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The Role of Nonprofit Organizations Serving Vulnerable Populations During Disasters

Joy Dvornicich
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Joy Dvornicich

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Review Committee

Dr. Julian Muhammad, Committee Chairperson,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Ian Cole, Committee Member,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Michael Brewer, University Reviewer,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2022

Abstract

The Role of Nonprofit Organizations Serving Vulnerable Populations During Disasters

by

Joy Dvornicich

MPH, West Chester University, 2007

BS, University of Scranton, 1993

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

August 2022

Abstract

Disasters can strike any population, but research has shown that poor, disabled, medically underserved people and children are more adversely affected than the general population. This qualitative descriptive case study aimed to understand better nonprofit organizations' (NPO) impact on vulnerable populations during disasters. Data was collected through semistructured interviews with representatives of NPOs from a southeastern city in Pennsylvania whose clients are vulnerable populations. This qualitative case study was based on Weisbrod's theory of government failure. The 4Cs of communicate, collaborate, coordinate, and cooperate were investigated through semistructured interviews and a review of secondary data. The research questions were designed to investigate the funding sources, the collaboration between NPOs and the governments, and the resources and services provided to vulnerable populations during and post disaster. The efforts of the NPOs, directly and indirectly, contribute to the immediate and long-term health of the community and should be considered an essential branch of the unified command structure during disasters. How local, state, and federal governments support NPOs during pre-, actual, and post disaster operations were also examined. The importance of understanding the function of NPOs is relevant to the discipline of emergency management, primarily since most studies focus on the local, county, and state entities. This study contributes to positive social change by providing research that will better inform local, state, and federal emergency management sectors of the meaningful impact of NPOs in serving vulnerable communities during disasters.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my father and mother. My father was a U.S. Navy Veteran, a public servant, a volunteer, and a giver. He taught me to pay attention to detail and serve my community. Although I wish he was with me to witness my graduation as I am the first in our family to earn a Ph.D., I know he was proud of me and knew I would finish my journey and achieve my goal. My mother was a career nurse and a caregiver for more than her immediate family. She continued to work while battling Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma and never gave in or gave up. She taught me perseverance, to set boundaries, and keep moving forward no matter the obstacle.

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To the nonprofit organization staff who participated in the study, you have provided valuable information to help continue the research in future studies. I am grateful for your trust in me, and I have learned a great deal about your missions and sacrifices that better our communities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Through necessity or a sense of obligation, nonprofit organizations (NPOs) have stepped into filling the gaps in available services caused by government administrative failures (Salamon & Toepler, 2015). This study addressed the role of NPOs in community disaster response and recovery and their impact on vulnerable populations. The importance of understanding the function of NPOs is relevant to the discipline of emergency management, primarily since most studies focus on the local, county, and state entities. This study contributes to positive social change by providing research that will better inform local, state, and federal emergency management of the meaningful role of NPOs in serving vulnerable communities during disasters. This chapter discusses the literature that has addressed the roles of NPOs in disaster response and recovery and the gaps in knowledge to which this study contributes. The research problem and purpose of this study are presented as well as the research questions.

Background

“All disasters are local” is a common phrase in the discipline of emergency management (Serino, 2011). Disasters have historically been handled at the local level, with assistance from the states if requested, and eventually followed by the federal government. The first case of the federal government offering financial assistance during a disaster was in 1803, when aid was provided to a New Hampshire town devastated by fire (Haddow et al., 2017). The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was established on March 31, 1979, after President Carter presented Reorganization Plan Number 3 to Congress (Haddow et al., 2017). FEMA had oversight of emergency

preparedness, mitigation, and response activities. Although the federal government can provide resources to the states pre-, during, and post disaster, the Constitution gives the state government primary responsibility for the public's health and safety (Haddow et al., 2017).

“Arrive First, Leave Last” is a familiar saying about Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD; Center for Disaster Philanthropy, 2019). NPOs committed to emergency management are a subgroup of VOADs (FEMA, 2015). Voluntary organizations are often the first on the scene during a disaster because many organizations are community-based and can mobilize quickly and provide immediate assistance. Voluntary organizations have been on the scene of natural and human-made disasters to aid individuals, families, and communities. VOADs have been at the frontline of helping individuals and communities impacted by disasters since the Johnstown Floods of 1889 (Johnstown Area Heritage Association, 2021). Voluntary organizations have developed the public's trust by establishing themselves as part of the community. VOADs are community-based, flexible, innovative, and resourceful and can provide services and build capacity during and after disasters (FEMA, 2015).

Prior research on this topic has shown the importance of NPOs in disaster response and recovery. Davis et al. (2010) conducted a systematic literature review to collect data on the combined effects of a disaster and living in an area with existing health or health care disparities on a community's health, access to health resources, and quality of life. The authors found a gap in the literature that had not captured the strain of health and health care disparities before and after a disaster in medically underserved

communities. Disaster studies and policies should account for differences in health profiles and access to care before and after a disaster. Sledge and Herschel (2018) examined nongovernmental entities' (NGEs) role in disaster response and recovery. The authors surveyed 115 NGEs engaged in disaster response and conducted semistructured interviews with staff from NGEs and government agencies in post disaster areas in five different geographies. The authors determined that NGEs can adapt quickly and provide essential services to populations often overlooked or wary of interacting with the government. The authors also noted a high level of variation in locally embedded nonprofit resources across counties (Sledge & Herschel, 2018, p.440).

Local and state governments rely on federal assistance; however, research gaps identify how disaster aid is distributed to those with unequal susceptibility to harm (Domingue & Emrich, 2019). The authors found a gap in the literature that had not captured the strain of health and health care disparities before and after a disaster in medically underserved communities (Domingue & Emrich, 2019, pp. 897-898). Peek (2017) focused on the use of automated health programs to seek social support for vulnerable populations. The research concluded that social support improves health outcomes and promotes healthy behaviors. Davis et al. (2010) found a gap in the literature regarding the strain of health and health care disparities in medically underserved communities before and after a disaster. A study of the 2017 Thomas Fire (Mendez et al., 2020) exposed how response and recovery resources served the wealthier communities and ignored the undocumented immigrant population's needs. The local NPOs and volunteers provided essential services such as emergency information in

languages other than English, labor protection, and disaster relief funds to vulnerable populations. The study conducted by Mendez et al. (2020) also highlighted the inadequate emergency response information and lack of oversight of occupational health and safety for those of low socioeconomic status who provided essential services. These individuals were required to work due to a lack of financial reserves. The undocumented immigrant communities were also impacted by the disruption in transportation services, exploitive housing practices, and ineligibility to receive federal aid (Mendez et al., 2020, p.54).

My study helped to clarify the role of NPOs in their community during and after a disaster. I also aimed to understand how NPOs contribute to the health and recovery of their communities.

Problem Statement

Obtaining federal assistance can be a complicated process. For example, suppose a Presidential disaster declaration may be necessary to assist in the recovery of an impacted area. In that case, the State or Indian tribal government will request a joint Federal, State/Tribal Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) through the FEMA Regional Office (FEMA, 2022a). First, the PDA team will thoroughly assess the impacted area to determine the extent of the disaster and the types of federal assistance that may be needed. Then, a declaration request is sent to the President through the FEMA Regional Office within 30 days of the onset of the disaster, once the State or Indian tribal government determines that the damage exceeds their resources (FEMA, 2022a). If there is a denial from the FEMA Regional Office or the President, an appeal

may be submitted within 30 days of the denial notice (Congressional Research Service, 2022). Once approved, aid is distributed to the state Emergency Management Agency (EMA) and filtered to the affected counties and local governments (FEMA, 2011). Completing the required steps and waiting for the President's decision may take valuable time.

Politics may also play a role in the disaster declaration. Major disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, or acts of terrorism will receive federal aid. However, some examples in U.S. history have shown that political interests may determine whether smaller states receive federal dollars or need to find their resources. For example, in 1994, President Clinton denied federal assistance for disaster recovery for floods that caused \$6.7 million in damages on the South Side of Chicago (Roberts, 2013). Illinois is a solidly Democratic state and was not considered valuable to Clinton's re-election efforts, whereas President Clinton needed to win Louisiana. A year later, President Clinton provided aid to New Orleans for the May 1995 Southeast Louisiana and Southern Mississippi Flood, which caused \$10 million in damage (Roberts, 2013). The Congressional Research Service (2017) found that from 1974 to 2016, presidents denied requests for disaster relief an average of 2.9 times per year during nonelection years and 2.1 times per year during a presidential election. Disaster assistance used as a political tool means that federal aid may depend on many factors for a disaster area's residents. Therefore, states, counties, and communities must plan on providing for themselves. Because of the insecurity of federal assistance to the heterogeneous communities during disasters, NPOs have filled the gaps left by the government during response and

recovery. I focused my research on the unique role that NPOs have in disaster management, serving vulnerable populations.

Types of Federal Assistance

Federal assistance in presidentially declared disasters is in three categories: assistance for individuals and businesses, public assistance, and hazard mitigation assistance (FEMA, n.d.-a). Assistance for individuals and businesses includes disaster housing, unemployment assistance, grants, legal services, crisis counseling, and tax relief. Public assistance includes funds for repairing or replacing essential public systems and facilities. The third type of assistance, hazard mitigation, includes support for measures that permanently eliminate or reduce an area's long-term vulnerability (FEMA, n.d.-b). The first type of federal aid, resources for individuals, is where the NPOs fill the community gap during and post disaster.

Prior Research

NPOs play a significant role in promoting social integration, creating employment opportunities, and providing goods and services to the most vulnerable people in the community after an outbreak of disaster (Bartram et al., 2017). The Centers for Disaster Philanthropy (2019) suggested that, in 2016, the NPO sector accounted for at least 5.4% of the United States' gross domestic product (GDP), representing at least \$850 billion in contributions to the U.S. economy. Data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics (2020) showed that approximately 1.54 million nonprofits were registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in 2016, an increase of 4.5% from 2006. Katz (2018) contended that NPOs have grown to have strong networks, influence, and robust supply

chains that help them address the different levels of emergencies in society. Lassa (2018) asserted that the NPOs address social needs that the public or private sectors could not satisfy due to profit motives. To effectively respond to calamities in society, NPOs are organizations with the ability to mobilize more resources for relief purposes (Cabral et al., 2019). Also, the operations of NPOs are not determined by tax or revenue collected from taxpayers but by personal and charitable donations (Laska et al., 2018). The primary role that NPOs have in the community is to help society respond to calamities and natural disasters. In addition, NPOs are vital in assisting vulnerable people in settling and recovering after a disaster outbreak (Carrasco & O'Brien, 2018).

Purpose of the Study

The central point of my qualitative study was the impact of NPOs on vulnerable populations during disasters. I focused on the NPO's role in helping vulnerable individuals reacclimate during and after a disaster, the challenges faced, and the government's role in supporting NPOs to achieve their relief mission. Next, I analyzed the differences between the NPOs located in a city in southeastern Pennsylvania (PA) and their roles in community disaster response and recovery. Disaster research has identified race, socioeconomic status, age, disability, and language proficiency as characteristics of disparate exposures and disaster impact (Domingue & Emrich, 2019). Finally, I addressed the impact of the NPOs on the vulnerable populations in a southeastern city in PA, referred to as "City" in this study. This study defined vulnerable populations as low socioeconomic status (SES), low incomes, or impoverished. However, individuals who are often vulnerable due to income status, for example, may also be vulnerable due to

age, gender, disability status, and level of disaster exposure (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2017).

