect the rationalization of non-profit organizations through specific paths. In consideration of the simplicity of the theoretical interpretation, we will try to select the relevant factors in line with the actual situation of China's non-profit sectors.

2.1 Instrumental Interpretation and Variable Selection

Instrumental interpretation takes the rational measures adopted by non-profit organizations as a response to market competition and stakeholders' requirements[3]. The most representative measures include the "demand-supply" path from the economic perspective and the power analysis of resource dependence theory. The former focuses on the macro level of the market mechanism while the latter is more concerned about the organizational level of the external resource network.

(1) "Demand-supply" path. Macro political and economic environment can cause changes in the structure of demand and supply, and the "demand-supply" path attaches great importance to the impact the changes have put on non-profit organizations. According to the service model, non-profit organizations can be broadly divided into two categories. In the first category, the organizations charge fees for services to maintain their survival, examples including all kinds of medical and social welfare institutions; while the organizations in the second category maintain their survival by means of internal and external fund-raising (or government funding), including various advocacy organizations and voluntary organizations[4]. Since the 1980s, the political and economic changes have led to a more complex resource environment in the third sector, and have driven the following mechanisms: first, a large number of enterprises or quasi enterprises got into the traditional non-profit and voluntary areas, and formed a competitive relationship with non-profit organizations. Such a "brunt" has worsen part of non-profit organizations that live on charges[5]. At the same time, due to the popularity of the new public management movement, the governments of many countries began to emphasize the privatization and marketization with a variety of result-oriented policy tools, to advocate the so-called "public-private partnership" in social policy, and to emphasize the efficiency or effectiveness of nonprofit organizations in undertaking government projects. This has, to a large extent, affected the organizations that rely on government funding or grants. As Frumkin[15] pointed out, non-profit organizations gave up their autonomy and accepted all kinds of complicated government projects, not just because they had to rely on government's funds, but also because of the narrower funding channel caused by the intervention of a large number of enterprises. The "supply and demand" path assumes that only those efficient organizations have access to resources and have the advantage in the

[3] Young, Dennis R., and Lester M. Salamon. "Commercialization, social ventures, and for-profit competition." *The state of nonprofit America* (2002): 423-446.

[4] Hansmann, Henry B. "The role of nonprofit enterprise." *The Yale law journal*89.5 (1980): 835-901.

[5] Frumkin, Peter. *Service Contracting with Non-profit and For-profit Providers: On Preserving a Mixed Organizational Ecology*. Institute for Government Innovation, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 2002.

competition[6]. Therefore, although the political and economic changes have different orientations, they jointly promote non-profit organizations to act like enterprises, making a sound developing plan, formulating better strategies, and achieving stronger management.

From this point of view, we need to explore the factors from two aspects: one is the internal competition of the field which non-profit organizations belong to[7]; the other lies in the relevant supporting policies and systems from the government which have a profound impact on the overall competitiveness and development prospects[8].

(2) Resource dependence theory. The theory of resource dependence regards organizations as "open systems", which emphasizes that the survival and development of an organization cannot be separated from the flow of resources, and the problems of resource dependence and power allocation are derived[9]. The implicit logic of the resource dependence theory is that we must pay attention to the role of the external resource distribution degree and the importance of resources in the inter-organizational power allocation. Generally, the more concentrated the external resources are, the fewer choices the organizations have, and they will become more vulnerable with fewer available resource providers and increased long-term uncertainty of resources[10]. Many relevant studies mainly discuss the structure and behavior of non-profit organizations from the perspective of the sources of funds (government, enterprises, foundations and other subjects)[11]. First of all, many scholars have found that, due to following governmental preferences, some non-profit organizations are rapidly losing their dominance in the relationship with the government, and their autonomy is weakened[12]. Secondly, with the rise of cross-sectoral strategic alliances, non-profit organizations and enterprises have gradually formed a symbiotic relationship. However, due to the weakness in capital and other aspects, non-profit organizations are more affected by enterprises, and they often cater to the requirements that enterprises have made on their structure and operation[13]. Therefore, from the perspective of organizational

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[6] Weisbrod, Burton A., and Elizabeth Mauser. "Tax policy toward non-profit organisations: an eleven-country survey." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 2.1 (1991): 3-25.

[7] Suárez, David F. "Collaboration and professionalization: The contours of public sector funding for nonprofit organizations." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 21.2 (2010): 307-326.

[8] Liebschutz, Sarh F. "Coping by nonprofit organizations during the Reagan years." *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 2.4 (1992): 363-380.

