

Organizational Resilience of Intimate Partner Abuse Nonprofits During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Nonprofits often function as a key part of the social safety net by providing services to vulnerable populations and strengthening communities. Despite their essential nature, research on organizational resilience (OR) among nonprofits tends to focus on surviving financial distress, while other organizational aspects of resilience are less emphasized. Finding few nonprofit OR models that address our research context, we adapt and extend a model of OR from the for-profit sector. Our model adaptation includes technical, social and financial resources and expands each category to cover unique aspects of nonprofits that the for-profit OR model does not contain. We also borrow concepts from social-ecological resilience (SER) to enhance our nonprofit-adapted OR model, which we test using a case study of intimate partner abuse (IPA) agencies. We examined eight IPA nonprofits in a Midwestern state during the COVID–19 pandemic, interviewing both managers and frontline staff. We hope our adapted model can be used by researchers and practitioners to better understand and evaluate OR not only in IPA agencies, but all nonprofits.

Keywords: Resilience, Nonprofits, COVID–19, Organizational Resilience, Intimate Partner Abuse, Intimate Partner Violence

Introduction

Organizations sometimes confront sudden, unexpected changes. Such emergencies require adaptation. Those organizations that can adapt or transform their operations so they continue to function can be said to possess organizational resilience (OR) in the face of challenges; those that do not may cease to function altogether (Tengblad & Oudhuis, 2018b; Trussel, 2002). Despite the size and importance of the U.S. nonprofit sector and their often-significant differences from for-profit organizations, we found few nonprofit-specific OR models (Searing et al., 2021; Witmer & Mellinger, 2016). Understanding key strategies of adaptation in these organizations can help them build resilience prior to emergencies and ensure they are more prepared to survive, thrive and, most importantly, continue to serve our communities even in the most challenging of times.

As an increase in intimate partner abuse¹ (IPA) was widely expected during the COVID–19 pandemic (Reference Group for Gender in Humanitarian Action, 2015; Smith, 2019), we worked with a sample of these agencies to learn more about how they were weathering this challenge. One major theme emerged around coping with changing circumstances and

adapting operating approaches to manage them. As we did not find a nonprofit OR model to apply in this setting, we adapted and extended a model from the private sector (Tengblad, 2018b) to apply to nonprofits.

We begin by reviewing literature showing how IPA increases during pandemics and other crises (such as natural disasters). We then examine OR's roots and existing for-profit OR models, and we discuss some useful concepts from social-ecological resilience (SER) that are less emphasized in OR and that help provide better insight. From there we introduce our adapted model and illustrate it using a sample of IPA agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nonprofits and IPA Under COVID–19

Nonprofits provide support for the most vulnerable in our communities. During the COVID–19 global pandemic, many Americans have utilized nonprofits, from community food banks to mental health helplines and many others. Nonprofits typically offer either goods (e.g., food and clothing) and/or services (e.g., counseling). OR in nonprofits is key to maintaining these organizations as an irreplaceable source of support for individuals and their communities in times of crisis.

Research shows that nonprofit funding has suffered due to COVID–19 (Maher et al., 2020; Stewart et al., 2021). The U.S. government offered some nonprofit relief funding, including grants through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (Maher et al., 2020).

While human-service nonprofits were challenged by the pandemic, those serving primarily women and children experiencing abuse were particularly challenged as lockdowns to contain the virus confined women with their abusive partners.² Research shows IPA and violence increase in times of stress, such as pandemics and natural disasters (Bandiera et al., 2019; Godin, 2020; Roesch et al., 2020; Sety et al., 2014; Stripe, 2020; Women's Aid, 2020; WHO, 2020). Lockdowns, where people are required to stay at home and sharply curtail social interactions, remove many safeguards women use to try to manage abuse and violence directed at themselves and their children (Peled & Gil, 2011). Additionally, the economic impacts of pandemics, including job losses and disruptions to childcare and schooling, can also limit survivors' options.

Several studies, including a meta-analysis (Piquero et al., 2021), found an increase in domestic violence in the U.S. during the early lockdown phases of the COVID–19 pandemic (Boserup et al., 2020; Godin, 2020; WHO, 2020). Though some IPA agencies in the U.S. experienced decreased call volumes during some periods of the pandemic, many in the field felt this represented women's lack of access to phones, or lack of safety to reach out for help (Campbell, 2020), rather than a decrease in abuse (Evans et al., 2020).

Organizational Resilience

Often organizations develop within a specific niche with a specific purpose and assume the status quo will simply continue. However, change is a constant in organizational life and though some change is gradual, organizations sometimes face drastic, catastrophic change. Whether an organization can adjust to slowly or quickly changing conditions may determine whether it continues to function and fulfill its mission.

Though resilience originated within ecology (Biggs et al., 2015; Holling, 1973; Pimm, 1984), the concept has also been adopted and adapted in a variety of other disciplines, including the

management of organizations such as businesses (Linnenluecke et al., 2012; Tengblad & Oudhuis, 2018a; Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007).

In business, resilience is used in relation to organizations facing change. Many definitions of OR within the business literature are similar, with slight variations. Tengblad and Oudhuis (2018b, p. 3) define OR as the ability to “maintain their vitality in a changing world that constantly requires adaptation.” Vogus and Sutcliffe (2007) define OR as “maintenance of positive adjustment under challenging conditions such that the organization emerges from those conditions strengthened and more resourceful” (p. 3418).

Business researchers tend to look at how aspects of OR impact a for-profit organization’s financial and overall health (Tengblad & Oudhuis, 2018b). Much OR research has focused on ‘high reliability organizations’ that face high-risk challenges in day-to-day operations (airlines, nuclear power plants, etc.) and practice OR as a daily preventive measure to build the skills, processes and resources needed to prevent or manage a major catastrophe (Tengblad, 2018a).

Nonprofits have employees, must manage their finances, and often have a similar basic structure to for-profit business, but they also differ in some important ways. For example, for-profits have generating profits as the primary mission with perhaps some social goals on the side, whereas nonprofits primarily have a social mission for which generating revenue is essential. Similarly, volunteers are nonexistent in the for-profit sector but are a mainstay of nonprofits.

Some studies on nonprofit OR have focused on key factors or characteristics in nonprofits that can help nonprofits to be more nimble in stressful circumstances, but without offering a holistic model of nonprofit OR. For example, Witmer and Mellinger (2016), in a study of large healthcare nonprofits, posited that OR-focused adaptation in nonprofits is somewhat different than in the for-profit sector. They reported the major keys to adaptation in these nonprofits as fiscal transparency, hope and optimism, servant and transformational leadership, community reciprocity, improvisation, and commitment to mission. Another study (Mosley et al., 2012) looked at how nonprofit organizational characteristics such as organization size, age, and manager training impacted adaptive choices during a period of financial stress (e.g., cutting personnel or programs, adding new programs, building joint programs with other organizations or using earned income tactics to continue to function). They found larger organizational size and the presence of a strategic plan made organizations more likely to engage in adaptive tactics, but organizational age and higher professional training did not predict a higher likelihood of using the aforementioned adaptive tactics (Mosley et al., 2012).