The NPOs studied serve the elderly, low-income, disabled, individuals who are not proficient in English, individuals or families experiencing homelessness, and young mothers or single parents. The importance of understanding the function of NPOs is relevant to the discipline of emergency management, primarily since most studies focus on the local, county, and state entities. For example, the city where the study is conducted has more than 30 NPOs serving vulnerable communities (see Guidestar, n.d.). When disasters occur, these NPOs must sustain essential services to those they serve and engage in disaster relief and other unanticipated activities to serve those impacted.

Research Questions

For this study, the roles of NPOs in disaster response and recovery for the vulnerable populations in the City of southeastern PA were explored. The central questions framing this research are:

RQ1: How many and which essential services do NPOs deliver to the vulnerable population in the City in southeastern PA during and post disaster?

RQ2: Which sources of funding are utilized by NPOs, and how many resources are needed to sustain services throughout and post disaster for the vulnerable populations in the City in southeastern PA?

RQ3: In what ways, and to what extent, do local, state, and federal governments support NPOs during pre-, mid-, and post disaster?

Theoretical Framework

Primary research involves investigating variables to verify a theory (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). This study was based on Weisbrod's theory of government failure. Weisbrod (1975) suggested that the government delivers services to a homogenous population. Individuals dissatisfied with the availability or quality level will seek services through nonprofits. Preferences for quality or quantity of services, or those that serve cultural differences, are examples of government failure to meet the minority (Paarlberg & Zuhlke, 2019). Weisbrod's theory begins with market failure, which is the market's inability to supply the necessary goods or services (Salamon & Toepler, 2015). The market produces goods or services for customers able and willing to pay for them. According to Olson's (1965) analysis of collective action, goods that can be produced through collective action are available to everyone independent of their ability to pay. Public goods must be supplied to all group members (Udén, 1993); this creates a "free-rider problem," which is a burden on a shared resource (Salamon & Toepler, 2015, p. 2159). Its use or overuse creates the problem of individuals not paying their fair share (Salamon & Toepler, 2015). The market will not invest in goods or services provided to the public at no or little cost.

Therefore, the underproduction of the quantities of goods that citizens need will lead to an undersupply of the required public goods. Government intervention is the standard prescription of classical economic theory for these market failures. Weisbrod argued that in democratic societies, the government only produces the collective goods most citizens desire (Salamon & Toepler, 2015). Individuals vote to maximize their

efficacy, and politicians determine their policies' direction to gain more votes. Therefore, politicians will tailor collective goods to the median voter's preferences, ensuring the majority's support (Salamon & Toepler, 2015). Governments are less likely to supply public goods driven by heterogeneous preferences. Societies with population diversity and heterogeneous collective goods demands are often unmet due to the government's inability to provide the supply that meets the demands; this is where the NPOs emerge to fill in the gaps left by the government and market providers.

In this study, I employed a qualitative research design. Data was collected from interviews, relevant organizational documents, and pre-existing data. This data was used to gauge the type and level of support nonprofits received from local, state, and federal governments during disasters, enabling them to serve vulnerable communities. This theoretical framework is essential for gauging the extent to which the City's vulnerable residents of PA have preferences that differ from less vulnerable communities during a disaster and whose needs are addressed by the nonprofits' service provisions.

Conceptual Framework

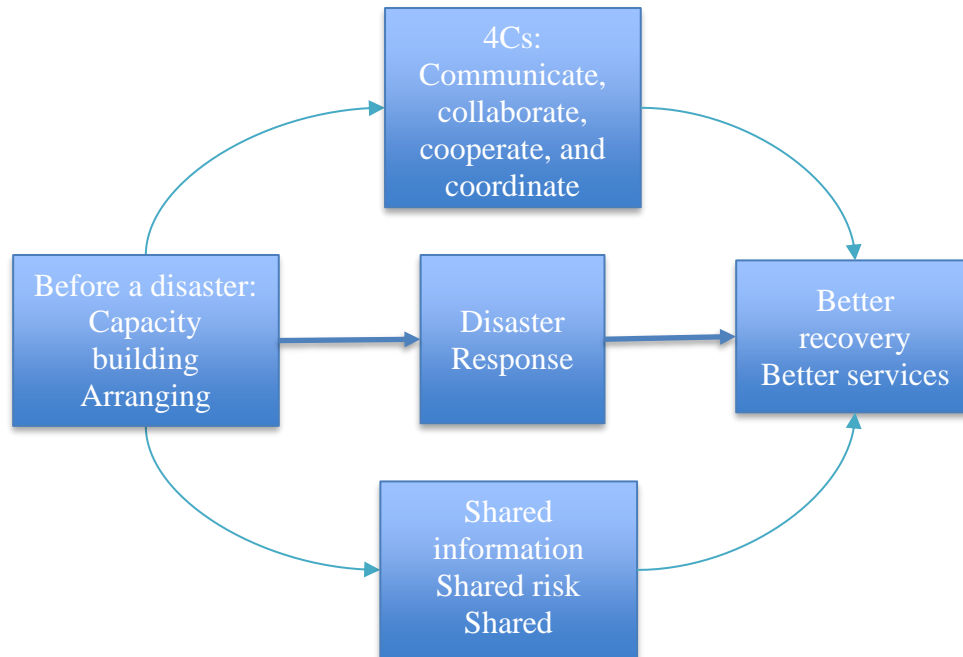
I also used a conceptual framework to explain the ability of NPOs to solve problems arising from natural disasters (Twigg & Mosel, 2017). The primary concepts in this study relate to emergencies, uncertainties, and extreme events. NPOs are critical in addressing national, state, and local problems through partnerships and negotiated efforts (Salamon & Toepler, 2015). The expansion of NPOs is divided into several stages. The first stage, from 1945-1970, is where governments seek to meet the needs of citizens through structures of interagency collaborations (Lassa, 2018). During this phase,

governments worked closely with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to identify the needs of people affected by a disaster. The role of NGOs was primarily reactive to disasters (see Lassa, 2018). The second stage is that the role of NPOs is significant and growing from 1971-1989 (Lassa, 2018). For example, the United States has seen a proliferation of many philanthropists, social entrepreneurs, and NPOs that aid in disasters (Lassa, 2018). The increase is associated with single growth engines where the NPOs concentrate their funding efforts, becoming less reactive and more proactive towards a community-based approach (Lassa, 2018). The NPOs identify a primary funding source early on and align it with their program model. Such moves help attract more resources and reduce the risks associated with diversification (Sapat et al., 2019). The third growth phase from 1990 to 2005 was characterized by using public advocacy as a critical strategy and adopting longer-term approaches. This period is marked by an inclusive targeting of the people at risk and catalyzing local change and public policy reform (Lassa, 2018). Many researchers have recognized the value of NPOs and collaborative engagements in disaster management. The challenges and complexities in emergencies have also been identified. These areas continue to be subjects of scholarly work and literature.

The focus of the NGOs was on the survivors of the disaster and how to help them (Lassa, 2018). In this study, the conceptual framework focused on the needs of vulnerable people during and after a disaster. Therefore, the concept addressed the collaborative efforts of governments and NPOs to meet the population's needs. While it may be

challenging to meet the necessities of vulnerable people affected by a disaster, providing basic needs helps protect lives.

I adopted a four-tier conceptual framework by understanding this study's underlying concepts. The second and third tiers apply after a disaster has impacted an area. The response to a disaster involving vulnerable populations requires using the 4Cs: communicate, collaborate, coordinate, and cooperate (Martin et al., 2016). For example, if the scope of the mission includes a medical response, the NPO should quickly make any evacuations, avail medicine, and transport medical staff to the scene. The response also includes sharing resources, risks, information, and commitment. An NPO meets with other NPOs responding to the same disaster at the response stage. The government also moves in and may claim jurisdiction of the disaster area. The disaster can be managed through collaboration and interagency alliances (Martin et al., 2016). The final tier offers better services and recovery after the disaster has been mitigated. This conceptual framework responds to the research questions. It provides information on funding of NPOs dealing with vulnerable populations, the collaboration between local, state, and national governments in disaster management, and essential services delivered to vulnerable populations. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework of the 4Cs.

Figure 1*Conceptual Framework***Nature of the Study**

In this research, I studied nine NPOs in a city in southeastern PA. The NPOs serve the vulnerable populations in their community, specifically, those over 50 years old, individuals experiencing homelessness, foreign-born or whose primary language is not English, individuals experiencing poverty, single mothers, or young mothers. The unit of analysis is a bounded system; each NPO has a role in disaster response and recovery in a chosen city in southeastern PA. The case study is one of five approaches presented by Creswell (2013) and is helpful as a pilot study to decide whether more extensive studies are justified (Chaiklin, 2000). Purposive sampling involves sampling units from a population based on defined inclusion criteria (Terrel, 2016). I used a

qualitative approach that involved interviews with the staff of NPOs that serve those defined as vulnerable. In addition, qualitative interviews were conducted with the directors, chief executive officers (CEOs), or designees of the NPOs to review and further clarify the agency document review (see O’Sullivan et al., 2017). The qualitative data provided information on disasters encountered in the City by the NPOs, essential services delivered to the vulnerable populations, funding sources, and the number of resources needed to sustain services throughout and post disaster.

A nonprobability sampling design can use interview questions at one agency to determine whether questions were difficult for the participants to understand (O’Sullivan et al., 2017). This design will also stimulate exploratory research and identify hypotheses for further research (O’Sullivan et al., 2017). A gap in the literature precipitates the need and importance of this research topic; therefore, this study was warranted from practitioners' and academicians' perspectives.

The City in Southeastern, PA Statistics

Due to the inequitable disaster recovery in areas with vulnerable populations, NPOs bear the weight of disaster response and recovery for the populations they serve. The statistics for the City show that within its population, approximately 13-14% are foreign-born, 20-30% of the population are 5 years old and older, speak a language other than English in the home, and 10-11% of individuals under the age of 65 have a disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). It is also important to note the disparities between the census tracts in the City. In census tracts I coded as CT4 and CT7, 14-15% and 9-10%, respectively, within the age group of 19-64 have no health insurance. The number of

individuals who lack medical insurance increases in tracts I coded as CT5 and CT6 to 29-30% and 32-33%, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). In census tracts, CT4, CT5, and CT6, the population below the poverty level is 32-33%, 36-37%, and 32-33%. In comparison, census tract CT7 has 14-15% of the population living below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). These pockets of vulnerable populations may be misrepresented when looking at the City or the Greater Area of the City concerning needed disaster response and recovery assistance.

According to Guidestar (n.d.), there are approximately 210-230 NPOs registered in the City. Out of the total number, 78 NPOs are listed as reporting assets to the IRS. In comparison, the most populated city in the United States with 8,804,190 residents (City of New York, 2022), New York City (NYC), has 21,706 registered NPOs with Guidestar (n.d.). Comparatively, the City has approximately 0.10-0.20% of the population of NYC and 1% of the number of registered NPOs in NYC. Looking at a population like the City, another is a city in southwest PA with a similar population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021a); the southwestern PA city has 290-300 registered NPOs, like the City (Great Nonprofits, n.d.). Understandably not all of these NPOs registered in each city serve vulnerable populations. The basis of this study, the NPOs registered in the City, are further evaluated in the Chapter 4 Results section.

