

Background

Cancer is one of the leading causes of deaths in China. Increasing civil society organizations (CSOs), partnering with government and other sector agencies, have engaged and contributed significantly to the cancer prevention and control in China in last decades. The COVID pandemic posed significant challenges to global health in the past few years. Given the critical role that CSOs play in supporting cancer patients, it is essential to understand the impact of COVID-19 on these organizations and identify potential strategies to address the challenges they face.

This research aims to contribute to this discussion by examining the impact of COVID-19 on CSOs supporting cancer patients in China and exploring ways to strengthen their resilience capacities when faced hardship in future.

Methods

- Eligible studies published in Chinese or English were searched on three electronic databases (PubMed, CNKI, and Web of Science) using keywords: civil society organization, multisector, cancer service, cancer patients, caregivers, COVID-19, China, needs and demand, and challenges, up to March 30, 2023.
- Studies were eligible for review if 1) they discussed the impact of COVID pandemic on cancer service provision in China, 2) the services were provided as a result of the collaboration between CSO and other agencies in China.
- WHO Health System Building Blocks framework was used to summarize the impact of the pandemic on CSO-engaged cancer program, and how CSOs adjusted to adapt to the challenging situation.

Result

Seventeen articles were included in the review. There were two major types of cancer CSOs: one was initiated by cancer patients and their caregivers (like SCRC), and the other was initiated by social welfare and oncology professionals (like HKACS and CACA) (Fig 1.).

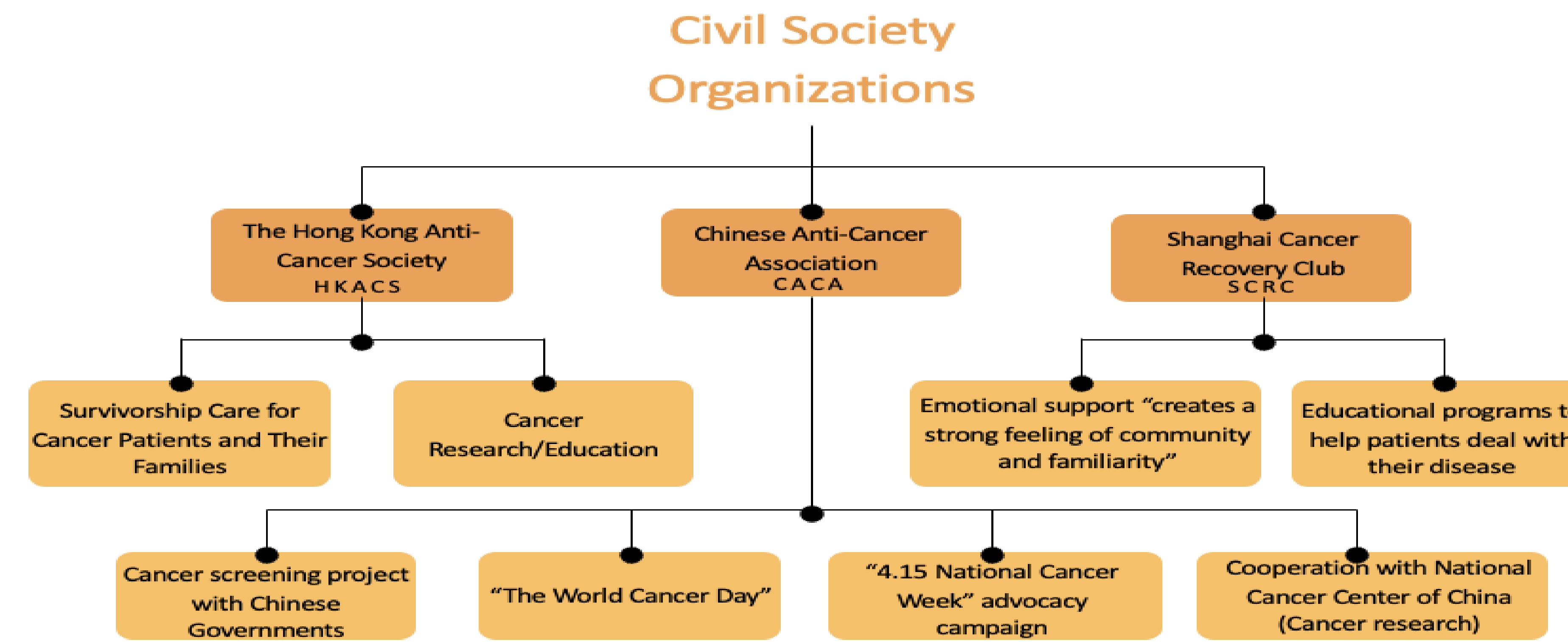


Figure 1: Services that provided by Three Cancer CSOs in China

During the pandemic, the shifting of the public health priorities and implementing COVID control restrictions resulted significant reduction in cancer control resource allocation and disruption of cancer service delivery. Many CSO-engaged intersectoral collaborations for cancer prevention and control were suspended or collapsed.