Insights for OR from Social-Ecological Resilience

SER evolved from earlier resilience work focusing on ecological systems and how they react to change. Today, SER focuses on integrated natural-human systems and how they respond to change and interact in complex ways given their dynamic nature (Holling, 1973; Walker & Salt, 2012). Walker et al. defined resilience as the “capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity and feedbacks.” (Walker et al., 2004, p. 1).

The stronger focus on systems could be useful for analysis of OR in nonprofits. Appreciating an organization’s environment or context may add critical information about future challenges and increase its ability to plan for adaptation. Context for a nonprofit could include the physical environment (natural disasters, climate change, etc.), but it can also include the socio-political environment (e.g., precarious state funding for certain services or political currents negatively impacting certain groups, such as anti-immigrant sentiment or legislation). Physical or socio-political environment can impact an organization or its clients.

The 3-D resilience framework (Béné et al., 2013) describes three types of capacity that collectively and individually can lead to resilience—absorptive coping capacity (coping), adaptive capacity (adaptation), and transformative capacity (transformation). If returning to a previous status quo is the goal, then coping, or the capacity to absorb short-term shocks and continue to function, might be sufficient (Béné et al., 2013). Coping is a ‘resistance’ strategy, or resisting change by absorbing a shock (Béné et al., 2014), for example using financial reserves to absorb pandemic losses. Coping is a common resilience strategy where it is manageable and affordable in the near-term, but it may not be sustainable in the longer term and may leave an organization with reduced capacity for resilience in the future.

When a crisis or challenge to the status quo goes beyond what a system or organization can absorb, then adaptation, or the ability to adapt and adjust, becomes salient (Béné et al., 2013). Adaptation requires different organizational resources, like planning, learning, and sometimes cooperation or collaboration (Béné et al., 2014). Examples of adaptation include being more flexible about work hours to allow staff to meet clients outside of normal business hours during an emergency, thus increasing access to services to help more clients more quickly.

Sometimes adaptations, or incremental changes, are not enough to maintain current functions and a transformation to a new state is the only option. Transformation is the ability to respond to situations by creating a “fundamentally new system when ecological, economic, or social (including political) conditions make the existing system untenable” (Walker et al., 2004, p. 1). Transformation as a part of OR is rare, as organizations seek first to cope and adapt and only transform as a last resort. IBM, for example, transformed from a manufacturing company to a service-driven information technology company when faced with an inability to adapt and remain relevant in manufacturing (van Kralingen, 2010).

Using these three categories can help organizations to better understand where their actions lie on the resilience framework and evaluate how actions impact current and future resilience capabilities. However, coping, adaptation and transformation are often used dynamically depending on what a situation calls for at a given point in time; resilience is said to emerge from ‘trade-offs and synergies’ between these capacities (Béné et al., 2014). In this paper, we identify coping and adaptation as elements of resilience, which is an evolving, dynamic state rather than a one-time outcome (Béné et al., 2013).

A Model of OR for Nonprofits

In this section we draw on existing models of OR from business and nonprofits to analyze OR in IPA nonprofits during the COVID–19 pandemic. Not finding a model that fit our purposes, we developed our own adapted model as presented below.

Existing OR Models

OR models focus primarily on the for-profit sector, with a smaller, more recent literature focusing on nonprofits. There are several OR models for for-profit organizations, such as one by Linnenluecke et al. (2012). They built a longitudinal model around organizational adaptation during different phases of emergencies. They explore how an organization may experience different crisis phases differently, perhaps stumbling initially, but recovering quickly and learning from the experience in subsequent phases of a crisis. Similarly, Vogus and Sutcliffe’s model (2007) focuses on organizational capabilities in for-profit organizations and in what state they emerge from challenging conditions. These models may be useful in examining the overall experience of organizations post-pandemic, but they were not suited for a cross-sectional study during the pandemic.

Searing et al. (2021) created a model of nonprofit OR with five focal areas, including financial, programs and services, management and leadership, human resources and outreach. Both Mosley et al. (2012) and Searing et al. (2021) touch on categories similar to our adapted model, but both focus mainly on resilience in the face of financial hardship and lack a focus on technical aspects of organizations. Technology use in nonprofits has a long history and is accelerating in line with technology use across our society (McNutt et al., 2018). Technology is increasingly important for service delivery, fundraising, grant-seeking, research, outreach, service provision, effective administration (McNutt, 2020), collaborations (Barrett et al., 2018), etc. As information technology emerged as a strong theme in IPA agency adaptation during the pandemic, we turned to for-profit OR models, seeking one that explicitly included technology.

Tengblad's (2018b) for-profit OR framework focuses on three resource areas that impact the ability to adapt: financial, technical, and social resources. First, Tengblad's model highlights the role of financial resources as they impact an organization's ability to exist, procure supplies and invest in needed resources such as staff, training, and technology. His second focus area is technical resources, which includes actual technology—machines and programs to run them—but also the technical knowledge within an organization. The final focus area in Tengblad's model is social resources, or the relationships, internal and external, that help the organization accomplish its work.

Adapted OR Model for Nonprofits

Knowing IPA agencies would be under special stress during the pandemic, we wanted to capture their experience and examine their resilience during this crisis. Our model adaptation grew out of our findings and includes an emergent theme on the important role played by technology during the pandemic. Not finding a nonprofit OR model that explicitly included technology, we chose to adapt Tengblad's (2018b) model as its focus on financial, technical, and social resources is straightforward and centers around the areas of adaptation we felt most relevant to nonprofits. The focus on social resources is particularly pertinent for nonprofits, and we felt the focus on technical resources in resilience was crucial given the increasingly important role of technology in many nonprofits today.

Our adaptation uses modified versions of Tengblad's categories and adds additional focus areas (see Table 1).

1. Financial Resources

Tengblad's financial resilience category looks at an organization's financial balance, profitability, liquidity, business contracts and intangible assets. Nonprofits (including IPA agencies) are generally funded through a mix of government funds (federal and state monies), foundation grants and private donations, with government monies making up most of IPA agency budgets (Wiley & Berry, 2018). Our adapted model of financial resources has five categories: a) overall financial state; b) staffing levels;³ c) grants, service contracts and loans; and d) fundraising.