Definitions

ALICE: ALICE is an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. The ALICE population represents working families with income above the Federal

Poverty Level but not high enough to afford basic household necessities (United Way, 2022).

Census tract: A census tract is a small statistical subdivision of a county. A unique numeric code identifies each tract, ranging from 1,200 to 8,000 inhabitants, with an average of 4,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

Heterogeneous community: The heterogeneous community refers to citizens whose needs for public goods are more diverse than what median voters demand (Lu, 2020).

Homogeneous community: The homogenous community refers to the median voters who demand collective goods.

Major disaster: A major disaster refers to any natural catastrophe or, regardless of cause, fire, flood, or explosion, which may cause loss of life, human suffering, loss of income, and property loss and damage. Disasters may disrupt governments' and communities' everyday functioning and significantly affect individuals and families (FEMA, 2019, SECT. 101).

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs): The United States (U.S.) and international NGOs represent various ideologies, political causes, religions, social issues, and interest groups. U.S. regulations that impact civil society organizations are designed to facilitate and support the formation of NGOs. In addition, U.S. regulations are designed to avoid making judgments about the value or work of any given NGO (U.S. Department of State, 2021).

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs): Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) refer to organizations that meet one section of three dozen tax codes created by Congress, which

identifies certain conditions that must be met to be exempt from paying federal income taxes. The one common condition is not paying out profits (“no part of the organization’s net earnings can inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual”). Hence the term nonprofit (National Council of Nonprofits, 2021, para. 2). The charitable nonprofits in this study fit the category of providing services that feed, heal, shelter, educate, and nurture people of every age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status.

Social capital: Social capital (SC) comes in cognitive and structural forms. Cognitive SC is the “shared trust, norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs within a community” and is more subjective than structural SC. Structural SC includes information sharing, decision making, and collective action through roles, networks, and structures guided by rules, procedures, and precedents (Kawamoto & Kim, 2019, p. 64).

Unified action: Unified action is the “synchronization, coordination, and/or integration of the activities of governmental and non-governmental entities” to achieve unity of effort (U.S. Department of Defense, 2008, p. 573).

Unified command structure: A unified command structure is multiple disciplines working through their designated managers to establish common objectives and strategies to prevent conflict or duplication of effort (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012).

Unity of effort: Unity of effort is the coordination and cooperation toward common objectives and is the product of successful unified action. The participants do not necessarily have to be part of the same command or organization (U.S. Department of Defense, 2008, p. 576).

Vulnerable population: Vulnerable populations are low socioeconomic status (SES), low incomes, or impoverished. The vulnerable population can also refer to individuals who are often at-risk due to age, gender, disability status, and level of disaster exposure.

Assumptions

I assumed that the study participants had the knowledge or experience to answer the questions thoroughly. The questions used for the interviews were drawn from the research questions and the research objectives. I framed the questions in a manner that were understandable to the respondents (see Pal, 2016). I used more complex queries for the interview questions but was virtually present to elaborate on the participants' questions. In the data collection technique, I assumed that the language used was not ambiguous. I assumed I used a language that simplifies the respondents' questions (see Pal, 2016). I also assumed that the participants' language to respond to the questions was one that I understood. I assumed neither the respondents nor I would use offensive or discriminative language. The language used by the NPO staff was standard and acceptable.

I assumed that interviews would elicit reliable responses (see Pal, 2016). I also assumed that the nine NPOs participating in the study would permit me to collect data. I collected data from as many participants as possible to reach data saturation. According to Tran et al. (2017), researchers must reach data saturation to increase the quality of collected data. Researchers are often in a dilemma about the number of interviews required to reach data saturation. Data saturation is reached when no more data can be

collected to replicate the study. I expected that as much data as possible was collected using interviews to the point that the responses would be replicated (see Tran et al., 2017). I assumed that the respondents answered the interview questions honestly. The provision of accurate answers helped me achieve the research aims and objectives and answer the research questions.

I assumed that I would be able to present the study results consistently (see Pal, 2016). The assumption was that I would analyze the qualitative data collected and present it in a way that is in congruence with existing literature. I also assumed that the tools used to analyze data would give positive results. I assumed that all the staff and volunteers of NPOs have participated in disaster response involving vulnerable populations. Therefore, the respondents would have first-hand information about providing relief to vulnerable people in Southeastern PA. Finally, I assumed that the research model used to conduct the study would apply to PA's southeastern region.

I assumed that Weisbrod's theory was applicable. The theorists argue that it is the responsibility of the government to provide services to its citizens (Paarlberg & Zuhlke, 2019). If the government is unable to provide services, the citizens seek services from NPOs. Weisbrod's theory was used to gauge the ability of the state government to provide essential services to vulnerable populations affected by disasters. I have been involved with disaster response and recovery and have witnessed NPOs assisting vulnerable populations. The assumption is that the study results are consistent with the observations and that the respondents and I are independent. Therefore, I collected data without influencing the participants in any way.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study was limited to the role of NPOs in disaster management. NPOs have been selected for the study because they play a critical role in responding to disasters. They use the "Arrive First, Leave Last" principle to ensure affected people get basic needs (Center for Disaster Philanthropy, 2019). Over the years, NPOs have been influential in disasters' first response, especially after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. After the attack, the New York Times and the New York State Office of the Attorney General reported that 1,196 charitable organizations gave a helping hand (Fischer, 2000). The figure includes the philanthropic organizations that gave immediate assistance to the people directly or through municipal, regional, state and federal agencies. Therefore, it is undisputed that NPOs have been front runners in helping people affected by disasters. In all significant attacks in the United States and globally, affected victims have reported the assistance they received from well-wishers and NPOs. In addition, evidence shows that partnerships between NPOs and FEMA agencies have helped communities during emergency times (Fischer, 2000).

The scope of the study was limited to a city in the Southeastern region of PA. The Southeastern region was selected for the study because of its prevalence of common natural disasters such as winter storms, severe storms, flooding, power outages, tropical storms, and pandemics (see NOAA National Weather Service, n.d.). Earthquakes have also been reported in the region. I focused on how some of the NPOs in Southeastern PA have helped vulnerable populations start their lives afresh after disasters. The scope of the study was also limited to vulnerable populations within the City in Southeastern PA.

These populations include the elderly, low-income, disabled, not proficient in English, young mothers or single parents, and families or individuals experiencing homelessness. These populations were selected for the study because they are the most affected during a disaster (see Carrasco & O'Brien, 2018). For example, homeless people will need somewhere to sleep if a flood occurs. The floods also destroy houses and property rendering many families homeless. During such times, NPOs have assisted the families' access to necessities such as food, shelter, and medication.

Evidence shows that outside assistance arrives as late as 24 hours, 48 hours, or even 96 hours after a disaster strikes (Khankeh et al., 2018). This estimation is based on whether the disaster struck at one point or has been ongoing. However, the vulnerable populations' peak demand for emergency services can occur in the early few hours after the disaster. NPOs have helped vulnerable populations to access immediate medical care. According to Carrasco and O'Brien (2018), vulnerable populations consume the most resources during a disaster response. Therefore, it is significant for measures to be put in place to ensure a constant supply of resources either from government agencies, well-wishers, or NPOs. If local health resources cannot handle the vulnerable populations, chronic conditions become severe, especially among the impoverished, the infirm, elders, and children. NPOs may enhance the health system's surge capacity, but it often becomes expensive in the middle of a disaster. The effect of the mismatch between health needs and resources becomes another disaster. Consider the cases of hurricanes, where resources are limited to the number of affected families. McKinney et al. (2010) quantified the number of direct and indirect deaths resulting from Hurricanes Charley,

Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne that made landfall in Florida in 2004. The authors reported elevated mortality for up to 2 months following each storm, resulting in 624 direct and indirect deaths attributable to the storm.

I sought to observe the guidance followed by NPOs when responding to vulnerable populations after a disaster. Besides answering the research questions, I was also interested in knowing whether the response for vulnerable populations coincides or if some populations were given priority. I also limited the scope to understanding the collaboration between local, state, and federal agencies with NPOs before, during, and after a disaster (see Fischer, 2000). To answer the third research question, I sought to know the interaction between government agencies and NPOs. The aim was to understand whether there are meetings to prepare for any disasters, alliances, or collaborative plans if a disaster strikes. For example, I was interested in knowing whether NPOs can enter a disaster scene without government agencies' approval. The answers to these questions helped me understand the role played by NPOs in responding to disasters and meeting the needs of vulnerable populations.

I hoped to expand the study's scope to all the NPOs in the City in Southeastern PA working with vulnerable populations. However, the study was limited to nine NPOs that assist specific vulnerable populations. Therefore, the information collected about one NPO through the interviews may not be applicable to another. This approach diversified the data sources and ensured that as much information as possible about vulnerable populations was collected. This approach also helped me to remain within the boundaries of the research questions, aims, and objectives.

This study was limited to the staff working with NPOs in the City. I did not query the vulnerable populations assisted by NPOs because it was challenging to interview them consistently. However, the enlisted NPOs have documented areas where they have played a role in helping vulnerable populations during a disaster. During the interviews, the questions asked were limited to the essential services given to vulnerable populations and the number of resources needed to sustain services throughout and post disaster.

Limitations of the Study

Based on the nature of the research questions and the increased number of disasters in Southeastern PA, this study was primarily based on the qualitative research method. The study was limited to collecting data through qualitative open-ended interview questions with the directors, chief executive officers, or designees of the NPOs. I expected statistically significant results using this technique. I also expected that the interviews would lead to a diverse sample of information used to conclude the research. Therefore, I conducted and validated the interviews rigorously. However, the research was limited by the sample size.

The respondents were sampled through purposive sampling and not a random sample. Therefore, there was a likelihood of bias. However, data for the census tracts and statistics from Southeastern PA enabled me to achieve the research objectives. As a result, the respondents' questions and the fundamental need to achieve tangible results were based on existing paradigms. I expected that some quality assurances not identified in this study might develop in the future as the roles of NPOs in disaster recovery

diversify. It is also possible that future researchers will be more satisfied with substitute delivery methods and may not entirely rely on interviews.

I appreciate that there is historical data about the involvement of NPOs in disaster responses. However, there are no consistent measures of involvement. As a result, the study was limited to the current involvement of NPOs in disaster management and recovery (see Valcik, 2016). The research did not use any information not provided by the participants or the study's secondary sources. The limitation on NPO involvement was the focus of NPOs to be more proactive in helping vulnerable populations affected by disasters.

Over the years, NPOs have been more involved in assisting families affected by hurricanes, tsunamis, floods, and earthquakes over the years. For example, in 2016, NPOs in the United States spent about \$175 billion to assist vulnerable families (Valcik, 2016). The federal government has also responded to disasters and managed recovery. However, some disasters are too severe for the government to handle efficiently. Because NPOs are more responsive than government agencies, the government often turns to NPOs to provide special services to underserved communities. In addition, NPOs establish rapport and long-term relationships with marginalized groups or populations in remote areas (Boris & Steuerle, 2006, Halseth & Ryser, 2007, as cited in Matei and Dinu, 2010). In that regard, NPOs come in to assist. The study was also limited to the immediate response of NPOs after a disaster. Therefore, I sought information from the staff about what happens once an NPO learns about a disaster.