[9] Davis, Gerald F., and J. Adam Cobb. "Chapter 2 Resource dependence theory: Past and future." *Stanford's organization theory renaissance, 1970–2000*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2010. 21-42.

[10] Salancik, Gerald R., and Jeffrey Pfeffer. "A social information processing approach to job attitudes and task design." *Administrative science quarterly* (1978): 224-253.

[11] Guo, Chao, and Muhittin Acar. "Understanding collaboration among nonprofit organizations: Combining resource dependency, institutional, and network perspectives." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 34.3 (2005): 340-361.

[12] Gazley, Beth. "Beyond the contract: The scope and nature of informal government–nonprofit partnerships." *Public administration review* 68.1 (2008): 141-154.

[13] Bednall, David HB, et al. "Business support approaches for charities and other nonprofits." *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 6.2 (2001): 172-187.

rationalization, we need to focus on the potential impact of the funding from enterprises on the structure and operation of non-profit organizations[14].

2.2 Institutional Interpretation and Variable Selection

Some scholars believe that managerialism is derived from a special kind of professionalism from the United States -- management professionalism, and with the integration of global politics, economy and culture, it has become popular in the worldwide non-profit organizations, and has gradually become the most important driving force to promote the rationalization of various types of non-profit organizations. From the point of view of institutional logic, its core can be summarized as "the operation logic of similar enterprises", which, in essence, is embodied in the basic management beliefs, corresponding practices and symbols of a series of formal organizations[15]. The essence of managerialism logic is summarized into three points: first, the core of managerialism is that the organizations should be managed by managers, the management professionals who have received professional training[16], while other stakeholders (shareholders or employees) should be excluded from management decisions. In the words of Locke[17] these managers are "the owners of knowledge about how to effectively run the organization (know-how)". Second, managerialism emphasizes that organizations can and should be based on specific management knowledge and practices of enterprises[18]. For example, Maier and Meyer[19] pointed out that the organization would be able to achieve effectiveness and efficiency with the help of a specific organizational management structure under the guidance of management practices and concepts. In short, the management emphasizes that organization must try to establish formal and scientific system of rules, organization structure as well as technologies (such as strategic planning, performance evaluation)[20], so as to avoid the influence of various factors on the effectiveness of the organization[21]. Third, some scholars pointed out that managerialism, as a kind of ideology or concept, was formed based on a series of mature and scientific economic

[14] Kerlin, Janelle A., and Tom H. Pollak. "Nonprofit commercial revenue: A replacement for declining government grants and private contributions?" *The American Review of Public Administration* 41.6 (2011): 686-704.

[15] Reay, Trish, and C. R. Hinings. "The recomposition of an organizational field: Health care in Alberta." *Organization studies* 26.3 (2005): 351-384.

[16] Tosi, Henry L., et al. "How much does performance matter? A meta-analysis of CEO pay studies." *Journal of Management* 26.2 (2000): 301-339.

[17] Locke, Karen, and S. Ramakrishna Velamuri. "The design of member review: Showing what to organization members and why." *Organizational Research Methods* 12.3 (2009): 488-509.

[18] Hvenmark, Johan. "Business as usual? On managerialization and the adoption of the balanced scorecard in a democratically governed civil society organization." *Administrative Theory & Praxis* 35.2 (2013): 223-247.

[19] Maier, Florentine, Michael Meyer, and Martin Steinbereithner. "Nonprofit organizations becoming business-like: A systematic review." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 45.1 (2016): 64-86.

[20] Suárez, David F., and Hokyu Hwang. "Resource constraints or cultural conformity? Nonprofit relationships with businesses." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 24.3 (2013): 581-605.

[21] Kreutzer, Karin, and Urs Jäger. "Volunteering versus managerialism: Conflict over organizational identity in voluntary associations." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40.4 (2011): 634-661.

management theories (such as the principal-agent theory) since the manager revolution[22]. Therefore, from a macro level, managerialism can be considered as the integration of management, ideology and expansion[23].

From this point of view, there are at least three factors that affect the rationalization of the organization. The first factor is the working background of the manager, which is reflected to some extent by the inscription mechanism mentioned above; the manager's educational background is the second factor; the third factor lies in the so-called "management movement" and the policy orientation arising from the interaction between governments under the background of globalization, and it exerts influence through the combination with the former two factors. Therefore, the institutional interpretation provides us a guidance, that is, it is necessary to investigate the manager's working background, educational background, and training experiences, in particular, the training level of management-related courses[24]. To conclude, we should focus on the five conditions---market competition, government support, enterprise assistance, working background and educational background---when exploring the theoretical mechanism and the corresponding configuration for the rationalization of non-profit organizations.