The stability of their funding streams greatly impacts the adaptability of nonprofits, either giving them latitude to innovate and make changes or limiting their adaptive capacity. Research shows several strategies have positively impacted nonprofit financial states during crises, such as maintaining strong connections to external funders (Lin & Wang, 2016) and streamlining grant processes (Putnam-Walkerly, 2021). Additionally, in 2020 the federal government, states and foundations offered grant monies targeted specifically toward IPA agencies because they anticipated a rise in domestic abuse during pandemic lockdowns (Paarlberg et al., 2020).⁴

Table 1. Adapted Model for Organizational Resilience in Nonprofit Organizations

Model Category	Sub-Category	Description
1. Financial Resources	a. Overall financial state	Changes in organization's current finances compared to pre-crisis levels
	b. Staffing levels	Changes in personnel and staffing numbers/levels
	c. Grants, service contracts & loans	Changes in grants, service contracts, and any additional loans
	d. Fundraising	Changes in fundraising levels
2. Technical Resources & Organizational Processes	a. Technological assets & deployment	How technology enables/stymies crisis response
	b. Technical know-how	Technical capability of technical/other staff; process for making technical changes and level of stakeholder involvement
	c. Organization & procedures	Changes in how work is done during crisis, compared to pre-crisis
	d. Technical innovation	New technology and new uses of technology
3. Social Resources	a. Followership & relationships with employees	Changes in communication, employee relations, focus on staff safety & support
	b. Relationships with clients	Changes in interactions with clients, roles and responsibilities between staff and clients
	c. Relationships with partners	Changes in relations with organizations nonprofit depends on to accomplish its mission
	d. Relationships with funders	Changes in relations with funders (local, state, regional & national level)
	e. Relationships with top management & board	Changes in how top management operate (power sharing, etc.) and function/relations of board
	f. Relationships with volunteers	Changes in use, number & function of volunteers
	g. Relationships with networks or coalitions	Changes in frequency or content of relations with organizations in network or coalition (lobbying, technical assistance, etc.)
	h. Relationships with community	Changes in level of support from community
	i. Relationships with other stakeholders	Other significant organizational relationships impacting crisis response
	4. Mission & Values	a. Mission
b. Values		What values do nonprofits maintain and what values do they step away from?
5. Environmental & Contextual Factors	a. Geographic location & environment	Dis/advantages based on area and area resources—hampering or helping crisis response
	b. Societal values, norms & movements	Ongoing or concurrent events in society impacting crisis response

2. Technical Resources and Organizational Processes

The second piece of Tengblad's model is technical resources, including products and services, production technology and organization of work, logistics and supply chains, information

systems and technical knowledge and innovation (Tengblad, 2018b). Our adapted model of technical resources and organizational processes has four categories: a) technological assets and deployment; b) organization and procedures; c) technical know-how; and d) technical innovation. We focus on how technology can facilitate adaptation to maintain or enhance service provision.

Though technology (hardware and software) sometimes lags at nonprofits due to scarce funding, technology adoption has increased in this sector as organizations recognize its potential to increase their impact through improved management, measurement, and internal and external communication (McNutt, 2020; McNutt et al., 2018). A recent study (Newby & Branyon, 2021) found technology played a key role in keeping nonprofits engaged with their client populations during the pandemic. Additionally, another study documented the rapid shift to technology-mediated communication between social workers and their clients during the pandemic (Mishna et al., 2020).

However, IPA agencies may differ somewhat from other nonprofit sectors due to special concerns that virtual communication technologies might expose their clients to further harm by abusive partners (Al-Alosi, 2020; NNEDV, 2022). Both funding and safety issues have affected and complicated technology adoption among IPA nonprofits. For example, prior to the pandemic in our sample of agencies few advocates had laptops and telehealth was not used.

3. Social Resources

Tengblad (2018b) writes, “To be organizationally resilient, a company must develop mutually trusting relationships with committed coworkers, loyal customers, reliable suppliers/partners, supportive owners and various other stakeholders” (pp. 45–46). Tengblad’s model of social resources has five categories: a) followership and relationships with unions; b) relationships with customers; c) relationships with suppliers and partners; d) relationships with owners and financiers; and e) relationships with other stakeholders. These categories provided a starting point but required significant adaptation and expansion for application to nonprofits.

Nonprofits rely on many relationships to accomplish their missions, and these partners and networks can greatly contribute to—or limit—options for adaptation. Our adapted model of social resources has nine sub-categories: a) followership and relations with employees; b) relationships with clients; c) relationships with partners; d) relationships with funders; e) relationships with volunteers; f) relationships with networks and coalitions; g) relationships with top management and board; h) relationships with community; and i) relationships with other stakeholders.

Social resources can impact adaptation in nonprofits in a wide variety of ways. Staff knowledge, dedication, and compassion was rated as a top strength for IPA shelters in one survey and ‘lack of staff’ rated as a top weakness facing many IPA organizations (Roberts et al., 2007). The work of human service nonprofits typically involves person-to-person communication (whether in-person, via phone, etc.) requiring emotional intelligence and effort on the part of their employees; such ‘emotional labor’ is difficult to sustain when employees are exhausted or feel unsupported by the organization (Guy et al., 2014).

In nonprofits such as IPA agencies that serve traumatized populations, employees bear an even higher burden of emotional labor and require higher levels of support and inclusion from their agencies (Slattery & Goodman, 2009). In general, inclusive decision-making within and between organizations (Biggs et al., 2012) can empower, increase communication, and result in greater resilience. Additionally, engaged board members stepping up fundraising and outreach efforts can increase adaptation options and, in the long-term, resilience.

4. Mission and Values

We added a fourth category to Tengblad's model to capture the importance of mission and values to nonprofits. An organization demonstrating strong adherence to accomplishing its mission despite challenges, like a pandemic, may be able to continue to attract funding, attract more dedicated staff, and earn greater respect from clients.

While mission is the driving reason for the existence of a nonprofit, values are important to how a nonprofit accomplishes its mission. Values include things like 'client needs come first' or a strong belief in protecting client confidentiality. Like mission, values can be an important part of staff and client retention; an organization may adapt and even change some values in a crisis, but radically changing significant values is likely to cause stress within the organization and potentially with clients and community partners.

5. Environmental and Contextual Factors

Environmental and contextual factors also impact adaptation and, ultimately, resilience. We suggest two primary contextual factors for consideration, but we acknowledge this category might differ significantly depending on the nonprofit organization or sector. These factors cannot be changed quickly and so can help/hamper adaptation.

a. Geographic location and environment. A nonprofit with a strong relationship with a wealthy local company may have a ready source for emergency aid, potentially increasing their financial resilience and positively impacting technical resilience, both of which could positively impact social factors in resilience. Nonprofits in less wealthy communities may not have access to the same resources, resulting in greater resilience challenges. Lin and Wang (2016) found higher levels of fiscal stress in nonprofits located in rural areas.

Additionally, nonprofits are tied to the environment around them. A nonprofit located in an area where climate change is dramatically increasing flooding or causing extended droughts will also be impacted by these phenomena, as will the people they serve.