I was interested in the series of activities from when the disaster information is received to when the first people are assisted. I sought to understand the role of NPOs as first responders in disasters. I was limited to understanding the help needed by vulnerable populations in the days, weeks, and months following a disaster. For example, I sought to understand the collaboration between government agencies, such as FEMA and NPOs, to provide food, water, shelter, clothes, medical supplies, and essential services to vulnerable populations. Evidence shows that the relief efforts to help vulnerable populations affected by disasters are collective. Many independent volunteers and NPOs converge on disaster scenes to provide much-needed help. Some NPOs include the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross. Some organizations offer specialty disaster relief services; others provide a wide range of services (Matei & Dinu, 2010).

This study was limited by cost and time. I financed the appropriate equipment and office supplies to conduct the interviews, printed and analyzed the interview transcripts, and offered incentives to participate in the research. I also needed to invest time in conducting the study. Time was also spent preparing the interview questions, seeking approvals from the research supervisor and the NPOs, collecting and analyzing data, and writing the drafts. The study was also limited by the measures used. The study results may not be generalizable to all the NPOs that deal with vulnerable populations or those involved in disaster response, as only the staff was included. The research needs agencies such as FEMA and the NPOs that have assisted vulnerable populations to be generalizable. The study's findings are not generalizable because only nine NPOs out of all of the registered NPOs in the City were considered for the study.

The study was limited by the use of agency documents and interviews to collect data. According to Beskie (2003), it is possible that some respondents might not understand the questions and give inapplicable answers or not answer the questions at all. I overcame this limitation by giving the respondents a brief about the study and the expectations. With the interviews, I was in a position to clarify the questions to the participants. The research was limited by the amount of information collected from the respondents. For example, I did not collect the participants' demographics because of the research's ethical considerations. I also did not establish whether the involvement of NPOs in disaster response was based on the source of information, the type of disaster, or personal characteristics.

Significance of the Study

In this study, I examined how and to the extent NPOs respond to and assist in the recovery of the vulnerable populations of the City in Southeastern PA. NPOs fill the gaps left by the state or federal governments or market failure and provide goods or services to the disparate community. Weisbrod's theory of market failure/government failure suggests a non-existent relationship between governments and NPOs. This lack of connection between NPOs and government is because the NPOs arise out of necessity in locations where the government does not operate or provide support due to a lack of sufficient public demand. NPO operations are supported through donations from those preferring collective goods not provided by the market or the government. The nonprofits have a specific population that serves as their clients. The NPOs must then have their emergency management plans in place to continue services for their clients. The

employees and volunteers of NPOs must be ready to stand alone without broad assistance from the governments and the general market. Hence, the diverse community continues to be served during and after disaster strikes the community.

This study contributes to positive social change by providing research that better informs local, state, and federal emergency management of the significant role of NPOs in serving vulnerable communities during disasters. Understanding the critical role of NPOs will also contribute to the field of emergency management and public administration regarding how best to support NPOs in delivering essential services during response and recovery efforts. This knowledge will contribute to more effective collaboration, communication, and preparedness for disasters to improve response efficiency and resilient recovery operations. Disaster preparedness and recovery are not the only improvements; better planning of personal preparedness and financial commitments may also result from collaboration between NPOs involved in emergency management activities.

Summary

Responding to and managing disasters is the federal government's role through its agencies. However, the federal government alone may not respond to all the disasters in an area. For that reason, NPOs come in to assist vulnerable populations in society. Chapter 1 of the study focused on the background information, problem statement, purpose, theoretical framework, assumptions, scope and delimitations, research limitations, and significance of the study. I addressed the role of NPOs in community disaster response and recovery and their impact on vulnerable populations. Previous

studies have shown that the role of NPOs in disaster recovery and response is vital. The problem addressed by the study is the inadequacy of resources to respond to disasters. The study investigated the role of NPOs in helping vulnerable populations in a city in Southeastern PA recover from disasters. The research was based on Weisbrod's theory. Weisbrod suggested that the government delivers services to a homogenous population (Paarlberg & Zuhlke, 2019). However, when the government fails to deliver services, people seek assistance from NPOs. I assumed that the respondents provided accurate and honest answers to meet the research aims and objectives. The scope of the project was limited to the City of Southeastern, PA. The sample size also limited the study as staff from nine out of the total registered NPOs in the City were interviewed. The study is significant as the results contribute to positive social change. The information provided by the study helps local, state, and federal emergency agencies respond to disasters better.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study aimed to analyze the differences between the NPOs located in a city in Southeastern PA and the NPOs' roles in community disaster response and recovery.

Literature exhibits that natural disasters in the community have increased over the last 20 years (Ataseven et al., 2020). As such, NPOs effectively offer humanitarian support to individuals. I addressed the unique role that NPOs have in disaster response management and supporting vulnerable victims.

In addition, the secondary purpose of the study was to explore the difference between the NPOs located in the City and how the disaster influenced their response strategy or capacity. In Chapter 2, different sections are discussed. First, I discussed the literature search strategy used to conduct the study. This is followed by the conceptual framework that will inform and guide the study. Third, I discuss the key variables or themes related to the study based on the literature review. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary and conclusion section, including a transition into Chapter 3.

Literature Search Strategy

I used the internet, the Walden University Library, the West Chester University Library, and Google Scholar to locate various databases for scholarly articles, books, and other publications that were deemed relevant to the topic of study. I then searched different databases, including PubMed Central, Rutgers University Libraries Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects, the American Psychological Association (APA) PsycINFO and Psych Articles, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Library of Medicine PubMed, ProQuest, Taylor & Francis, Academic Search Premier through

EBSCO, SAGE Publishing, JSTOR, ResearchGate, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, Emerald Publishing, and Elsevier. I ensured that sources published from 2015 onwards were used for the literature review to increase the sources' accuracy and reliability. The exceptions to this were keystone articles on market failure and emergency management. Keywords used in the literature search included *nonprofits*, *not-for-profit*, *funding for nonprofits*, *influential funding for nonprofits*, *disaster response*, *disaster management*, *emergency response*, *nonprofit disaster response*, *vulnerable populations*, *social inequity*, and *post disaster recovery*.

Theoretical Foundation

The government failure theory was selected to guide the study. The theory provides a conceptual framework for understanding the loss of state funds to independent nonprofit services in the community (Salamon & Toepler, 2015). The theory of government failure is based on economic theories of market failure (Mancur, 1965). The theory is founded on market efficiency and resource allocation in the market. Therefore, the theory provides information that I used to fill gaps in the literature. Government failure theory is based on the premise that the government delivers service to a highly homogenous population (Salamon & Toepler, 2015). Therefore, individuals who are dissatisfied with such services or consider them inadequate may seek assistance from private parties, in this case, the NPOs (see Salamon & Toepler, 2015).

Preference for the quick response and quality services depicts a government's failure to address its population's basic needs. In such cases, NPOs are positioned to be outstanding in providing customized services to individuals. For instance, NPOs are

considered more helpful and efficient during disaster outbreaks than the government (Salamon & Toepler, 2015). The state cannot thoroughly offer support to individuals who have different needs than the homogenous community following a disaster. Therefore, the theory was used to understand how government failure facilitates NPOs to provide adequate responses to victims during a disaster.

Conceptual Framework

I used a conceptual framework to explain the ability of NPOs to solve problems arising from natural disasters. The primary concepts in this study relate to emergencies, uncertainties, and extreme events. NPOs play a critical role in addressing national, state, and local problems through partnerships and negotiated efforts. Understanding the underlying concepts in this study, a four-tier conceptual framework was adopted. The response to a disaster involving vulnerable populations requires using the 4Cs: communicate, collaborate, coordinate and cooperate (Martin et al., 2016). This conceptual framework responds to the research questions. It provides information on funding of NPOs dealing with vulnerable populations, the collaboration between local, state, and national governments in disaster management, and essential services delivered to vulnerable populations.

Primary Literature

Public, nonprofit, and disaster management literature contribute to studying interorganizational relationships during disasters. For example, Kapucu et al. (2009) discussed the emergency management association compact, a mutual aid agreement (MAA) between states allowing states to assist one another in responding to natural and

human-made disasters. The MAA, which the parties vet before disasters strike, offers transparent procedures, allowing states to assist each other with some certainty of the expectations and responsibilities. The authors examined the key strategies that state emergency managers used to coordinate the interstate networks that emerged following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Hurricane Katrina was a threshold crossing event, which brought about changes in public policy comparable with those that followed the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (Mitchell, 2006). One of those policies was the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (PKEMRA). PKEMRA expanded the authority of the FEMA and imposed new requirements on disaster management operations. In addition, to prevent other instances like that which occurred during and after Katrina, FEMA leadership imposed new responsibilities on the local and state governments to receive federal resources (Haddow et al., 2017). The new responsibilities included partnering with government, private, and nongovernment entities in the community to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a disaster.

Martin et al. (2016, p. 622) conducted a systematic literature review to study the different degrees of embeddedness within interorganizational relationships. The literature search included the keywords *communication, cooperation, coordination, and collaboration*, combined with the following terms: *crisis, disaster, emergency management, and humanitarian response*. Six articles covered communication and cooperation. Sixteen articles discussed coordination, and five discussed collaboration (Martin et al., 2016, p.623). These articles, dating from 1985 to 2013, provided the authors with the basis for defining the *four Cs of disaster partnering*.

To obtain the 4Cs among stakeholders in disaster management, scholars and practitioners should rethink how to conceptualize the role of NPOs in delivering resources in incident response and recovery. In addition, there is public policy implication of the NPO's role in the future of NPOs in the United States. and elsewhere (Matei & Dinu, 2010).

Key Statements and Definitions

Martin et al. (2016) defined communication among organizations as the act of transmitting a message and is considered a critical ingredient of collective action. Whether conventional phone lines, cell phones, or radio channels, communication failures can severely inhibit the emergency response. Cooperation refers to short-term relationships between organizations or parts of an organization. Martin et al. characterized cooperation as limited connections and low levels of interaction between agencies. Simo and Bies (2007) used the terms *partnership*, *alliance*, and *coalition* to describe intentional, collaborative relationships between organizations from different sectors aiming to solve joint problems. Coordination relies on the sharing of resources as well as the organizational structure. For example, emergency management professionals depend on the structure of the incident command system (ICS), which was created to coordinate fire operations that required the participation of many responding organizations (Waugh & Streib, 2006). According to Martin et al., collaboration is a long-term relationship between organizations characterized by high levels of interdependency.

A successful disaster management system requires the integration of efforts of governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders (Kapucu et al., 2010). Therefore, emergency managers must enhance collaboration among stakeholders to ensure the effective integration of efforts. According to Kapucu et al., (2010, p.455) “trust building, reaching consensus, establishing team spirit, and improving mutual understanding via effective communication are indispensable parameters in collaboration among actors in [EM] emergency management.” Therefore, I focused my study on the services provided by the NPOs but also the coordination and communication between agencies involved in the disaster response and recovery phases.

Literature Review of Key Themes/Variables

Overview of NPOs

Nonprofit organizations are businesses with tax-exempt status by the IRS because they further a social cause to society during an emergency (Aleffi & Cavicchi, 2020). Eller et al. (2018) also defined NPOs as firms that do not trade goods for for-profit motives and primarily engage in charitable programs that seek to improve community lives. In the United States, NPOs include religious institutions, charitable entities, and educational foundations that differ in impact, scope, purpose, size, and resources (Arik et al., 2016). The standard features characterizing NPOs include:

- Passion for mission,
- An atmosphere of scarcity,
- Bias toward informality,
- Participation and consensus,

- Dual bottom lines: financial and mission,
- Program outcomes are challenging to assess,
- The governing board has both oversight and supporting roles,
- Mixed skill levels of staff and participation of volunteers (Ataseven et al., 2020).