3. DATA COLLECTION AND TECHNOLOGY SELECTION

3.1 Data Collection

In August 2014, the research team collected the relevant cases with personal relationship and official channels. Based on the snowball sampling method, the team conducted a systematic survey of 14 cases in H City, J City, and W City in Z Province of China. The 6-member research team was divided into 3 groups (There were 2 members in each group. A unified interview outline was used (see Appendix 1) to conduct interviews and data collection (see Table 1.2). In the interviews, one member of each group took the role of interviewer, and the other one worked as a recorder. Sometimes with the permission of the interviewees, the researchers could make a sound recording for afterward recalling. In order to get as much information as possible, the method of multi-interview was adopted, that is, in each interview, more than one participants were enrolled. With their leader as the target interviewee, other participants also engaged in some conversations to ensure the authenticity and reliability of the information. At the same time, with reference to the triangular verification of qualitative research, the research team collected some relevant information from the manuals and websites of the organizations. In addition, for verification and analysis, the team also interviewed the heads of certain government departments

[22] Meyer, John W., and Patricia Bromley. "The worldwide expansion of "organization"." *Sociological Theory* 31.4 (2013): 366-389.

[23] Klikauer, Thomas. "What is managerialism?" *Critical Sociology* 41.7-8 (2015): 1103-1119.

[24] Hwang, Hokyu, and Walter W. Powell. "The rationalization of charity: The influences of professionalism in the nonprofit sector." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 54.2 (2009): 268-298.

that were responsible for part of the organizations[25]. On this basis, all the collected data were coded, which also made it easier to code the cases. What' more, in the coding process, the researchers verified the ambiguous information through follow-up phone calls to ensure the reasonableness of the information.

The main methods of data collection and the basic information about the organizations are listed in Table 1.2. First, it can be found that these organizations are located in the developed areas, most in the urban areas, of Z Province. Since they have similar economic and social environment, it provides the research team with the possibility that the macro factors can be exclude in the analysis. Second, regarding the types of the organizations, most of the cases are engaged in public welfare and social services, only one in personal interest (GYD Mountaineering Association), which is also helpful to control or eliminate the influence of the relevant factors caused by the types. Third, all the research cases or organizations are registered social groups, which ensures the legitimacy and eliminates the influence of other legal factors on the activities and structures of the organizations[26]. Therefore, it can be concluded that the basics of the above cases make it easier to carry out the analysis by using QCA method.

[25] Miles, Matthew B., and A. Michael Huberman. *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. sage, 1994.

[26] Bingzhong, Gao. "Problems Related to the Legitimization of Associations in China [J]." *SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CHINA* 2 (2000): 009.

Table 1.2 Introduction to cases of this research

Code	Investigating time	Name, nature and site of the group	Main contents	Call-back time
1	2014-8-26	YL：Social service (H City)	Interview 、Material	2016-6-26
2	2014-8-26	DJSJ：Social service（H City）	Interview、internal manual	2016-6-28
3	2014-8-27	YJY：Public service （W City）	Interview、Group information	
4	2014-8-27	SXZ：Social service（J City）	Interview、internal manual	
5	2014-8-27	LSZJ：Environmental group（H City）	Interview、internal manual	2016-7-10
6	2014-8-27	QN：Social service（J City）	Interview、Group information	
7	2014-8-27	FDL：Community service（H City）	Interview、internal manual	
8	2014-8-27	DS：Public service（H City）	Interview、internal manual、Group information	
9	2014-8-27	MS：Public service（H City）	Questionnaire 、internet	
10	2014-8-27	GYD：Interest group（H City）	Interview、internet	2016-7-11
11	2014-8-28	XHZR：Public service（H City）	Interview、internet、internal manual	2016-8-12
12	2014-8-28	PGY：Community service（H City）	Interview、Group information	
13	2014-8-28	JL：Public service（H City）	Interview、internet、Group information	
14	2014-8-28	HL：Social service（H City）	Interview、internal manual	2016-8-15

Data sources: collected by the author

3.2 QCA Technology Selection

Some researchers pointed out that the application of the QCA method must focus on two aspects: the quantity of cases (the size of data) and the abundance of the accessible raw information from the cases[1]. First of all, in this study, considering that the raw sample was small (Small N) (14 cases), and the variables involved were relatively simple (5 basic conditions), the researchers tended to choose csQCA or mvQCA technology for the analysis after investigating the abundance of the information from each condition. Meanwhile, with reference to the existing studies, the researchers found that csQCA had been widely used. Therefore, csQCA was adopted since it would contribute to the comparison between this study and the previous ones.