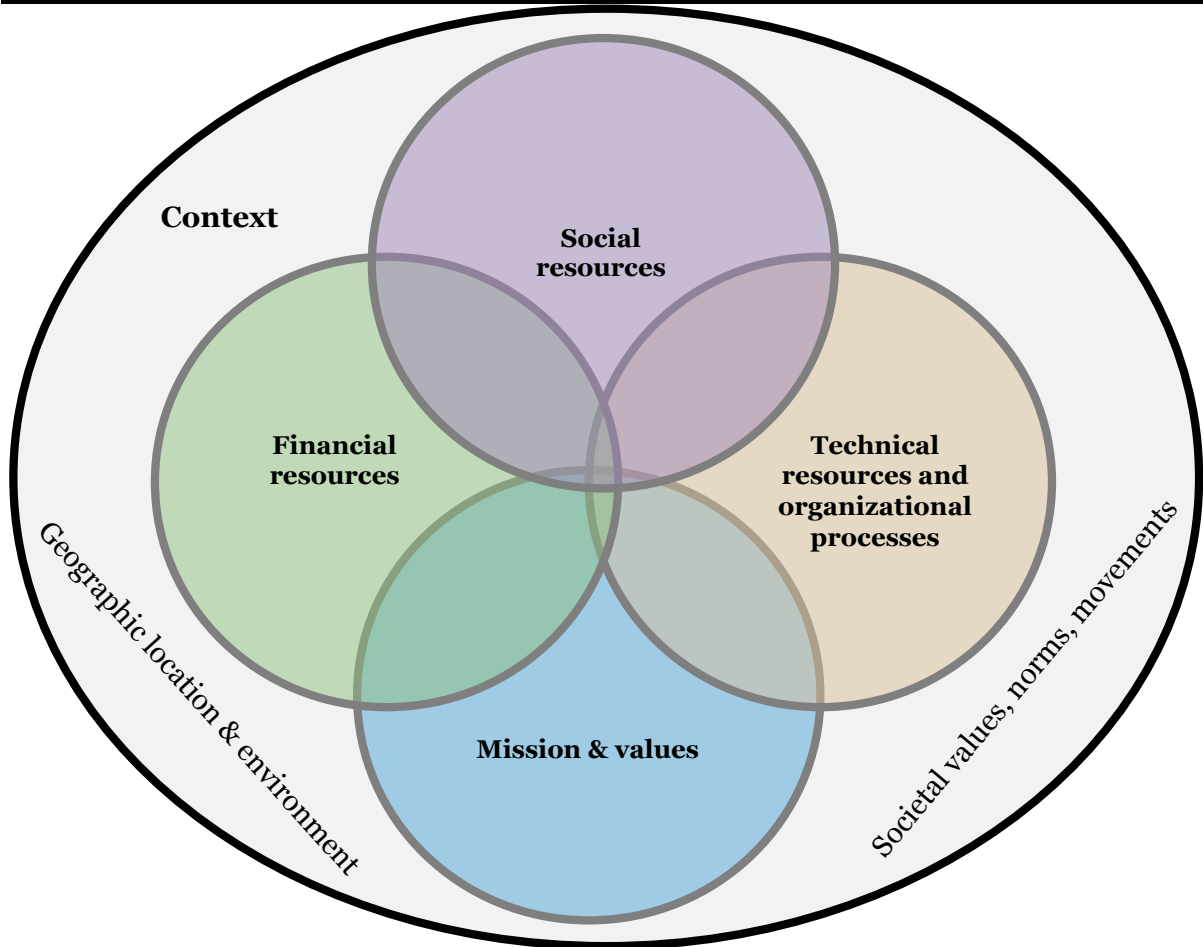
b. Societal values, norms, and movements. Nonprofits are situated in communities and buffeted by the same winds of change occurring around them. When community issues arise and community members take sides, nonprofit agencies cannot always remain neutral, and often must adapt and examine their own policies. For example, many IPA agencies have anti-racist policies in place because the communities they serve have taken steps to begin to address racism. Additionally, nonprofits are impacted by local and state policies and values about their mission; in locations where IPA is regarded as a family matter, rather than a crime, IPA agencies face more obstacles to obtaining community support and funding.

Finally, our adapted model shows overlap across categories (see Figure 1), as we have found adaptation actions may cross categories. For example, adaptations in fundraising may enable technological changes that also improve client service.

Method

This study was approved by an institutional review board (IRB) under strict safety protocols during a time when most research was stalled due to the pandemic. All recruiting and interviewing were done remotely, by phone.

Figure 1. Adapted Model of Organizational Resilience for Nonprofit Organizations



Recruitment and Sample

There are roughly 50 agencies in this Midwestern state that serve survivors of abuse, including some on campuses, some run by religious organizations and some focused on abuse in native communities (Women’s Law, 2022). Our eight participating organizations represent a spectrum of IPA agencies, from smaller, rural programs, to mid-sized suburban agencies to some of the largest IPA agencies/programs; our sample comprises roughly 16% of all IPA agencies in the state. The IRS 990 forms for the agencies show they employ between 29 and 121 people, with revenues ranging from a million dollars to nearly \$5.5 million annually (Table 2). All participating organizations are registered as 501(c)(3) and therefore are classified as nonprofits under U.S. tax codes.

We had existing research relationships with all organizations in this case study, making this somewhat of a convenience sample. We wanted manager perspectives of challenges and responses, as well as front-line staff opinion about the actual impact of the changes, so we interviewed at least one managerial staff member and one frontline staff member from each participating nonprofit (n=18). Managers were interviewed and then asked to nominate frontline staff to participate, in a form of snowball sampling.

All agencies were long-standing, with the majority gaining 501(c)(3) status in the late 1970s or early 1980s and one more than fifty years ago. All operate on a mix of government funding and grants, as well as private/community foundation support and private donor fundraising. All participating agencies are of sufficient size to have management teams as well as frontline staff. Interviews were conducted between June and October of 2020.

Table 2. Agency Characteristics (n=8)

Agency Characteristic	Range
Number of employees*	>25 to >120
Year 501(c)(3) status granted*	Majority between late 1970s to mid 1980s (one outlier >50 years)
Total revenue*	\$1 million to >\$5 million
Service area	Rural, suburban, urban

* Data pulled from 2020 IRS 990 forms. Sources: Candid Guidestar, ProPublica Nonprofit Explorer

Among participants (n=18) the majority identified as female (n=17, 94%). They averaged 37 years old, ranging from 24 to 62. Most identified as White (n=16, 89%), with one African American (5%) and one mixed race participant (White and Hispanic; 5%). Length of employment with their agency ranged widely, from six months to 37 years, with an average of eight years (Table 3).

Participants were assigned pseudonyms and each is identified as either frontline staff or manager. Eight participants (44%) were managers and ten (56%) were frontline staff. Managers were defined as people who had other employees working directly for them; some managers had limited direct contact with clients. Frontline workers had direct contact with clients as the major part of their work, though some also had additional responsibilities not involving direct client contact.

Interviews

All participants were interviewed by phone individually by the first author and read a consent statement. Interviews averaged 83 minutes in length with a range of 48 to 166.

Interviews were semi-structured, with an interview guide used to ensure interviews covered all topics. Interviews began with more open-ended discussion or narrative questions, such as, “Tell me about how your work has changed since the pandemic started?” From these narrative beginnings, interviews then probed specifically for changes due to the pandemic. The interviewer used time anchors to help interviewees more accurately recall (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992) and contrast past and current work experiences.

Data Analysis

Transcriptions were analyzed in Nvivo, a qualitative software. We used thematic content analysis to create codes in line with analysis guidelines recommended by Miles et al. (2014). After an initial round of open coding, codes were organized by theme, condensing some codes, and creating sub-codes to allow for more granular examination of some ideas.

To protect the confidentiality of participants we shared aggregated results with participant organizations via email, but due to the pandemic we did not meet in person.

Results

In interviews we frequently found responses to the pandemic that demonstrated coping and adaptation, along with issues that negatively impacted OR. We illustrate our adapted model using our IPA case study. In the interest of brevity, we highlight only novel findings; see Table 4 for a brief synopsis of novel results (see Appendix 1 for complete results).

