

When times get tough: Staff experiences of a trauma informed culture in challenging times



Sierra McGee¹, Melissa Currie¹, Kim Arbeau¹, Tom Ketelaars¹
¹Child and Parent Resource Institute



INTRODUCTION

Organizational resilience has gained increasing prominence in recent years as a way to understand how healthcare organizations respond to unexpected disruptions (Napier et al., 2024).



Organizational resilience is the capacity of an organization to anticipate, adapt to, and recover from adversity while maintaining a safe, stable, and nurturing environment for a trauma-responsive workforce, though definitions vary across the literature (Brown et al., 2023; Kantur & Iseri-Say, 2015).

OBJECTIVES

To identify models and tools of organizational resilience and examine their impact on measuring staff well-being after an adverse event.

METHODS

A non-systematic review of studies published from 2015 to the present was conducted across multiple databases using keywords such as “resiliency framework” AND “health system” OR “organization.” Studies were included if they either proposed a framework for addressing organizational disruptions following an adverse event or described methods for rapidly assessing organizational resilience capacity.

REFERENCES

Brown, L. L., Pennings, J., Steckel, S., & Van Zyl, M. (2023). The organizational trauma resilience assessment: Methods and psychometric properties. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 15, S446-S455. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0001184>

Dominguez-Ortega, J. M., Marinissen, H., & Errea Rodriguez, M. (2026). Development and Early Validation of the Organisational Resilience Assessment Survey (ORAS): A Tool to Measure Organisational Resilience. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 34(2), e70154.

Erol, Ö., Tozan, H., Karadayi, M. A., Çakır, K., & Aydın, S. (2026). From inherent capacities to resilient systems: a multi-dimensional framework for assessing health system resilience. *BMC Health Services Research*, 26(1), Article 302. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-026-14027-x>

Kaczmarek, K., Pashia, A., Inusah, A. S., Li, X., & Qiao, S. (2024). Organizational resilience and its implications for healthcare workers in the COVID-19 pandemic: A literature review. *medRxiv*: the preprint server for health sciences, 2024.10.10.24315244. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2024.10.10.24315244>

Kantur, D., & Say, A. I. (2015). MEASURING ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE: A SCALE DEVELOPMENT. *Journal of Business Economics and Finance*, 4(3). <https://doi.org/10.17261/Pressacademia.2015313066>

Khanbeiki, A., Sora, B., Mohebi, M., & Boada-Grau, J. (2025). Brief organisational resilience scale (BORS): Development and validity in Spain and Austria. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 33(3), e70063.

Kim, Y. (2020). Organizational resilience and employee work-role performance after a crisis situation: exploring the effects of organizational resilience on internal crisis communication. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 32(1-2), 47-75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2020.1765368>

Napier, E., Liu, S. Y. H., & Liu, J. (2024). Adaptive strength: Unveiling a multilevel dynamic process model for organizational resilience. *Journal of Business Research*, 177, Article 114334. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114334>

Safi, M., Thudis, B. R., Brandt, F., & Clay-Williams, R. (2022). The application of resilience assessment grid in healthcare: A scoping review. *PloS one*, 17(11), e0277289. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0277289>

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions or additional information feel free to contact Sierra McGee at Sierra.McGee@Ontario.ca.

A literature search was conducted that identified the following models of organizational resiliency.

RESILIENCY MODEL	DESCRIPTION, KEY COMPONENTS
The Resilience Assessment Grid (RAG)	The RAG enables the production of an organizational “resiliency” profile via four resiliency “abilities”: responding, monitoring, learning, anticipating. The RAG does not include a resiliency “score”, with authors stating, “resiliency cannot be measured”. Rather, RAG profiles are intended to support understanding of what enables resilience (Safi et al., 2022).
Health System Resilience Assessment Framework (HSRAF)	THE HSRAF considers nine dimensions of a health system that make up “inherent capacities”, which are transformed into adaptive capacities during disruptions, where organizations utilize them to action. Service delivery was identified as being the most impactful dimension of health system resilience, which examines quality and continuity of care during disruptions (Erol et al., 2026).
Brief Organizational Resilience Scale (BORS)	The BORS is a 9-item scale consolidated from two measures that can be applied to multiple sectors. The BORS assesses organizational resilience from two key perspectives: an organization’s ability to recover after an adverse event and its capacity to implement processes that support employee resilience in the workplace (Khanbeiki et al., 2025).
Organizational Resilience Assessment Survey (ORAS)	The ORAS is 36-item measurement tool confirmed by a factorial analysis designed to assess organizational resilience through six “resilience” factors. “Culture” was identified as the factor with the strongest “profile”, indicating that staff principles, values, common purpose, commitment, and ability to adopt a growth mindset are key elements to retaining resilience when measuring the impact of an adverse event (Dominguez-Ortega et al., 2026).

IMPACT ON TRAUMA-INFORMED ORGANIZATIONS

Multiple frameworks, including those presented here, offer practical strategies to reduce the negative impacts of disruptions on organizations. They support organizations by:

- **Improved understanding of staff experiences** during and after organizational disruptions.
- **Strengthened employee–organization relationships** through enhanced skills, capacity, care quality, and performance (Kim, 2020; Kaczmarek et al., 2024).
- **More effective communication** between staff and leadership, along with increased awareness of available resources to address adverse events (Erol et al., 2026).
- **Enhanced awareness, understanding, and protection against the impact of vicarious trauma** on staff and organizations from burnout and compassion fatigue (Kaczmarek et al., 2024).

DISCUSSION

Key Takeaway: Four resilience frameworks were identified as useful for measuring organizational resilience during disruptions. At CPRI, these models can support a trauma-informed culture by preparing staff for adverse events, monitoring impacts, and guiding targeted supports through assessment tools. The ORAS appears particularly promising, as organizational culture emerged as the most influential factor.

Limitations: This review was not systematic; some relevant studies may have been missed. Only English-language literature was included.