Withstanding their diversities, NPOs play a significant role in promoting social integration, creating employment opportunities, and providing goods and services to the most vulnerable people in the community after an outbreak of disaster (Bartram et al., 2017). In 2016 the NPO sector accounted for at least 5.4% of the United States' GDP (Centers for Disaster Philanthropy, 2019). This percentage represents at least \$850 billion in contributions to the U.S. economy. Data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics (2020) showed that approximately 1.54 million nonprofits were registered with the IRS in 2016, an increase of 4.5% from 2006.

The critical idea is the growth and the role that NPOs have in the community during and after a disaster. Katz (2018) contended that NPOs have grown to have strong networks, influence, and robust supply chains that help them address the different levels of emergencies in society. Lassa (2018) asserted that the NPOs address social needs that the public sector or private sector could not satisfy due to profit motives. To effectively respond to calamities in society, NPOs are organizations with the ability to mobilize more resources for relief purposes (Cabral et al., 2019). Also, the operations of NPOs are not determined by tax or revenue collected from taxpayers but by personal and charitable

donations (Laska et al., 2018). As an example of the difference in focus between NPOs and governmental organizations,

Nonprofit executives place a greater emphasis than government managers on using partnerships to gain new resources and to build the relationships that presumably help them to gain resources ... government respondents are substantially more likely to agree about other cost benefits of collaboration: to express interest in gaining professional expertise through partnerships and to view partnerships as a means for avoiding competition. (Gazley and Brudney. 2007, p.393, as cited in Matei & Dinu, 2010).

One purpose of my study was to elaborate on the ability of NPO staff to pivot their operations and expand collaboration based on the community's needs.

Through the government support of tax relief, NPOs also contribute to creating employment opportunities. With a 5.4% gross contribution to the GDP in 2018, it was estimated that NPOs employed more than 12 million employees (Haeffele & Storr, 2019). The number of people employed in the NPOs is equivalent to 10% of the U.S. labor force (Lassa, 2018). The employment opportunities provided include sectors such as arts, culture, and humanities; education; environment and animals; health; human services; and international and foreign affairs. In addition, professional associations and lobbying groups, public or societal benefits, such as foundations and grant-making groups, faith-based, and groups that are yet to be classified also benefit (Keegan et al., 2018). However, the primary role that NPOs have in the community is to help society respond to calamities and natural disasters. In addition, NPOs have a vital role in assisting

vulnerable people in settling and recovering after a disaster outbreak (Carrasco & O'Brien, 2018). This study focused on NPOs' role in helping vulnerable individuals settle after a disaster outbreak, the challenges faced, and the government's role in supporting NPOs to achieve their relief mission.

Importance of Donations to NPOs Support Programs

Garcia and Chandrasekhar (2020) conducted a study to investigate funding sources for NPOs. In their study, the researchers compared two scenarios—the first related to increased government taxes and their role in sponsoring disaster responses. The second aspect was charitable donations for NGOs to facilitate disaster aid to affected individuals (Mena, 2019). The study findings indicated that attitude toward the state's role in disaster management was consistent with charitable individuals who were more impacted by victims' experiences than political affiliations. However, the study also established that government-led disaster recovery programs were less effective in responding to disasters than privately sponsored NPOs that were more efficient in providing relief aid to victims (Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020). Based on this study's results, it was concluded that one of the most efficient and effective sources of donations for NPOs is from private entities, which play a significant role in providing relief aid to disaster victims (Bartram et al., 2017).

In a different study, Chandra and Paras (2020) investigated possible factors that influence donations to NPOs. In the study, the researchers tested whether voluntary giving was directly related to for-profit market practices such as advertising. The researchers established that fundraising was not conducted for profit maximization in

NPOs. In most cases, crowdfunding was among the most widely used source of funds for NPOs. In their report in 2018, Carrasco and O'Brien (2018) underscored that charitable practices' primary aspect relates to three main factors: a sense of belongingness, love, and social responsibility to support families in need. In addition, the researchers concluded that free donations were the primary source of funds for NPOs (Carrasco & O'Brien, 2018). NPOs must rely on a variety of funding resources to remain a viable operation. A report on Hurricane Katrina by Pipa (2006, as cited in Matei & Dinu, 2010) highlighted that NPOs received little if none of the vast outpourings of charitable support or supplies from the federal government, leaving them vulnerable to closing or reducing services. Research Question 2 of my study focused on the various funding sources the NPOs must use to remain viable.

Definition and Categorization of Disasters

According to the World Health Organization (WHO; 2008, p. 22), a disaster is “ a serious disruption of a society's functioning, causing widespread human, material, or environmental losses that exceed the ability of affected society to cope using only its resources.” Hence, the term disaster implies that the affected society is not capable of counteracting the adverse effects of its properties anymore. A disaster also needs to contain a threat or affection of human beings. If an earthquake or flood occurs in an unpopulated area, it is considered a natural phenomenon, not a disaster (Nikbakhsh & Farahani, 2011). Furthermore, Van Wassenhove (2006, p. 476) stated that a disaster is a disruption that affects the whole system and threatens the success of a community.

Laska et al. (2018) identified four types of natural disasters: natural sudden onsets (such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes), human-made sudden onsets (such as terrorist attacks, coups d'état, industrial accidents), natural slow onsets (famines, droughts, and poverty), and human-made slow onsets (political and refugee crises). On the contrary, Katz (2018) classified disasters into two forms: natural and human-made disasters. Natural disasters include storms, earthquakes, floods, droughts, epidemics, or volcanic activities (Cabral et al., 2019). On the other hand, human-made disasters are linked to human activities, including war.

Aside from the differences in categorizations, disasters are common and manifest in different forms, which can have a far-reaching impact on human life and the environment. According to Haeffele and Storr (2019), regardless of the distinction, whether human-made or natural, disasters result in significant loss, such as human life, destruction of the current infrastructure, and economic hardships. Hendriks and Boersma (2019) also noted that natural or human-made disasters cause psychological and emotional pain that the survivors have to live with throughout their lives. In addition, disasters may also have far-reaching implications on the day-to-day activities within a society, whereby people have to change how people communicate, engage, and relate with each other (Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020).

Two terms related to disaster include emergency and relief. An emergency differs from a disaster regarding time and urgency (Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020). In particular, a disaster consists of a given period characterized by the loss of life and property. Conversely, an emergency is a more general period with no limit. It is characterized by

the constant deterioration of life and the ability of individuals to cope with it over time (Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020). The primary objective of disaster relief operations is to

Design the transportation of first aid material, food, equipment, and rescue personnel from supply points to a large number of destination nodes geographically scattered over the disaster region and the evacuation and transfer of people affected by the disaster to the health care centers safely and very rapidly. (Barbarosoglu, Özdamar, & Cevik, 2002, p. 118)

Disaster relief operations seek to ensure that first aid material, rescue personnel, food, and equipment are delivered to people in need within the shortest time possible (Rabta, 2018). When there are challenges in transportation facilities, drones can be used to supply essentials to disaster-affected populations. The majority of humanitarian assistance given to elderly populations is related to healthcare, emergency, and food supplies. My research focused on the challenges faced by the NPOs, which services were provided, and those considered vulnerable populations.

Needs of Victims During a Disaster

There are several needs that victims have following a disaster. In this study, I discuss these needs and how they have been applied to various disasters within the community. The common forms of needs for victims in the aftermath of a disaster are discussed below.

Housing and Support Services

Sovacool et al. (2018), in their study on rebuilding and reconstruction after Katrina, noted that the occurrence of such a hurricane revealed the families'

vulnerabilities when faced with an emergency. The researchers argued that families with no assets, savings, or home insurance plans were the most affected because they could not find the most economical way to rebuild their houses. Hendriks and Boersma (2019) focused on the need for NPOs to support the construction of affordable houses in Safe Embarcadero For All (SEFA) neighborhoods in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. According to the findings, Leardini et al. (2020) stated that if affordable houses are unavailable, NPOs will be responsible for ensuring that individuals are placed in temporary shelters. For long-term solutions, Chandra and Paras (2020) reported that NPOs played a role in deconstructing and finding affordable houses for Hurricane Katrina victims.

In addition to housing needs, families affected by hurricanes and other disasters may require additional support from the NPOs. For instance, older people who have disabilities, individuals with mental health problems, and those with criminal bail backgrounds may be supported through networking (Hesselman & Lane, 2017). In addition, NPOs addressed the affordable housing needs among victims in the aftermath of a disaster and offered support services, including counseling and advocacy, to help in the post disaster recovery process (Bartram et al., 2017).

Blackman et al. (2017) concluded that low-income families have limited trust in public institutions to protect their interests, especially regarding redeployment. This observation is contrary to high-income families that might consider the government a trustable entity to support redeployment practices. The critical problem for NPOs is to provide support and redeployment practices to protect low-income individuals (Lin et al.,

2017). In such instances, there is a conflict of interests and moral dilemma on how NPOs can fully address victims' housing, support services, and redeployment following a disaster (Hendriks & Boersma, 2019). Sledge and Thomas (2019) noted that a lack of access to safe and affordable housing was a consistent concern with the NGE staff interviewed post disaster. The authors also noted that FEMA programs often appear to be most effective for financially stable homeowners. One aim of my study was to expand on the most needed services in the community during and post disaster. Housing repairs and lack of housing, or affordable housing, are common themes in the literature.

Needs of Families and Children

A majority of NPOs can offer services and address the needs of families and children. For instance, following Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans was ranked as one of the poorest neighborhoods pre-hurricane Katrina, negatively impacting children's sustainability (Katz, 2018). Approximately 42% of children in New Orleans lived below the poverty line. As a result, children lacked basic needs such as education, clothing, and shelter (Lin et al., 2017). These are essential primary needs that NPOs addressed when responding to a disaster, including post disaster recovery programs (Lin et al., 2017). In addition, most children who witness disasters have reported high depression levels (Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020). Children also exhibited anxiety and social problems when interacting with others in the community (Hesselman & Lane, 2017). Such mental problems negatively affect children's well-being in the aftermath of a disaster and the need for NPOs to offer medical assistance to children (Cabral et al., 2019). This

assistance may be done by vaccinating the children and guiding them in coping with disaster-related stress (Choudhury et al., 2019; Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020).

Blackman et al. (2017) reported that approximately 1638 learners affected by Hurricane Katrina responded to a national child traumatic network and said they suffered high-stress levels, including depression and anxiety. For instance, it was noted that one in every three children had been separated from their biological parents or guardians. One in every five had witnessed their family member injured during the disaster, 54% had Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and 31% had mental health symptoms such as social problems, nightmares, or irritability. Chandra and Paras (2020) summarized results from participants in 2020 and noted that mental health services were the primary need of children and family needs after a disaster.

Social Needs

Victims affected by different disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, have social problems. In most cases, the victims usually have lost family members, close friends, husbands, and wives with whom they used to associate (Nakazato & Lim, 2017). In this case, the victims are likely to have problems relating to new people in the environment. Therefore, it is the role of NPOs to ensure that the victims are facilitated through guidance and counseling to develop healthy relations and relationships with new people in society (Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020; O'Donovan, 2019).