Secondly, according to Skaaning' research on the robustness of conclusions[12], with a small data size, QCA analysis would be very sensitive to the data; relatively speaking, csQCA would be insensitive. Besides, in this study, the number of the cases equaled to that of the conditions, which was in line with the basic requirement of csQCA simulation study. It was sufficient to obtain a systematic configuration with limited diversity, which was different from the random configuration. Therefore, due to the reasons mentioned above, csQCA was adopted for the follow-up study. The next part discusses the calibration of relevant conditions and outcome variables.

4. CALIBRATION AND RAW DATA

With reference to the secondary code assignment procedure adopted by Bromley et al[2] in the QCA analysis, this study carried out the calibration of relevant conditions by following these steps: raw data coding, measurement scheme, and variable assignment. Since csQCA method was used in this study, the final variables only included 0 and 1, whose meaning was completely different from that of the dummy variables in the traditional statistical analysis. In csQCA, the value of the variable is mainly to define the membership of a particular case on a certain condition, but not the change of the meaning of the traditional dummy variable[3], although they are similar in many aspects.

It should be noted that the main coding process was completed by two researchers, each of them coded in accordance with the preset scoring criteria; after the first-round coding, the team compared the codes with the values of the six key variables mentioned above. The result showed that the correlations were all more than 0.95. As for the ambiguous cases, the team recollected the information (for example, through telephone visit) for the follow-up discussion and

[1] Herrmann, Andrea Monika, and Lasse Cronqvist. "When dichotomisation becomes a problem for the analysis of middle-sized datasets." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 12.1 (2009): 33-50.

[2] Bromley, Patricia, Hokyu Hwang, and Walter W. Powell. "Decoupling revisited: Common pressures, divergent strategies in the US nonprofit sector." *Management* 15.5 (2012): 469-501.

[3] Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney. *A tale of two cultures: Qualitative and quantitative research in the social sciences*. Princeton University Press, 2012.

processing to ensure consistent results. Table 1.3 shows the detailed assignment procedure and calibration criteria.

After completing the calibration, the team got the raw data as shown in table 5.4. For the first five conditions (variables), "1" means that the condition occurs, and "0" means that the condition does not occur or is missing. For the final result (variable), “1” means that the non-profit organization has the characteristic of rationalization, while “0” means that it does not. In particular, the last line shows that in the distribution of the results (variables), 7 cases (50%) appeared to be rational. This is in line with the other researchers’ suggestion that the distribution of cases should be as balanced as possible in the dependent variable, and also facilitates the subsequent QCA operations.

Table 1.3 Measurement and coding of relevant variables

Variable	Concept Definition	Measurement Standard	Typical Case
Dependent variables (result)			
Organizational rationalization	The construction of non-profit organizations, integrating their formal roles and rules, so as to build a (social) “actor" with a clear identity	Referring to the study of Hwang and Powell (2009) and mainly study (1) the usage of organizational strategic planning; (2) the independent external financial audit system; (3) effective quantitative evaluation method; (4) external consultant system and other situations. When the organization meets any of the above, set the value to 1; set the rest to 0	*H City LSZJ:* "...basically we make formal strategic plans every year, and our financial information is open and transparent which is now available on the Internet..." (inter staff of LSZJ, 2014-8-27) Network data shows that in 2013, the ISO9001 quality management system was introduced to strengthen the organizational management; and they had a large number of consultants from universities and enterprises (file No.: LSZJ-03)
Independent variables (condition)			
Market competition	A series of	Referring to the study of Frumkin (2002) and	*H City DJSJ:*

	uncertainties caused by peers, external enterprises, potential competitive pressure and consequences from the social environment with which non-profit organizations face	Weisbrod (1991) and so on. focusing on the competition condition of the evaluated organizations in their fields, including: (1) whether there are similar organizations in the region; (2) whether there exists enterprises of similar functions; (3) whether there are other types of competitive institutions or mechanisms (such as overseas organizations or the government-provided services). When the organization meets any one or several conditions of the above , set the value to 1; set the rest to 0	"...there are many social work related organizations, many of which are enterprises or aiming at money, thus we are now facing with pressure and hoping that the government can provide some help to social organizations like us... Of course, we also need to improve our own speciality, many other enterprises put their interests on the first place, their professional and service are not good as us" (interview data 2014-8-26, head of DJSJ)
Government supporting	A series of governmental supportive policies and measures for non-profit organizations based on the concept of "public private partnership" and "new public management"	Referring to the study of Salamon (1995, 2012) and Wang Puqu (2010) about the relevant achievements of government purchase services and private cooperation, focusing on whether the organization obtains: (1) sites; (2) direct financial supports; (3) related projects from the government. When the organization meets any one or several conditions of the above, set the value to 1; set the rest to 0	*H City DS:* "...We have a lot of activities with government supports, and specially offices... In recent years, we also got other help through some project evaluation programs" (interview record 2014-8-27, leader of DS) "...basically, we (government) helped them (DS) a lot responding to the calls of the party and in order to construct the social governance. We have provided them the funds, the relevant sites and mainly aimed at