The pandemic particularly affected the workforce, funding, and service delivery of the CSOs (Fig 2.), and led to notable decrease in cancer-related research, education, survivorship care, and advocacy campaigns. In response to the challenges, CSOs had to adjust their working mode to phone calls and remote, sought corporate and charitable partnerships to distribute essential items (like masks, hand sanitizers and nutritional supplements) to cancer patients, and employed additional personnel to ensure humanistic care for cancer patients.

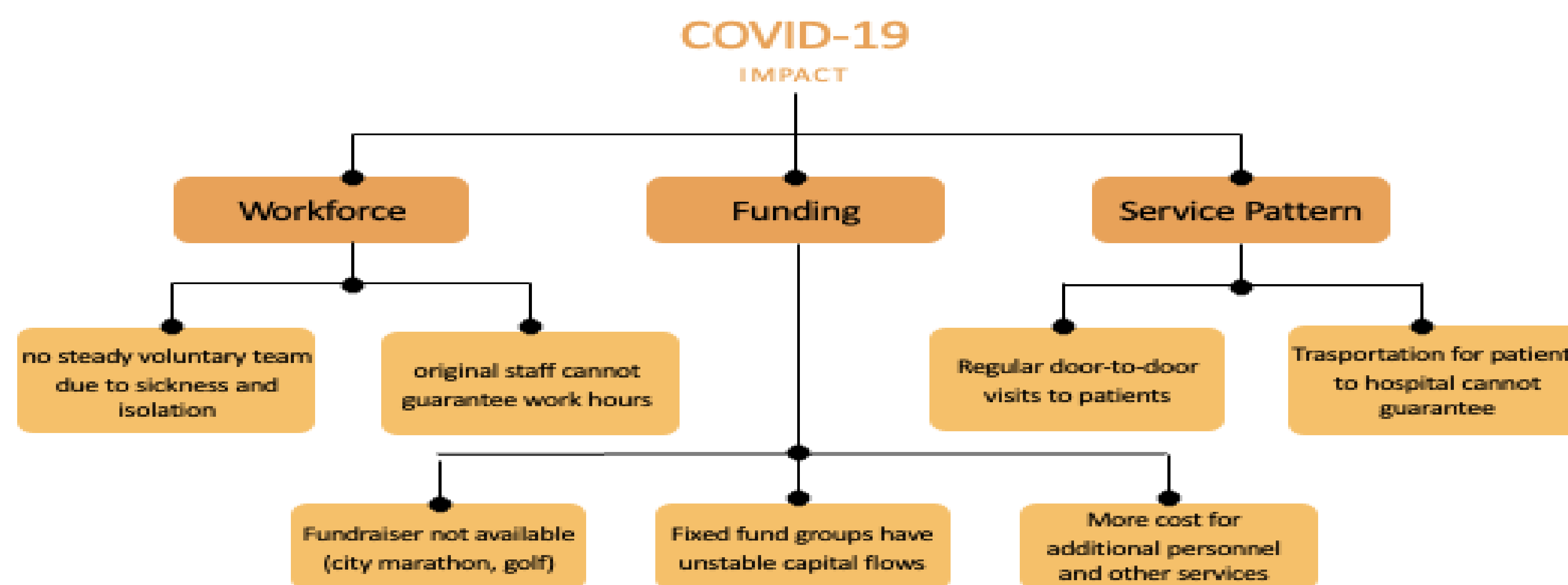


Figure 2: The Impact of COVID Pandemic on Cancer CSOs in China

Discussion

The COVID pandemic has posed significant challenges to cancer CSOs, especially in funding, workforce and service delivery, and resulted in a considerable reduction of the engagement of CSOs in multisectoral cancer programs in China. Moreover, this study revealed the lack of CSOs' engagement in leadership in multisectoral cancer programs in China.

As the pandemic is gradually brought under control in China, strategies and actions need to be developed and taken to help resume CSOs' regular operations and collaborations with other sectors and build their resilience capacity in the post-COVID era. Particularly, CSOs need to be engaged in policy- and decision-making process in future, in order to increase their accountability in cancer service and support programs, and ultimately, benefits the cancer patients in LMICs like China.

Reference

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