Table 3. Grouped* Participant Demographics (n=18)

	Ranged demographics	
	(#)	(% or average)
Gender		
Female	17	94%
Male	1	6%
Age	24–62	37 years
Race/ethnicity		
African American	1	5%
Mixed race	1	5%
White	16	89%
Length of employment	6 months to 37 years	8 years

* Participants were promised confidentiality to encourage them to speak freely, so we are unable to provide individual details such as age and years of service which might identify participants.

1. Financial Resources

At the time of the interviews (June–October, 2020) most agencies had manageable financial impacts. Some programs reported revenue losses from in-person service contract programs; most losses were temporary (though still significant) as agencies eventually found ways to safely reopen programs.

Grants for hazard pay for in-person staff, pandemic-related supplies (PPE, cleaning supplies, etc.), and technology (laptops for remote staff, tech for clients without access) were extremely helpful for our sample of agencies, increasing the range of adaptation options open to them. However, initially grantmakers also hampered agency agility through complicated application processes, long lead-times in receiving funding and through existing grant provisions requiring in-person service provision. Changes by grantmakers to streamline processes and loosen restrictions aided agency adaptation.

Private donations from individual donors and small businesses are important to IPA agencies; such funds are often used to support new or innovative programming or accomplish tasks not covered by other funders. One such use can be direct assistance payments to clients for housing or other expenses typically not allowable with more restricted monies.

A lot of times we use our general funds, which are our donations, to provide specific assistance to clients and with that money decreasing, when a client comes to me and says, ‘Can you help me pay my car payment?’ Unfortunately, no. ... So that’s impacted our clients in ways that I didn’t foresee when all of this started (Ash, manager).

2. Technical Resources & Organizational Processes

Here we discuss the contributions to OR of technological assets and the know-how to deploy it, and changes in organization and procedures.

a. Technological assets & deployment. The adaptation in IPA services from a communication technology perspective has been revolutionary, and highlighting these changes is a large part of why we chose Tengblad’s model. These agencies went from pure in-person service models pre-pandemic to a purely virtual model at peaks in the U.S. pandemic, to a hybrid model with clients able to choose in-person or virtual services at less intense pandemic periods. This has been a large operational and cultural shift for these agencies that was quickly completed,

Table 4. Synopsis of Novel Results

Model Category & Sub-Category	Results	Immediate Impact on Adaptation	Longer Term Impact on Resilience
<i>1. Financial Resources</i>			
Grants, service contracts & loans	Grants for hazard pay for in-person staff, pandemic-related supplies & technology very helpful. Some grant processes/requirements hampered speed of agency adaptation. Some losses of in-person service contract program revenues due to pandemic. No use of loans reported in sample.	+/-	Unknown
Fundraising	Major fundraising events canceled or moved to virtual; impact unclear at time of interview; some programs slightly up, some slightly down.	Less discretionary funding for rental/bill assistance for clients	Unknown
<i>2. Technical Resources & Organizational Processes</i>			
Technological assets & deployment	Agencies swiftly moved to telehealth as pandemic shutdowns lingered; grants for technology facilitated the shift. Concern over digital divide and access for all clients.	Benefit for some clients; mixed feelings for staff	
Technical know-how	Few agencies with dedicated IT staff resulted in inclusive teams of volunteer staff members making collaborative decisions.	+	+
Organization & procedures	Work schedules changed to protect staff and clients. Work-from-home policies adopted (esp. in regard to protecting client confidentiality). Greater use of communication tech to maintain staff cohesion. Tension over differences between in-person shelter staff and remote staff.	Some work schedules not sustainable long-term. Virtual staff relations helpful, but not same as daily in-person interactions	Work-from-home may help attract employees in future. Staff cohesion in virtual / hybrid organizations is longer-term issue

<i>3. Social Resources</i>			
Followership & relationships with employees	Majority of managers reported special efforts to care for employees (tech-enabled communication, regular check-ins, more efforts to encourage non-work-focused conversation); concerns over employee stress levels & burnout. Examples of inclusive decision making and increased top-down and bottom-up communication.	+/-; difficult to negotiate differences in exposure between in-person shelter staff vs. remote staff	Increased communication and inclusive decision making could strengthen OR; More focus on employee wellbeing could reduce burnout/turnover
Relationships with partners	Community partners such as healthcare systems, police (in some cases less likely to arrest/hold perpetrators), courts (cases delayed leaving clients in limbo for divorce, custody, and felony cases) faced own pandemic challenges and were sometimes less available/responsive	+/-; depended on partners and pre-pandemic strength of relationship	Joint preparation for emergencies could help establish mutual goals to increase systemic/ community resilience
<i>4. Mission & Values</i>			
Mission	Increased focus on short-term mission (supporting clients) vs. longer-term mission of working to end abuse (including work with community partners such as police and courts, as well as community outreach and education efforts). Some efforts to increase virtual outreach & education.	Allowed for greater focus in crisis	Unknown; potentially negative if longer-term mission is lost
<i>5. Environmental & Contextual Factors</i>			
Societal values, norms & movements	Black Lives Matter movement, anti-immigrant policies, etc. added to agency priorities.	Added to organizational priorities, requiring additional resources	Potential to improve staff, client, and community service/relations longer-term

largely successfully, during a global emergency. It is one of the areas of greatest adaptation for IPA agencies and will impact their service reach and ability to accommodate client needs far into the future.

The shift to telehealth happened within days to weeks of lockdowns in our sample, greatly increasing flexibility with minimal disruption in critical services. Telehealth has not merely been a replacement for in-person services but in some cases has additional benefits for clients.

Clients are missing far less appointments because it's from the comfort of their own home. They don't have to travel. They don't have to worry about gas money. They don't have to worry about their kids having daycare or contacting the abuser to help them out for an hour with the kids or dropping them off so that they can go to counseling, and they drive all the way out to [city name]. I mean we're not close to a lot of people and so that telehealth has been amazing. I mean absolutely amazing. We're offering [support] groups via telehealth now, those are super well attended which is different and so our goal is to keep that around forever. I mean it's fantastic (Hazel, manager).

Telehealth was not seen as a panacea, however. Some participants worried some survivors may have technological barriers (such as wi-fi access or bandwidth limitations) or a lack of technological comfort. Interviewees reported several solutions to bridge the tech gap—giving survivors phones or tablets, finding free wi-fi locations and coaching clients through technical issues.

b. Technical know-how. Many IPA agencies lack dedicated technical staff. In our sample technical know-how largely came from managers and frontline staff organizing on-the-fly problem-solving teams. These organizations also had to find creative ways to accomplish their goals within existing technical packages they could afford and start using immediately. Not having specific technical staff in some cases meant technical decisions were made with wider staff participation.