			systematization and regularization of the activities in recent years..." (interview record 2014-8-27, staff of Competent Unit in DS) *H City LSZJ:*
Business assistance	The sponsorship activities provided by enterprises to non-profit organizations for their own interests or from "social responsibility" respective under the pressure of social legitimacy	Combined with the introduction from the study of Austin (2000a) about cross sectoral cooperation, focusing on: (1) the direct financial support from enterprises to organizations; (2) cooperation of enterprises and organizations in the social field (at least 2 times a year); (3) other sponsorship from enterprises to organizations. When the organization meets any one or several conditions of the above, set the value to 1; set the rest to 0	"... We have many cooperation opportunities with other enterprises every year since we have a certain reputation in this province accumulated from environmental activities in early years, and they are willing to cooperate with us to improve their publicity." (interview record 2014-8-27, employee of LSZJ) Meanwhile, internal data shows that in 2013 the organization had different degrees of cooperation with Alibaba, Ford and other large enterprises (data: LSZJ-01)
Business background	The work experience of organization managers, used as basic concepts when dealing with organizational management and operation	Combined with the study of Suárez, focusing on the career experience, in particular, we set 5 years as a standard of "having enterprise working experience", namely, when the manager/leader's continuous working time is longer than or equal to 5 years, set the value to 1; in other cases, set the value to 0	*H City GYD:* "...Since I have work in the enterprise, you can say that I'm an amateur in this Mountaineering Association, but of course this is my hobby, so I actually invested

	in a subtle way		many time and energy in it..." (interview record 2014-8-27, head: 2016-8-12, return visit for confirming the work experience;)
Management training	The professional management education and training for managers which have self-evident and deep impact on the organizational management	Considering from the organizational management training from the study of Meyer and Bromley, judging if: (1) the leader has a management degree (Bachelor or above); (2) the leader has attended organization and management related training courses at least 3 times in the past 5 years; or (3) other important members of the organization have such experience. When the organization meets any one or several conditions of the above, set the value to 1; in other cases, set the value to 0	*J City QN:* "...Our leader is willing to participate in the training programs organized by the league and the government because he hopes to get close to people through this way. Sometimes he invites us, too. In recent years, there would be 1,2 activities in a year basically due to the government attention, most of which are about professional management..." (interview records 2014-8-27, internal personnel)

Date sources: collected by the author

Table 1.4 Raw data matrix

Case	F	C	S	B	P	R
1.YL	0	0	1	1	1	1
2.DJSJ	0	1	1	0	0	0
3.YJY	0	0	1	1	0	1
4.SXZ	1	1	0	0	0	0
5.LSZJ	1	0	1	1	1	1
6.QN	0	1	0	1	1	1
7.FDL	0	1	1	0	0	0
8.DS	0	1	0	1	1	1
9.MS	0	1	1	0	0	0
10.GYD	1	0	0	1	1	1
11.XHZR	0	1	1	0	1	0
12.PGY	1	0	0	1	1	1
13.JL	0	0	1	1	0	0
14.HL	0	0	1	1	0	0

Note：F=Enterprise fund ； C=Market competition ； S=Government support；B=Work background ； P=Professional train ； R=Rationalization

5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The team used the fsQCA 3.0 software developed by Ragin and his partners to perform related operations (Ragin & Davey, 2016). FsQCA 3.0 software itself has included the conditional necessity module and csQCA module. After clicking, the software will automatically produce the analysis results of necessity and truth table according to the raw data. According to Marx et al., the team first calculated the necessity of each condition to the results. Then, the truth table was calculated, and the subsequent logical minimization was used to obtain sufficient conditions. In the csQCA module, the default consistency threshold for the sufficient conditions was 0.8; the case frequency threshold for each line of the truth table was 1. Considering that the sample size of this study was14, the research team set the case frequency to 1. By comparing the calculated results when the case consistency was set to 0.75, 0.8 and 0.9, the team found that there was no significant difference. It was concluded that the relevant results were reasonable and could be used for the follow-up analysis.