Medical and Psychological Needs

Natural or technological disasters can cause a wide range of damage to a community. The severity of the damage is affected by population density, local building

codes, community preparedness and education, and the use of public safety announcements. For example, cleaning up after a flood can cause an increase in morbidity and mortality through mental and physical stress and exertion (American Public Health Association, 2005). There are also many physical hazards that victims of a disaster face. Depending on the type of disaster and the environment, people can face fires, explosions from gas leaks, downed live wires, and debris can all cause significant injury. In addition, water-borne diseases, vector-borne diseases, and skin disorders can all become significant hazards. Injured and frightened animals (FEMA, n.d.-c), hazardous waste contamination, disruption of sewer and solid-waste collection systems, molds, and mildew pose additional risks in the period following a flood (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

Hartmann et al. (2020) studied the crucial role NGOs specializing in healthcare play in mitigating the adverse impacts of social conflict. Swed's 2018 study (as cited in Hartmann et al., 2020) found that the NGOs' presence is associated with improving human rights conditions and empowerment rights. Post conflict, NGOs may play a positive role in rebuilding a nation's healthcare system. There is a perception that NGOs can restore health services more quickly, efficiently, and with more significant innovation and less corruption than national health systems (Hartman et al., 2020).

Psychological problems are another need for victims affected by the disaster. For instance, victims may be witnessing their loved ones die or suffer and could develop chronic mental disorders that may negatively impact their well-being. (Shervington & Richardson, 2020) stated that those exposed to disasters have an increase in psychiatric

morbidity. Therefore, mental health and psychosocial support programs should become a standard part of humanitarian response. Increased psychological suffering following traumatic experiences during a disaster could make it difficult for victims to transition into a post disaster recovery mode. According to Choudry et al. (2019), the implication is that passive survivors are not detached from the traumatizing experienced they hold. Passive survivors are less likely to transition and respond to various programs to support the successful transition of participants from passive survivors to active survivors.

Kiran et al. (2021) studied primary health care and community networks post disaster and reported that individuals who encounter disasters experience a range of negative physical, mental, and psychosocial consequences. Post disaster emotional and psychosocial problems are most reported, with rates almost double that of physical health problems. Studies on post flood psychosocial and mental health impacts have reported that these communities experience higher rates of psychological distress, anxiety, depression, somatization, and post traumatic stress disorder (Kiran et al., 2021, p. 2). These psychological issues are persistent, with higher enduring rates being reported two to five years after the disaster (Kiran et al., 2021)

Nonprofits in Collaborative Emergency Management

There is a need to introduce and understand collaborative emergency management to conceptualize the role that NPOs have in an emergency, particularly in disaster recovery of the vulnerable population. According to Katz (2018), collaborative emergency management includes a set of horizontal type of management practices that are highly networked to offer an optimum response in case of an emergency outbreak.

The sophisticated management practices network draws participants from private and public sectors to support all those who provide relief support to individuals affected by a disaster in the community (Hesselman & Lane, 2017). The inclusion of actors from different sectors is meant to facilitate decision-making and aid those willing to offer support when a disaster occurs in society, including emotional support to the victims.

Pyles et al. (2018) explained that NPOs play a significant role in disaster management and recovery. For instance, NPOs act as service and support providers during the relief need and post disaster recovery practices that are key to restoring vulnerable individuals to their previous emotional level (Mena, 2019) and guidance on how to cope with the aftermath of a disaster (Choudhury et al., 2019).

Rayamajhee et al. (2020) contended that given the magnitude and frequency of the disasters, the government and affiliated agencies might be less effective in responding to them. NPOs' support and service are crucial in providing resources to these agencies through a well-coordinated emergency management system that supports collaboration and the free flow of information with the stakeholders (Lin et al., 2017). For instance, private actors such as Walmart were noted as being highly effective in their supply chain during the Hurricane Katrina crisis (Cabral et al., 2019). Walmart reached the victims in time and offered support compared to state agencies limited resources and capabilities. Therefore, in disaster recovery and response, collaborative emergency management is an effective system that NGOs use to offer timely responses among stakeholders to provide efficient support to victims during and post disaster recovery processes (Mena, 2019).

According to Blackman et al. (2017), the increasing number of disasters in the community has promoted NPOs to capitalize on a robust and well-functioning collaborative emergency management framework. The purpose is to ensure that all stakeholders are coordinated efficiently and strategically respond to disasters promptly to minimize loss, especially loss of life. In addition, through collaborative emergency management, NPOs can better respond to specific communities during and after a disaster (Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020).

The Engagement of Nonprofit Organizations in Post disaster Recovery Programs

Different factors define the engagement of nonprofit organizations in post disaster recovery programs. In most cases, if not all, the post disaster recovery process may be sophisticated, particularly when NPOs are anticipated to participate in different collaborative emergency management networks. Kawamoto and Kim (2019) noted that few NPOs might be willing to work with government agencies and even other NPOs. Therefore, to effectively participate and engage NPOs in a well-planned post disaster recovery program, it is crucial to be mindful of the factors that could affect NGOs' decisions to engage in a post disaster recovery process (Choudhury et al., 2019). Hesselman and Lane (2017) investigated factors that influenced NPOs' involvement in collaborations with other NPOs organizations. Given the study findings on 95 charitable organizations, the researchers established that older NPOs with large capacity and government funding were less likely to engage in collaborative efforts to support post disaster recovery programs among victims. Sadri et al. (2018) examined partnerships between NPOs and local governments. The authors established that in

addition to the funding aspect, additional factors, including the capacity of an NGO, its age, shared professional experiences, and ideological views, influenced NGO leaders' decisions when deciding whether or not to collaborate in a post disaster recovery program. In a different study on service delivery collaborations, Hutton (2018) found that resource dependency, environmental uncertainties, and donor pressure are essential in influencing NPOs' decisions to collaborate with other agencies.

Participation in collaborative partnerships and maintaining such relationships need the dedication of time among human players, human capital, and financial capacity. Maghsoudi and Moshtari (2020) argued that NPOs might not be willing to dedicate such resources because of different factors that are internal or external. Cozzolino et al. (2017) argued that strong personal and interpersonal sustainability, including formal relationships with other stakeholders, is necessary for collaboration in a post disaster recovery program. The same findings were shared by Lassa (2018), who claimed that shared networks, capabilities, visions, goals, and infrastructure were essential aspects that influenced decisions to collaborate among NPOs in post disaster recovery. Equally, Seddiky et al. (2020) also reported a strong correlation between organizational resource capabilities and social capital and the decision for NPOs to collaborate with other organizations in a post recovery program.

The type of organizational structure, the capacity of NPOs, the community type to be supported, and the visions of NPOs were also significant in influencing the NPOs' decisions to partner with other NPOs to facilitate post disaster recovery programs. In a study on commercial NPOs, Hutton (2018) established that the decisions to engage in a

collaborative post disaster recovery program were influenced by organizational visions, organizational structure, and the type of culture an organization has. For NPOs to participate in a post disaster recovery program, there must be compatibility between the two organizations in terms of their culture, financial structure, mission, and vision. Similar findings are reported by Sledge and Thomas (2019). They found that compatibility in infrastructure, especially where NPOs share transport networks or supply chains, made it easier and more likely for them to participate in collaborative post disaster recovery programs (Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020).

It is important to emphasize the need for NPOs to harmonize their work and collaborate during disasters. During such times, Kawamoto and Kim (2019) recommended developing meaningful formal and informal connections in delivering the required services to different regions during a crisis. Similar views are reported by Hutton (2018), who argued that developing strong ties and trust among NPOs is crucial to developing collaborative post disaster recovery programs meant to support victims to recover effectively. Based on the literature reviewed above, NPOs provide timely support to disaster victims. It is essential to understand that factors such as the size of an NPOs, age, source of income, mission, and vision plays an essential role in determining the extent to which NPOs can collaborate with other NPOs in delivering post disaster recovery services.

Following disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes, infrastructure is often destroyed, and there is a need for repairs. Therefore, NGOs have the duty to ensure that they participate in the reconstruction process and readjustment of social amenities and

other structures to facilitate normalcy among survivors (Mena, 2019). In most cases, NPOs may partner with other agencies, such as the government, to provide services and labor or consultative thoughts on reconstructing various infrastructures within the affected area (Lin et al., 2017).

In a study conducted by Hutton (2018), it was established that nonprofit organizations have an essential role in ensuring that society is functioning well after a disaster by erecting electricity poles, restoring power supply, and redesigning water and sewer pipes. Similar findings were reported by Jillson et al. (2019). Lassa (2018) reported that NGOs participate in the aftermath of a disaster using different strategies such as helping the governments construct roads, and reconstruct power supplies. NPOs also ensured that potable water and other social amenities were made available to the victims (Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020; Soulard et al., 2018).

Cleaning the environment post disaster is another role that NPOs have in post disaster recovery programs. Cozzolino et al. (2017) stated that natural disasters such as earthquakes and fire outbreaks negatively impact the environment. After the disaster, there is a need to have a clean environment for human habitation; this may include ensuring the area is not contaminated with chemicals and water is free from possible contamination that would otherwise risk victims' lives (Tang & Wang, 2020). For instance, following Hurricane Katrina in Tennessee, the private sector consisting of NPOs supported the reconstruction of the water, drainage, and power supply systems (Xu & Saxton, 2019). According to Wang and Ganapati (2018), such practices create a sense of love, care, and belonging among the victims. In addition, such practices are likely to

normalize victims' lives by NPOs making a solid sense of victims' psychological stability and the loss they suffered. This involvement may help them heal faster and positively respond to different therapeutic techniques meant to support their psychological well-being (Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020).

Nonprofits in Post disaster Recovery and Development

The National Disaster Recovery Framework outlines a post disaster specification for nonprofit organizations' participation in post disaster recovery following a disaster (Lin et al., 2017). As Jillson et al. (2019) explained, nonprofit organizations have the primary role of ensuring that victims are well supported following a disaster. For instance, the NPOs may provide the required goods and services the victim requires to transition into a post disaster era due to the destruction of their property and loss of family members (Mena, 2019).

Xu and Saxton (2019) elucidated that in a post recovery program, NPOs are encouraged to support victims in facilitating house repairs and reconstruction of their entities (Lin et al., 2017) as rehabilitation services to victims with psychological and emotional problems. The rehabilitation process includes offering guidance and counseling services to survivors who witnessed traumatizing experiences during a disaster or have lost their loved ones. Lassa (2018) also noted that the post recovery programs, characterized by post traumatic stress disorder services, are important in addressing psychological problems among victims following a traumatizing disaster. These disasters may negatively affect their psychological well-being (Lin et al., 2017; Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020).

On the contrary, Curnin and O'Hara (2019) claimed lack of effective post recovery programs coordinated by NPOs could lead to further suffering among victims. Cozzolino et al. (2017) argued that trauma could result in a continued circle of suffering and impairment if not treated in the early stages. In this case, survivors are likely to engage in practices that threaten their lives, such as suicidal thoughts or depression, that could impair their cognition.