We had representation from advocates, from residential...from therapy. [There] was a small team of people who chose the virtual platform that we use and that wasn't me as a supervisor who was doing it. We had the people who were gonna be using it every day figure out what they wanted and then we went with that (Cedar, manager).

c. Organization & procedures. These organizations instituted many changes in work scheduling during the pandemic to ensure services could be maintained with limited in-person staff exposure. Only one organization reported a widespread exposure of essential staff to COVID-19 followed by mandatory quarantine, requiring other staff and management to step in to maintain continuity of essential services. One organization paired up essential workers to limit exposure; if one of the pair became infected, both would quarantine, but other paired in-person staff would be unaffected and able to step in to provide coverage. Another organization had essential shelter staff work solo for 30 to 38-hour shifts for weeks to avoid widespread exposure. Such schedule changes were a key response to the pandemic.

Changes in usage patterns for existing communication technologies enabled isolated staff to maximize communication among staff, an important aspect of adaptation. The technologies have filled an important gap, but most do not see them as a complete replacement for in-person communication.

We have phones, we have email, we have text, and we have...a chat program within in my office which we just got at the beginning of the pandemic—which has been great—but it's not the same as running over to your coworker's office and processing this...traumatic event your client just went through (Magnolia, frontline staff).

3. Social Resources

Lacking the financial and technical resources many resilient for-profit organizations may have, strong relationships and networks are often the bedrock of nonprofits. Although social resources may be more difficult to measure, they may also be the hardest to develop. Money can be raised in a day (with luck and strong fundraising strategies), technical resources can be purchased quickly (though they may take longer to integrate and function), but it takes time to change a workplace climate and build relationships.

a. Followership and relationships with employees. In an emergency, frontline workers are often those enacting the mission of the organization, which can suffer if they are disaffected, feel unsupported or unappreciated. Tengblad (2018b) therefore defines followership as “work engagement, responsibility, cooperation and trustworthiness” but also sees employees as “co-producers of leadership and co-creators of workplace conditions” (p. 46).

Negotiating the differences in exposure and work between shelter workers and staff working from home was complicated for many agencies. Staffed 24 hours a day, every day, shelters do not allow for remote work, whereas many other IPA employees could and did work exclusively from home at times during the pandemic. Division between shelter workers and other IPA staff are not uncommon, as shelter workers tend to have less training, fewer degrees, lower pay (often working just part-time and/or multiple other low-paying jobs) and more difficult hours (weekends, holidays, nights, etc.). Shelter workers in most agencies spoke of pushing management to address their safety concerns, as managers' workspaces are often not co-located with shelters. Shelter workers in some agencies felt top management did not understand the daily exposures and risks they faced.

I mean, quite frankly I was frustrated. I was mad. And that was why I said, you know, 'This is crazy! ...We want our voice heard. Why are we still meeting with clients [in person]? It doesn't make any sense. ...Why am I expected to meet a client in my small office [when other staff groups have stopped in-person contact]?' (Willow, frontline staff).

It's doubtful any organization addresses all employee concerns perfectly during an emergency, but we did hear examples of adaptive behaviors often cited in OR literature, like inclusion and support (Tengblad, 2018b).

Our [top manager] had a very strong belief that the person who pushes the broom buys the broom. ...honestly everything that we did—it was with both

that administration side and representation from all the different areas (Cedar, manager).

c. Relationships with partners. IPA agencies were buoyed by the response of some of their partner organizations and stymied by others. IPA agencies typically work closely with police and courts, as well as schools, landlords, and hospitals on immediate issues and the longer-term goal of ending abuse. Agencies tried to continue these inter-agency efforts during the pandemic but often found community partners struggled to engage. “We had a meeting...no one came” (Cedar, manager).

We specifically heard a lot about negative impacts to IPA resilience due to pandemic-related issues in police, courts, and housing-related entities. For example, housing advocacy work was greatly impacted by the pandemic as state housing agencies could be difficult to contact and some landlords were unwilling to risk exposure to show properties. During early lockdown periods this caused housing delays for IPA clients, potentially forcing these clients and their children to stay longer in emergency shelters (an experience many families find stressful) or living with their abusive partner.

Other agencies reported that strong pre-pandemic relationships with local landlords helped them overcome these issues, a strong sign of how well-developed relationships positively impacted an agency’s resilience.

The landlord would be like ‘Oh yeah, I trust you so... I’ll open [the property] up. You guys close it up. I’ll be there at that time. I’ll see you walk in. I’ll wave and I’ll leave.’ And I’m like, ‘This is fantastic. I’m loving this, yeah!’ So, we have some great landlords that we’re working with (Olive, manager).

4. Mission and Values

IPA agencies have always had a dual mission—a short-term focus on supporting survivors of abuse and a longer-term mission to end intimate partner abuse. While we did not detect large shifts in overall mission the pandemic seems to have, at times, caused agencies to focus on near-term survival and immediate client and staff needs, while focus on their longer-term mission waned in the most extreme phases of the pandemic.

IPA agencies have traditionally had strong values around client empowerment and confidentiality. We found some change in these areas, but perhaps in ways that will ultimately increase resilience. With telehealth, advocates were no longer in complete control of client confidentiality; clients needed to decide where, how and when to communicate. This change is in line with the empowerment philosophy present in most IPA agencies; ultimately, more fully informed, actively participating clients may more evenly distribute the responsibility for confidentiality and reshape it in ways that clients deem important.

Analysis also indicated increased agency focus on staff wellbeing.

So, making sure that we are still serving our survivors to the best of our ability, but yet still keeping our staff safe. Because if [staff] are not safe, then we’re still not helping our survivors, right? So, it’s kind of that balancing act (Olive, manager).

5. Contextual Factors

Our model (see Figure 1) acknowledges organizations are often dealing with complex issues in addition to emergencies. We found evidence that some participating organizations were impacted by their geographic location and by social movements occurring simultaneously with the pandemic. One example of this is the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Many agencies spoke about working to address concerns raised by the BLM movement during the pandemic, which required additional resources (time, effort, thought, etc.).

In our case study, we found one additional factor impacting organizational resilience: time. Resilience in longer-lasting emergencies may have different dimensions than resilience in shorter-term disasters. Longer-term disasters, such as pandemics, may cause fatigue or may spur new and deeper kinds of adaptation and resilience.

I think in the beginning...most of my frontline staff was like 'Oh, it's gonna be a few weeks. It's gonna be a month max. It's not a big deal we'll get through it.' ...as the time kept going, they started realizing, 'no, this might be more longer term.' And I think they started adapting relatively well to it, I feel like (Olive, manager).

Discussion

Ensuring nonprofits are resilient in crises is crucial to ensuring that many societal needs continue to be met even in emergencies. OR in nonprofits is a building block of community resilience. Evaluating resilience in nonprofits can increase preparedness in the sector and, by extension, the communities they serve.

This study presents several insights for nonprofits. The adapted model provides a holistic framework that covers areas of nonprofit resilience that previous nonprofit OR research did not, and it highlighted a wider range of adaptation in IPA agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall model is widely applicable across the nonprofit sector as OR across these organizations is impacted by quality of financial, social and technical resources and focus on mission and values. However, the subcategories developed in this study apply most closely to the IPA sector and may be most useful to closely related nonprofits, such as those focusing on sexual assault, substance use issues and other human-service nonprofits. Less closely related nonprofits are encouraged to modify subcategories to best reflect their organizations and ties to their communities and contexts. Consideration of an organization's wider context (geographic location and social values, norms, and movements) should likewise be applicable to a wide range of nonprofits.