5.1 Necessity of Single Condition

As is shown in Table 5.5, the necessity consistency values of most of the variables are less than 0.9, the threshold for the necessary conditions, thus these conditions can not constitute the necessary conditions for the rationalization of non-profit organizations. However, the necessity consistency of the enterprise background is 1, greater than the threshold of 0.9. This indicates that the prerequisite for the rationalization of a non-profit organization is that its managers (leaders or important members) have a long-term working experience. Specifically, such a situation is reflected on the following cases: No.1, No. 3, No. 5, No. 6, No. 10, and No. 12, which coincides with our basic theoretical expectations.

Table 1.5 Analysis of necessary consistency of single condition

Condition	Necessary Consistency	Coverage	Note
CFUND	0.571429	0.800000	Enterprise fund
Cfund	0.428571	0.333333	
COMPETITION	0.142857	0.166667	Market competition
competition	0.857143	0.750000	
SUPPORT	0.428571	0.333333	Government support
support	0.571429	0.800000	
BACKGROUND	1.000000	0.777778	Enterprise background
background	0.000000	0.000000	
PROFESSION	0.714286	0.833333	Management train
profession	0.285714	0.250000	

Note: an uppercase letter represents the [1] value for a given binary condition, and a lowercase letter represents the [0] value for a given binary condition.

5.2 csQCA Calculation Results

The sufficiency of the antecedent conditions and the potential configurations are calculated mainly with the help of a truth table. From the principle, it can be inferred that there will be $2^5=32$ theoretically possible configurations from the five conditions above. Table 5.6 shows a large amount of logical remainder, which provides the possibility of counterfactual deduction and help us to get a more generalized model of these conditions.

Respecting the simplification of QCA, there are three kinds of solution formulas to introduce counterfactual conditions. The first is to avoid using logic remainders as counterfactual conditions, from which the calculated result will be the so-called conservative/complex solutions; the second is to calculate all the possible logical remainders without filtration, from which the calculated result will be parsimonious solutions, also known as the "difficult counterfactual"; the third is to calculate the logic remainders and take full account of the real experience or researchers' own theoretical expectations at the same time, from which the calculated result will be intermediate results[5], also known as the "easy counterfactual". Among them, the intermediate result is a superset of the parsimonious solutions and a subset of the complex solutions. The following part will deal with the calculation results of csQCA combining the solution formulas mentioned above.

Table 1.6 Truth table

（Raw）	Contradictory variable					Result variable	Corresponding case number
	F	C	S	B	P	R	
1	0	1	1	0	0	0	2、9、10
2	0	0	1	1	0	C	3、[13]、[14]
3	1	0	0	1	1	1	6、12
4	1	1	0	0	0	0	5
5	1	0	1	1	1	1	7
6	1	0	0	1	0	1	4
7	0	1	1	0	1	0	11
8	0	1	0	1	1	1	8
9	0	0	1	1	1	1	1

Note1： F=Enterprise fund C=Market competition；S=Government support；B=Work background；

P=Professional train ； R= Retionalization

Note 2：C represents there are contradictions with the results thus we are uncertain.

[ ] represents the [0] value for a given binary condition.

Table 1.7 shows the effecting path of the antecedent conditions in this study to the rationalization of organizations. Fiss[9] believed that complex solutions often provide unnecessary configurations which make the insight of causality meaningless; Ragin[1] also pointed out that the guidance value of substantive knowledge to calculation must be taken into account, for which is an important premise to make QCA itself an explore/proof tool instead of a simple method. Therefore, in the study the intermediary results and parsimonious solutions are mainly discussed but complex related results are also listed as a reference.

As mentioned above, the key point of intermediate results is the introduction of necessary counterfactual conditions. Considering the theoretic presupposition and the basic findings of the case study (the interaction of organizations and enterprises and the business background of organization leaders will have substantial impacts on the rationalization), we set the following counterfactual presupposition in the fsQCA 3.0 calculation: when results R emerges, F and B should be considered present. Based on this simple counterfactual presupposition, related configurations (alternative) perform 3 kinds of effect Paths, which are

RATIONALIZATION=

CFUND*competition*BACKGROUND*support +

competition * BACKGROUND*SUPPORT* PROFESSION +

COMPETITION *BACKGROUND*support*PROFESSION

Among them, the path 1 shows that the resources and the background of leaders play a very important role in the formation of rationalization of organizations, which indicates that the integration of systematic interpretation and power analysis has stronger explanatory power (coverage=0.429); the path 2 and 3 commonly show that professional training and competition are not necessary conditions for the explanation of the rationalization, but are complementary by each other, which in some degree also indicates that there is possibility for mutual integration of the systematic perspective and economic perspective (coverage=0.286,01.43).