Jillson et al. (2019) argued that NPOs offer psychological support to disaster victims in different ways to improve their recovery and well-being. As Meyer (2018) supports, NPOs may develop systems that monitor and respond to victims' stressors in different situations. According to Mena (2019), such a framework would provide NGOs with valid and real-time information that can be used to monitor the psychological well-being of victims and offer relevant psychological support. NPOs could also identify different types of stressors affecting victims and design personalized mental illness therapy to support the recovery process. Curnin and O'Hara (2019) also reported that NPOs offer psychological support to victims that could be vital in preventing or minimizing the impact of disaster-related stressors in the recovery process. Such information could also promote self-care management among survivors for successful post disaster recovery programs (Lin et al., 2017).

Jillson et al. (2019) also reargued that psychological support is an essential aspect of NPO's disaster response programs. In particular, an emergency response program that integrates psychological care for victims can heal their psychological problems and rebuild strong social structures with people in the new environment. Moreover, the

psychological support offered by NPOs in the post disaster recovery process helps victims become active survivors, not passive survivors (Jon & Purcell, 2018). Wang and Ganapati (2018) underscored the type of psychological support provided by NPOs to vulnerable people during a crisis as preventing further distress and suffering among victims and helping them cope with the situation and reconcile with reality to improve their lives. Lassa (2018) also maintained that psychological support offered by NPOs post disaster is crucial in assisting victims in normalizing their lives.

Another role that NPOs have in the post disaster recovery process is supporting the victims in repairing their houses or building new homes. According to Meyer (2018), NPOs provide the resources to support victims in reconstructing their homes after being destroyed by natural or human-made disasters. The process includes procuring construction materials for the community members when required and helping them with the expertise to contract houses. If houses are destroyed beyond repair, NPOs may assist in building new homes for the victims and settling down. O'Donovan (2019) noted that NPOs might also provide basic needs to the victims, such as food, clothing, and temporary shelters, as they await relocation.

As an illustration, after natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, NPOs supported victims in building and repairing their homes. The practice is crucial because it gives the victims a sense of belonging and love from the people around them. Wang and Ganapati (2018) also underscored that helping victims rebuild their homes and other structures is a crucial way that NPOs address emotional problems attached to the loss suffered in the aftermath of a disaster. In particular, following the 2005 Pakistan

earthquake that left more than a million people homeless, over 2.5 million people were supported by different NPOs to build and repair their homes (Jon & Purcell, 2018), which the government could not address alone.

Christian Aid and other NPOs were instrumental in the Haitian earthquake that left millions homeless. According to reports, NPOs play an essential role in housing programs for millions displaced or left homes without homes. New houses were built for the victims, supporting them in settling into their new homes. Curnin and O'Hara (2019) noted that the victims were given houses and framing inputs to start their new life. During the crisis, thousands of victims were given clothes and food. Donations were received across the world, and they were provided to the right people who needed them most (Lin et al., 2017).

NPOs also provide medical services to victims in the post recovery process. According to Lassa (2018), related medical conditions are likely to be witnessed due to water contamination when disasters strike. In addition, overcrowding in shelter facilities during distress can lead to infectious diseases. In such an instance, NPOs will ensure that medical services are provided to the victims. Services provided include treatment against communicable diseases and other services victims may require (Jon & Purcell, 2018). Treatments included treating wounds and injuries sustained during the disaster or providing counseling services the victims needed.

If NPOs are limited in capacities, they may coordinate an effective and efficient delivery of medical assistance from other donors and deliver it to victims (Nakazato & Lim, 2017). It is important to note that providing medical services to individuals

following disasters is an important role that NPOs hold in high esteem. Failure to offer medical assistance to victims who have lost everything in a disaster could be challenging and expensive for the survivors (Keegan et al., 2018). The leaders of NPOs consider it their responsibility to respond with customized medical services that suit individuals based on the medical emergency (Matei & Dinu, 2010). For example, young children could be immunized against a potential outbreak in shelter facilities. According to Kawamoto and Kim (2019), providing medical assistance to victims in post disaster recovery programs by NPOs plays a vital role in guaranteeing the survivors' psychological, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

To help victims and communities recover from different disasters, both in the short run and long run, NPOs develop programs to help the victims deal with various problems that would interfere with their effective recovery. For example, problems could include mobilizing resources from different stakeholders to victims (Meyer, 2018). A study by Nakazato and Lim (2017) established that NPOs have a unique role in coordinating resources from donors to victims during a crisis. The role is facilitated by an extensive and well-developed supply chain that permits NPOs to reach remote areas more quickly and efficiently than state agencies (Keegan et al., 2018).

Equally, Mena (2019) reported that NGOs connect donors and victims after a crisis and provide a conduit to transfer resources from one place to another. The implication is that NPOs are essential in mobilizing resources and channeling the resources to vulnerable victims during a crisis (Jon & Purcell, 2018). Thus far, it can be concluded that nonprofit organizations have a unique role in coordinating resources from

donors, sponsors, and even state agencies to vulnerable victims during and after the crisis. The coordination role includes transporting food and other necessities to victims in different parts of the world.

Nonprofit organizations involved in the preparedness and response phases may contribute to robust disaster recovery and a disaster resilience community. According to Curnin and O'Hara (2019), the effectiveness and success of the disaster recovery program by NPOs are closely linked to its mitigation and preparedness strategies within its emergency management units. Literature documents that NPOs contribute considerably to society through various phases of emergency management. For instance, Lin et al. (2017) explored how Tennessee's nonprofit organizations differ in their mitigation strategies in response to preparedness and recovery programs. The researchers established that notwithstanding the limited financial resources, NPOs in Tennessee embrace highly sophisticated disaster mitigation and preparedness programs compared to private institutions (Roque et al., 2020).

Additionally, Lassa (2018) reported that following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, over 1170 nonprofit institutions responded to disasters and relief services. Such findings demonstrate that NPOs have a unique role in providing relief responses during emergency and recovery programs. It is important to emphasize that NPOs' involvement in different emergency phases may help such institutions develop strong collaborative relationships with other agencies within their networks to facilitate quick delivery of relief to victims during a disaster and post disaster recovery (Lin et al., 2017). In summary, it can be concluded that NPOs play a crucial role within the

emergency phases by creating collaborations among stakeholders to support the provision (Jon & Purcell, 2018) and delivery of relief to victims in different parts of the world during and after a disaster (Curnin & O'Hara, 2019). My research focused on the critical services delivered by the staff and volunteers of the NPOs to vulnerable populations during the response and recovery phases of disasters. NPO collaboration and communication to expand resource sharing were also explored in my study.

The responsibilities of NPOs in disaster response are not limited to supportive tasks. According to Xu and Saxton (2019), nonprofit organizations serve as informed leaders and collaboration in an emergency or disaster. Tang and Wang reported similar findings (2020). They established that NPO leaders assume an essential leadership role during a crisis in promoting collaboration and coordinating agencies to provide relief to affected individuals. In particular, to address the unique needs of individuals displaced by the New Orleans crisis, the American Red Cross coordinated and mobilized agencies from different sectors to create a more efficient New Orleans disaster recovery partnership (Keegan et al., 2018). In addition, they may coordinate large organizations, including the national voluntary organization acting in disaster, to ensure that victims have the necessities during and after a disaster (Roque et al., 2020).

Effective coordination during a disaster may also help NPOs deliver different recovery services to victims by avoiding duplication of duties within the supply chain. Tang and Wang (2020) believe that duplication of responsibilities during disaster response and recovery programs has negative implications for disaster management by reducing the efficiency and effectiveness with which other agencies can offer relief to

targeted individuals. In this regard, NPOs support vulnerable individuals during a crisis by ensuring that all efforts are coordinated from multi-agencies and streamlined to the targeted people at a particular time (Lin et al., 2017). Streamlined support, such as medical services during an emergency, is essential and a primary role that NPOs coordinate to reduce further suffering. It can be deduced that NPOs have an additional role in addition to supportive tasks, including coordinating other agencies to deliver relief during an emergency to targeted people with deficiency (Lin et al., 2017) and reduce further suffering (Curnin & O'Hara, 2019).

According to Wang and Ganapati (2018), NPOs may be integrated into governmental organizations to create programs that support disaster resiliency among individuals. The community would be informed and supportive through psychological counseling and other supportive services that build their trust in developing resiliency against the negative impacts of a disaster. Lassa (2018) reported that in addition to contributing to recovery and resilience, NPOs support services act as a catalyst for individuals who have psychological impairments after sustaining injuries from a disaster.

Social Capital and Nonprofit Organizations in Post disaster Recovery Development

Social capital is a familiar concept within disaster literature. Kammerbauer and Wamsler (2017) defined social capital as an everyday network that makes resources available to individuals through their different networks or connections with others. Dollery et al. (2020) argued that networks, social ties, and sanctions are the three primary social capital variables. As Laska et al. (2018) explained, social capital may be

researched at the individual, community, and national levels. In disaster recovery research, a considerable part of the study is focused on individual and community levels.

However, it is important to emphasize that social capital research outcomes could be positive or negative. As an illustration, Jon and Purcell (2018) argued that social capital could help individuals receive relief from people within their networks. On the contrary, Roque et al. (2020) argued that social capital might create social networks that automatically exclude people from different regions leading to discrimination in NPO's response during a crisis. Such assertions are essential to integrate when examining the role that NPOs have in disaster recovery as far as vulnerable individuals are contextualized (Curnin & O'Hara, 2019).

NPOs play a crucial role in developing social capital in communities, which is vital in inter-organizational collaboration during the post disaster recovery process. Dollery et al. (2020) view the relationship between social capital, civic engagement, and economic growth as studied widely. Research findings reveal that increased participation in NPOs programs will likely improve public health, which may help develop skills, trust, and a strong network of resources during a disaster. Equally, Leardini et al. (2020) reported that NPOs might also support establishing strong positive relationships between the public and government, which is vital in creating a stable and developed society post disaster recovery. Conversely, NPOs may serve an essential role as a mediator by linking people in capital networks to areas where individuals require relief (Keegan et al., 2018). Based on the literature reviewed above, it is essential to emphasize that social capital

provides a network through which NPOs respond and address disaster-related problems among the victims.

Research has shown that individual-level social capital significantly contributes to effective disaster response, recovery, and resilience. For example, Keegan et al. (2018) explored how Vietnamese individuals in New Orleans recovered from Hurricane Katrina's devastating effects. The study findings suggested that the community was structured and coordinated by the Mary Queen of Vietnam (M.Q.V.) Church (Keegan et al., 2018). The church was important in coordinating social capital networks from different stakeholders to support the affected people. Laska et al. (2018) also established that social capital helps NPOs customize a disaster recovery program for victims with different needs based on their geographical locations. In sum, social capital within NPOs helps such organizations create healthy relationships and networks of donors and volunteers ready to support victims in a disaster (Keegan et al., 2018).

Thus far, it can be concluded that social capital creates strong networks that are important in defining the type of support that victims require during and after a disaster. Second, the articles reviewed suggest that social capital helps NPOs design appropriate programs that integrate different stakeholders with unique capabilities to offer timely relief and psychological support to disaster victims. Lastly, it was evident that social capital creates trust among stakeholders such as donors, state agencies, volunteers, and sponsors, who are important in providing relief and psychological support to victims struck by a disaster (Curnin & O'Hara, 2019).

In the lengthy post disaster program, social capital trust has a vital role in creating and sustaining mutual collaborations among stakeholders. Maghsoudi and Moshtari (2020) argued that social capital and the resulting trust have a significant role in mobilizing a robust emergency management network ready to respond to victims' pleas during a disaster. Equally, Wang and Ganapati (2018) reported that social capital allows communities to interact with NPOs and efficiently execute their responses.