Communication technology was a key factor in how IPA agencies adapted in the COVID-19 pandemic, similar to increased technology use documented among social workers (Mishna et al., 2020). Not only did adding virtual services enable these organizations to continue to fulfill their mission during this extended crisis, it also allowed them to expand service to more clients, such as those with transportation or childcare issues. Ultimately, this shift aligns with IPA agencies' empowerment philosophy by allowing survivors to make their own decisions about which communication modalities are safe for them in their specific situation. Greater use of technology also increased staff safety and mobility in the pandemic.

We see the increased use of technology as a vehicle to provide virtual services to clients as one of the greatest success stories in IPA adaptation to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is not an isolated trend; many types of nonprofits have shifted to technology to serve clients virtually

(Mishna et al., 2020; Newby & Branyon, 2021); however, given IPA agency concerns about confidentiality and client safety, the quick move to telehealth was perhaps even more remarkable. This shift has the potential to change service paradigms in these organizations and perhaps, over a longer time span, transform how agencies provide services to address IPA, and even transform the IPA system itself.

Adaptations in work organization and procedures, such as creating more flexible work schedules and work-from-home policies, maintained and in some cases expanded client service and helped protect staff during the pandemic. Ultimately such adaptations may better position these nonprofits to compete with for-profit employers who had some of these policies in place prior to the pandemic.

Our model also highlighted social resources and how these relationships helped and hampered agency resilience. The pandemic-inspired shift toward valuing employee well-being as well as client service could help reduce staff turnover and potentially create agencies that are stronger and more resilient. Relationships with some partners, such as courts and police, caused greater stress for our sample of agencies and their clients, highlighting the networked and contextualized nature of resilience (Magis, 2010). Nonprofit relationships, internal and external, and their impact on OR during the pandemic should be examined for successes and failures as lessons learned may then be used to create opportunities to strengthen networks and partnerships for the next crisis.

This study confirms findings from previous nonprofit OR research which show the importance of financial resources during crises (Chen, 2021; Searing et al., 2021). Given the timing of our interviews (from June to October 2020) we provide a snapshot showing relatively stable funding based on pre-pandemic grant cycles and some increased grants specifically targeted to support this nonprofit sector. Traditional large, public fundraising events were cancelled, but many agencies saw only slight declines as their deep roots in their communities, coupled with public awareness of the potential for increased IPA during a pandemic, saw some agencies increase private donations from local companies, community foundations and individuals. Similar to for-profit organizations, the flexibility and discretion associated with such unrestricted funds is an important adaptation factor for many IPA agencies and can help to cushion other changes in funding. These unrestricted funds can also give agencies 'slack' funds in case of disaster or emergency, which has been found to be a key source of resilience in for-profit organizations (Tengblad, 2018b).

Finally, our adapted model also showed how agencies are impacted by their context. Agencies in our sample were impacted by the pandemic, but also by co-occurring events like BLM. This large social movement added to agency priorities in the short-term but also represented a longer-term opportunity to build better relations with staff, clients, and communities of color. These strengthened social resources can improve agency service within these communities, and ultimately serve as a resource for longer-term resilience for IPA agencies. Our model specifically addresses these contextual factors which were not explicitly present in other OR models we examined (Searing et al., 2021; Tengblad, 2018b).

Strengths

By looking across eight different organizations we were able to examine a wider variety of organizations and OR behaviors than might have been seen in a more in-depth, single organization case study. We used a convenience sample and snowball sampling within the participant organizations, allowing us to collect data during an emergency from both managerial and frontline perspectives. Studying one to two organizations in depth was not feasible as most IPA organizations were occupied managing operations in a pandemic.

Limitations

This was a small study of nonprofit IPA staff and managers in the Northern Midwest of the United States conducted during a global pandemic. It may not be representative of how other IPA nonprofits, or nonprofits in general responded to the pandemic; a representative, nationwide sample may have found different results.

We utilized snowball sampling within organizations, with original contacts sometimes choosing both managerial and frontline staff for interviews. Some managers said they chose staff who were outspoken, but others may have chosen staff they felt would be supportive of the organization's pandemic management. A more random sample might have had different results. However participants were chosen, all interviews were conducted individually and confidentially, ensuring frontline staff and managers could express their own views without fearing retribution.

Future Directions

We hope the nonprofit field can use this adapted model of nonprofit resilience to help assess adaptation capacity and, ultimately, resilience. Any assessment should reflect the 'shifting target' of resilience, and be worked into the long-term, short-term, and everyday planning and management of nonprofits.

We also recommend organizations evaluate their adaptation actions using Béné's resilience framework to determine if the actions represent absorptive coping, adaptation, or transformation (Béné et al., 2013). We saw examples of coping—such as 30-hour shifts to limit staff exposures—which exacted a high cost on staff and were not sustainable long-term. We also saw examples of adaptation in the shift to utilizing technology to provide virtual services to clients and interact with other community partners during the pandemic. Categorizing actions may help organizations see if they are over-using one tactic (for example, coping with change while ignoring opportunities to adapt, or vice versa) and create opportunities to discuss various resilience capacities and ensure they clearly understand the resources being used and their costs to current and future resilience capacity.

Communication technologies helped bridge many distances for nonprofit organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic (Mishna et al., 2020; Newby & Branyon, 2021). Future research should look at the widespread technology adoption by IPA agencies during this period to better understand its benefits and any drawbacks, especially regarding whether it impacts relationship-building between advocates and clients. Research on telehealth in general may be applicable, but given the traumatic nature of IPA, specific research may be warranted. Research should also evaluate the impact of distance work on wellbeing and retention for IPA advocates.

Multi-level analysis should continue to be part of future research efforts. Post-pandemic studies of OR in this sector should include individual employee experience of the pandemic and its collective impact on IPA agencies and other nonprofit organizations. Understanding how agencies retained talented staff in this stressful time may highlight useful strategies and tactics for future emergencies. Similarly, community resilience depends on the resilience of many entities (Paarlberg et al., 2020). Future research should examine how nonprofits and governments maintained, or did not, relationships throughout this emergency as a learning tool for the next crisis. Nonprofit OR in this sense would benefit from incorporating more of SER's multi-level systems thinking (Olsson et al., 2004) and going beyond a tight focus only on a single organization.

Finally, time is an important dimension in any analysis of OR. The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to directly impact the U.S. for two or more years. OR in short-term shocks—such as a

fire, or tornado—is likely to be different for a much longer-term shock, such as a global pandemic. OR is studied as pre-emergency preparation, immediately-after-the-fact and as a longer-term post-shock recovery and future preparation process. SER’s holistic system orientation emphasizes the notion of complex adaptative systems, requiring an acceptance of uncertainty and change and the need for continuous learning (Biggs et al., 2012). Some OR literature speaks of the constant nature of change and adaptation in organizations (often in relation to high-reliability organizations, such as airlines and nuclear energy facilities; Tengblad, 2018a), but OR is seen by some as only necessary in response to large, discrete emergencies. IPA agencies and other nonprofits might benefit from incorporating SER concepts around the constant nature of change and adaptation, making them more prepared for ‘everyday emergencies’ as well as larger-scale events. As resilience is dynamic, it cannot be accomplished through a one-time discussion, but the capacities leading to resilience can be regularly monitored, evaluated, and nurtured.