Table 1.7 Analysis of Results of Different Configurations(Non-contradictory Configurations)

Path	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
Complex results			
Path 1 CFUND*competition*support*BACKGROUND	0.429	0.429	1.000
Path 2 competition*SUPPORT*BACKGROUND*PROFESSION	0.286	0.286	1.000
Path 3 cfund*COMPETITION*support*BACKGROUND*PROFESSION	0.143	0.143	1.000
Result coverage		0.857	
Result consistency		1.000	
Parsimonious Results			
Path 1 support*BACKGROUND	0.571	0.143	1.000
Path 2 BACKGROUND*PROFESSION	0.714	0.286	1.000
Result consistency		0.857	
Result coverage		1.000	
Intermediate Results			
Path 1 CFUND*competition*BACKGROUND*support	0.429	0.429	1.000
Path 2 competition*BACKGROUND*SUPPORT* PROFESSION	0.286	0.286	1.000
Path 3 COMPETITION *BACKGROUND*support*PROFESSION	0.143	0.143	1.000
Result consistency		0.857	
Result coverage		1.000	

However, due to the so-called "limited diversity" and the bias errors of theory/case of the social phenomenon itself, it is hard to say that the intermediary results are completely reliable. Some researchers believe that parsimonious solutions of reasonable assumption without observation are relatively concise and credible[8]; however, as researchers, theoretical thinking is crucial for analysis. According to the strategy of Ragin and Fiss[41] , we will make unified analysis of the parsimonious solutions and the intermediate results (table 5.8). The core value of this strategy is to help us grasp the core content of "causal path"[9]. Before the analysis we would like to first introduce a set of concepts: “Core condition” and “Contributing condition”, the former one is the condition appears both in parsimonious solutions and intermediate results, the latter is that exists only in the intermediate results; in particular, these conditions can be excluded from the analysis unless further discussion of the contributing condition is needed when the researchers consider that it is necessary to think from the substantive knowledge or theoretical background. The results will be discussed according to the data in table 5.8.

First, the basic premise of the emergence of rationalization of a non-profit organization is that its leader has a long time working experience in enterprises, which is because that career experience played a central role in all configurations (configuration 1,2,3). This result is consistent with our theoretical expectations.

Second, the comparison of configuration 1 and configuration 3 shows that without government support, business assistance and market competition will contribute to the rationalization of organizations, although auxiliarily; it can also be inferred that business assistance provides an alternative for promoting the rationalization of nonprofit organizations when in the absence of market competition.

Third, the comparison of configuration 2 and configuration 3 shows that when the organization leaders have both career experience and management expertise, external market competition and government support as contributing conditions/factors to a great extent appear mutually alternative, because these two condition cannot coexist.

[41] Ragin, Charles C., and Peer C. Fiss. "Net effects analysis versus configurational analysis: An empirical demonstration." *Redesigning social inquiry: Fuzzy sets and beyond* (2008): 190-212.

Table 1.8 Analysis of rationalization

	Results (outcome)		
Condition	Configuration 1	Configuration 2	Configuration 3
Market competition	⊝	⊝	●
Government support	⊖	●	⊝
Enterprise fund	●		
Work background	⬤	⬤	⬤
Management train		⬤	⬤
Consistency	1.000	1.000	1.000
Raw coverage	0.429	0.286	0.143
	0.429	0.286	0.143

Note： ⬤=Core condition exists； ⊖=No core condition●=Contributing condition exists

⊝=No contributing condition Blank=Important condition

5.3 Discussion on Robustness

As mentioned above, no significant differences are indicated through the calculation of the three cases with the full consistency threshold of 0.75, 0.8 and 0.9, which means that the results of this study are largely stable. Therefore, this part will mainly discuss the contradictions among the configurations, and will compare the results with the above.

Rihoux and Ragin[8] pointed out that the contradictions of the configurations could be eliminated through either “selecting the value from the majority of the result variables” or “setting the scale of the result variable to 0". Based on this concept, the study re-analyzed the data in table 5.8 and found that in the 3 cases, the scales of two cases were 0 (cases 13,14) and one was 1 (case 3), which was because that it has been considered with strategic planning. However, through further detailed analysis it was also discovered that a possible cause of this scale problem was the misunderstandings of the concept of “strategic planning” at the semantic level between researchers and respondents. Generally speaking, an organization should have certain goals and preliminary planning of its future development; in contrast, developing a strategic planning requires a considerable amount of time and detailed argumentation and discussion within the organization to eventually form a formal text[38]. The case 3 clearly belongs to the former so that its scale should be the considered as 0. The reversion of this case broadly reflected that an important criterion for judging rationalization is the formal strategic text rather than the strategic thinking in the generalized dimension, which is helpful for the research to make a stricter measurement of the rationalization.

Table 1.9 shows the calculation result of case 3 after re-scaling and the elimination of contradictory configurations. Compared with table 5.7 it is indicated that leaving out the cover rate differences, no major differences can be seen in terms of the substance of the function route, therefore, the conclusions above can be considered reliable.

Table 1.9 Analysis of Results of Different Configurations(Non-contradictory Configurations)

Path	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
Complex solutions			
Path 1 CFUND*competition*support*BACKGROUND	0.500	0.500	1.000
Path 2 competition*SUPPORT*BACKGROUND*PROFESSION	0.333	0.333	1.000
Path 3 cfund*COMPETITION*support*BACKGROUND*PROFESSION	0.167	0.167	1.000
Solution coverage		1.000	
Solution consistency		1.000	
Parsimonious results			
Path 1 support*BACKGROUND	0.667	0.167	1.000
Path 2 BACKGROUND*PROFESSION	0.833	0.333	1.000
Solution consistency		1.000	
Solution coverage		1.000	
Intermediate Results			
Path 1 CFUND*competition*BACKGROUND*support	0.500	0.500	1.000
Path 2 competition*BACKGROUND*SUPPORT* PROFESSION	0.333	0.333	1.000
Path 3 COMPETITION *BACKGROUND*support*PROFESSION	0.167	0.167	1.000
Solution consistency		1.000	
Solution coverage		1.000	

6. SUMMARY

Existing researches about non-profit organizations' rationalization tended to lay particular stress on specific or "net" effects explained by a particular theoretical perspective, thereby rarely considered from the interrelation of various theoretical perspectives or from the configuration perspective and hereby summarizing the effects of different mechanisms in specific environments as well as their connections or alternatives. As an important methodology and tool which emphasizes combined action of multiple mechanisms, QCA provides a possibility for our study. Through the meticulous sorting and analysis of 14 cases from three areas of Z Province, the following two important new findings can be obtained:

First, in terms of facilitating the rationalization of non-profit organizations, the mechanisms of competition, resource, and system are not simply replaceable by each other but complementary in many cases; especially, accordingly configurations are formed between system-related mechanism and resource mechanism and between system-related mechanism and competition mechanism, which constructs the critical path of non-profit organizations' rationalization. This helped us solve the controversy of whether it is competition or complementation between system analysis, traditional resource dependence and economic analysis, that is to say that at least in the field of rationalization of non-profit organization, these three perspectives can be references of each other, and thereby, instead of picking a superior one from the three, people can form a more systematic and synergic framework of analysis and explanation. Certainly, according to the results of this study, system mechanism, compared with the other two mechanisms, plays a more fundamental role in terms of creating rationalization of organizations, which is in accordance with the theoretical discussion in the case section of this study.

Second, this study also indicates that the relationship among the different (sub) mechanisms of the same theory is relatively complicated. For example, in promoting non-profit organization rationalization there should be a certain competition mechanism (or quasi competition), therefore, when system mechanism exists, both bottom-up market "emergence" and top-down "public-private partnership" can generate conditions of rational complementary. Compared with the configuration with market competition (coverage =0.143), the configuration with government support (coverage =0.286) has more explanatory power, which is in accordance with the basic reality that there is still no effective field formed in most nonprofit realm under the larger scope of government influence. At the same time, as a supplement to the previous studies, this study observed that system mechanisms tend to be complementary to each other rather than replaceable by each other, which means that a leader/an important member of an enterprise with certain management training experience will be more helpful for the organization performing rational structure and behavior.

Based on the above, combined with the basic characteristics of China's non-profit realm, various new questions and propositions can be put forward. For example, whether the formation of the rationalization of the non-profit organization requires its leaders/important members to have certain career experience, meanwhile, the government's support or the resource supply is also indispensable; whether a certain degree of competition can promote the rationalization of a non-profit organization when its leaders or crucial members have experience of both career and specialized management training. These questions and propositions deserve further expectations.

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