Notes

1. There are multiple terms used to describe abuse between intimate partners, such as ‘domestic violence’ or ‘intimate partner violence.’ We use IPA as it encompasses the many different forms of abuse and does not imply the primacy of physical violence. Physical violence is not present in all abusive relationships; sometimes the threat of it is enough to induce fear. All forms of abuse impact survivors’ health and well-being, and some survivors report other forms of abuse (such as psychological abuse, sexual abuse, etc.) to be more damaging than physical abuse (see, Lacey et al., 2013; Lagdon et al., 2014).
2. Men also experience IPA and are served by IPA agencies, but they make up a much smaller percentage of clients for these agencies.
3. Staffing levels falls under Financial Resources as cutting staff (or staff salaries) is one of the fastest ways to eliminate expenses when revenues fall in for-profit and nonprofit organizations, though it has many other implications and drawbacks.
4. Like most nonprofits, IPA agencies raise or are awarded funds in one year to spend in the next fiscal cycle (meaning funds raised prior to the pandemic were what they were using at the time of this study).

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Author Biographies

Heather Bomsta is an evaluator, researcher, and consultant. She has a doctorate in community sustainability and master's degrees in psychology and management. Her areas of focus include gender, maternal and child mental health and wellbeing, resilience, intimate partner abuse, and sustainability. In addition to consulting and partnering with nonprofits on research, she has also worked and volunteered with nonprofits domestically and internationally.

John Kerr is a Professor in the Department of Community Sustainability at Michigan State University. He earned his PhD in 1990 from the Food Research Institute at Stanford University. His research addresses individual and collective action for improved natural resource management in the context of international agricultural development. He has published research on nonprofit organizations' efforts to promote improved natural resource management practices in several countries including India, China, Ghana, Nepal, and Mozambique.

Appendix 1. Complete Table of Results

Model Category & Sub-Category	Results	Immediate Impact on Adaptation	Longer Term Impact on Resilience
<i>1. Financial Resources</i>			
a. Overall financial state	Roughly equivalent to pre-pandemic at time of interviews	+	+
b. Staffing levels	Essentially stable; no reported layoffs	+	+
c. Grants, service contracts & loans	Grants for hazard pay for in-person staff, pandemic-related supplies & technology very helpful. Some grant processes/requirements hampered speed of agency adaptation. Some losses of in-person service contract program revenues due to pandemic. No use of loans reported in sample	+/-	Unknown
d. Fundraising	Major fundraising events canceled or moved to virtual; impact unclear at time of interview; some programs slightly up, some slightly down	Less discretionary funding for rental/bill assistance for clients	Unknown
<i>2. Technical Resources & Organizational Processes</i>			
a. Technological assets & deployment	Agencies swiftly moved to telehealth as pandemic shutdowns lingered; grants for technology facilitated the shift. Concern over digital divide and access for all clients	Benefit for some clients; mixed feelings for staff	
b. Technical know-how	Few agencies with dedicated IT staff resulted in inclusive teams of volunteer staff members making collaborative decisions	+	+
c. Organization & procedures	Work schedules changed to protect staff and clients. Work-from-home policies adopted (esp. in regards to protecting client confidentiality). Greater use of communication tech to maintain staff cohesion. Tension over differences between in-person shelter staff and remote staff	Some work schedules not sustainable long-term. Virtual staff relations helpful, but not same as daily in-person interactions	Work-from-home may help attract employees in future. Staff cohesion in virtual/hybrid organizations is longer-term issue
d. Technical innovation	IT benefitted many clients, but virtual children’s programs required creativity (meeting outdoors, focus on games, shorter interactions, shift to more parent counseling/support, etc.)	+	Hybrid approach could provide wider array of options for all clients

3. Social Resources

a. Followership & relationships with employees	Majority of managers reported special efforts to care for employees (tech-enabled communication, regular check-ins, more efforts to encourage non-work-focused conversation); concerns over employee stress levels & burnout. Examples of inclusive decision making and increased top-down and bottom-up communication	+/-; difficult to negotiate differences in exposure between in-person shelter staff vs. remote staff.	Increased communication and inclusive decision making could strengthen OR. More focus on employee wellbeing could reduce burnout/turnover
b. Relationships with clients	Efforts to maintain/build rapport virtually; expanded use of text, video and phone. Met with clients outside normal hours, or meeting in-person outside	+	Unknown; requires client-centered research
c. Relationships with partners	Community partners such as healthcare systems, police (in some cases less likely to arrest/hold perpetrators), courts (cases delayed leaving clients in limbo for divorce, custody, and felony cases) faced own pandemic challenges and were sometimes less available/responsive	+/-; depended on partners and pre-pandemic strength of relationship	Joint preparation for emergencies could help establish mutual goals to increase systemic/ community resilience
d. Relationships with funders	Efforts to streamline and get funds to agencies seen as positive; agencies generally reported positive interactions with funders	+	+
e. Relationships with top management & board	More communication from top management seen as mostly positive. Increased engagement from board members in fundraising and community outreach also beneficial	+	+
f. Relationships with volunteers	Severely restricted or stopped due to pandemic. Agencies reported efforts to stay in touch/engage volunteers to maintain active volunteer base once conditions allow a return	Loss of volunteers had negative impact in work hours and grant reimbursements	Unknown
g. Relationships with networks or coalitions	Technical assistance helpful. Greater communication focus mostly at executive levels; participants would have liked more cross-agency communication at all levels to gain ideas for adaptation		

h. Relationships with community	Some agencies reported increased community support	+	Unknown; requires community member research
i. Relationships with other stakeholders	n/a		
<i>4. Mission & Values</i>			
a. Mission	Increased focus on short-term mission (supporting clients) vs. longer-term mission of working to end abuse (including work with community partners such as police and courts, as well as community outreach and education efforts). Some efforts to increase virtual outreach & education	Allowed for greater focus in crisis	Unknown; potentially negative if longer-term mission is lost
b. Values	Challenging to balance client empowerment vs. staff safety; some agencies housed clients unwilling to comply with public health mandates in hotels. Responsibility for confidentiality largely shifted to clients in virtual space.	+/-; staff felt more concern for their well-being—can help maintain or increase their ability to serve clients	Unknown
<i>5. Environmental & Contextual Factors</i>			
a. Geographic location & environment	Agencies in better-resourced communities had more support, increasing their adaptation options. Natural disaster in addition to pandemic increased resilience challenges for one agency	Differed among agencies	Awareness of strengths/ challenges in location/environment in strategic, annual and disaster planning could provide important insights and enable contingency planning Potential to improve staff, client and community service/relations longer-term
b. Societal values, norms & movements	Black Lives Matter movement, anti-immigrant policies, etc. added to agency priorities	Added to organizational priorities, requiring additional resources	