Studies on community-based emergency management have shown that social capital is an important variable that defines emergency response efficiency among stakeholders. According to Kammerbauer and Wamsler (2017), individuals within the social network can use positive working relationships to initiate a customized disaster recovery program that meets the needs of the victims. Therefore, Lin et al. (2017) recommended creating solid social capital networks in the community to prepare for potential risk and the need for rapid responses. The findings were supported by Keegan et al. (2018), who also argued that strong social capital relations help communities to understand risk management responses and become resilient to disasters. As Maghsoudi and Moshtari (2020) described, such connections provide a conceptual framework through which NPOs operate to offer well-coordinated responses to vulnerable disaster victims, such as the delivery of food and clothes.

A study by Leardini et al. (2020) in Tokyo suggested that social capital was the most important predictor for post disaster recovery programs after the 1923 Tokyo earthquake. The researcher identified three mechanisms that allow victims to receive relief for quick post disaster recovery. Specifically, the researcher noted that social

connections were critical in forming informal insurance for the victims. In addition, such casual relationships provided vital information to the state and decision-makers relating to individuals' post disaster status. The information was then used to make necessary adjustments to improve policies to support the post disaster recovery approach following the Tokyo 1923 earthquake (Leardini et al., 2020; Curnin & O'Hara, 2019).

Second, Keegan et al. (2018) identified political activity as an essential instrument community members can use to mobilize support during a crisis. Third, Dollery et al. (2020) noted that dense social connections also support creating solid social capital networks that contain individuals from diverse backgrounds willing to offer support to victims following a disaster. Finally, Laska et al. (2018) concluded that communities with strong social capital support NPOs to unite different forms of resources in real-time and offer a quick response during post disaster recovery.

Organization-level social capital also has implications on peoples' relationships. In view of Keegan et al. (2018), NPOs need to consider inter-organizational solid connections as a prerequisite to timely disaster response. The stronger the inter-organizational relationships, the faster the response to a disaster because stakeholders have timely information on what needs to be done, how it needs to be done, and when to be done. Kammerbauer and Wamsler (2017) supported the above assertions by indicating that strong inter-organizational social capital ties allow NPOs to review their disaster response programs and integrate views from other stakeholders that are important in ensuring disaster responses are accurate and helpful. The subsequent sections discuss the

role of NPOs in disaster responses and resilience development through the lens of collaborative emergency management.

Challenges Influencing NPOs' Post disaster Response

Notwithstanding the global experience realized by NPOs over the years, several factors influenced their ability to offer an effective disaster response. This section discusses different factors that affect the appropriateness of humanitarian response by NPOs within the post disaster recovery programs. The factors will include how they influence the reconstruction of the environment and individual lives following a disaster.

Lack of Communication and Poor Coordination

Inadequate and insufficient communication among stakeholders has been identified as influencing post-disaster recovery programs among NPOs. According to Dollery et al. (2020), NPOs are willing to address the victims' emerging needs in the aftermath of disasters. However, it is crucial to understand that each agency offers assistance or relief to the affected communities (Soulard et al., 2018). Therefore, a well-coordinated post disaster recovery program that has been well understood and communicated to all stakeholders is essential (Tang & Wang, 2020).

Clear communication of needs will facilitate effective coordination among NPOs to deliver appropriate aid to the affected individuals. Nevertheless, in most cases, during post disaster recovery programs, communication breakdown and poor coordination among stakeholders become a significant impediment to society's reconstruction after a disaster (Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020). Furthermore, lack of communication, which consequently results in poor coordination, limits the capacity to which NPOs can

collaborate through different partnerships to reduce duplication of roles and coordination among stakeholders to offer relevant support to the affected individuals trying to recover from a disaster (Drennan & Morrissey, 2019).

Conditioning to Politics or Power

The primary goal of NPOs is to offer support to individuals in need based on the perception of neutrality or specialty (Eller et al., 2018). However, sometimes there are conditions on how NGOs should provide post recovery assistance to victims (Xu & Saxton, 2019). Occasionally, political players could limit the activities of NPOs on the assumption that they are agents of donors or enemies, hence limiting their capacity (Laska et al., 2018). Therefore, there is a need to ensure that all NPOs declare their source of funds to have the right opportunity to serve victims in post disaster recovery by building homes and social amenities (Leardini et al., 2020) and reconstructing infrastructure to support everyday activities.

Competition among NPOs and Governments

According to Lin et al. (2017), it is common for NPOs to be conceptualized as competitors of funds from donors. In such situations, the effectiveness of NPOs is likely to be jeopardized when donors are indifferent concerning who to finance or not. Furthermore, consistent tension among NPOs is expected to undermine their roles in disaster recovery programs (Laska et al., 2018). Therefore, NPOs need to avoid conflicts among themselves and the governments for mutual understanding to serve victims in a post disaster recovery era (Keegan et al., 2018).

Limited Knowledge of the Local Environment

NPOs respond to disasters in a new environment where they have not been before. In such instances, there is a possibility that a majority of the members may have limited knowledge of the surroundings and people (Katz, 2018). Moreover, Kammerbauer and Wamsler (2017) argued that being new in an environment makes it challenging to understand the socio-cultural aspects that influence socialization. According to Meyer (2018), post disaster recovery programs require NPOs to understand the local cultural practices that are likely to influence their service delivery to the affected victims in the aftermath of a disaster. It is recommended that NPOs identify factors that can limit their effectiveness and offer solutions to them to be effective in post disaster recovery programs (Eller et al., 2018). As a result, the organizations will have a better opportunity to engage in post disaster reconstruction programs and psychological empowerment for victims who may require counseling in response to traumatic events they witnessed during a disaster (Laska et al., 2018).

Summary

Disaster resilience, recovery, and community development in the aftermath of a disaster are three overlapping aspects. As such, addressing each aspect translates into a constant resource allocation conflict. With this in mind, state agencies may be less effective in responding to disasters as soon as they occur. Consequently, NPOs have become instrumental in automatically responding to victims affected by different disasters (Cabral et al., 2019). The success of NPOs in responding to disasters can be

attributed to resource capacity, well-connected networks, social capital capacity, and strong relationships with donors (Carrasco & O'Brien, 2018).

With this in mind, the literature review synthesis established that NPOs have different structures that necessitate their roles and effectiveness in offering a strategic disaster recovery response. The analysis further demonstrated that the unique characteristics of NPOs, such as tax exemptions, played a significant role in availing resources to NPOs. The increased financial resources resulting from tax relief will offer a response to victims during a disaster. The analysis also established that NPOs have a unique role in coordinating agencies during a disaster (Miković et al., 2019). This role includes using their emergency management systems network to mobilize resources and channel the support received to the right people at the right time (Leardini et al., 2020).

Additionally, it was evident that NPOs have a unique role in post disaster recovery by addressing social challenges, infrastructure, and human capital that a disaster could have destroyed. NPOs also coordinate a comprehensive set of stakeholders who can support post disaster recovery programs, such as providing services such as readjustment of water and sewer systems, power reconnection, and reconstruction of social amenities that people in everyday life need. In Chapter 3, I discuss the research methods used to conduct the study, including data collection, analysis, and presentation.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In this study, I analyzed the differences in resources and services provided by NPOs that cater to vulnerable communities in the City of Southeastern PA. I also examined the roles these organizations play in community disaster response and recovery and their impact on the vulnerable populations in this community. This study will contribute to existing disaster research that has identified race, socioeconomic status, age, disability, and language proficiency as factors that make populations more vulnerable and result in disparate exposure to disasters and their impacts (see Domingue & Emrich, 2019). In this chapter, I discuss the study's central concept, my role as the researcher, and the methodology that I employed. My recruitment procedures and ethical considerations will also be presented.

The participant pool consisted of staff who have worked at the designated NPOs during a presidentially declared disaster since 2010. These disasters include the following: the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic (Pennsylvania COVID-19 Pandemic [DR-4506-PA]), Pennsylvania Severe Winter Storm and Snowstorm 2016 (DR-4267-PA), Pennsylvania Severe Winter Storm 2014 (EM-3667-PA), Pennsylvania Hurricane Sandy 2012 (EM-3356-PA), Pennsylvania Tropical Storm Lee 2011 (DR-4030-PA), Pennsylvania Hurricane Irene 2011 (DR-4025-PA), and Pennsylvania Severe Winter Storms and Snowstorms 2010 (DR-1898-PA; FEMA, n.d.-d). I used a purposive sampling procedure to select the participants for the interviews. The director, chief executive officer (CEO), or the designee of each NPO which participated in this study selected one to four participants who met the requirements of being involved in disaster

response while working or volunteering at the NPO. The participants had the experience and knowledge to answer the questions, which examined the role and responsibilities of their NPO during and following a disaster.

Research Design

For this study, the roles of NPOs in disaster response and recovery for the vulnerable populations in a city in southeastern PA were explored. The central questions framing this research are:

RQ1: How many and which essential services do NPOs deliver to the vulnerable population in the City in southeastern PA during and post disaster?

RQ2: Which sources of funding are utilized by NPOs, and how many resources are needed to sustain services throughout and post disaster for the vulnerable populations in the City in southeastern PA?

RQ3: In what ways, and to what extent, do local, state, and federal governments support NPOs during pre-, mid-, and post disaster?

I employed a qualitative research design for this study, specifically the case study. A case study offers a comprehensive description of a specific case. It is used to analyze and describe a group of people (in this case, the staff of nine NPOs), a problem or several problems, a process, a phenomenon, or an event in detail (see Mohajan, 2018). According to Simons (2009), a case study is “an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system” (p. 21), reflecting real life.

Data was collected from various sources, such as databases and NPO documents. Interviews were held with designated NPO employees and volunteers who actively partook in disaster response and recovery. In addition, follow-up qualitative interviews with the directors or designees of the nine NPOs were used to clarify answers or explain agency documents. I identified the questions of interest and defined what is known based on an analysis of the existing literature. Therefore, a case study was appropriate for this investigation. Refer to Appendix A for the interview questions and Table A1 for the comparison of the interview questions and how they assist in answering the research questions. The information was collected over several weeks from the NPOs in the City. The problem, the context, the issues, and the lessons learned are the appropriate structure for a case study (see Creswell, 2013).

This study's qualitative approach was best due to limited time and resources. The number of participants and the amount of time I, the researcher, could spend with them was limited for several reasons. Currently, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented extended in-person communication, preventing me from spending significant time in the NPO office environment. In addition, the case study was limited to less than 10 NPOs, restricting the number of participants. Lastly, the NPOs studied have limited staff and volunteers; this limitation also precludes a qualitative analysis.

Role of the Researcher

My role in this study is crucial as my educational, professional, and personal experiences are relevant to the topic. I have been professionally active in public health and emergency management, participating in all four phases of emergency management

during my career. I am a certified emergency manager by the International Association of Emergency Managers, FEMA-certified ICS instructor, and FEMA-certified Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) practitioner. In addition, I hold a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a Master of Public Health with a Graduate Certificate in Emergency Management. I am a U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman veteran, and I served with the Veterans Health Administration as a public health emergency manager for over ten years. Furthermore, I worked closely with NPOs in the county where the City is in PA during my employment with the U.S. Census Bureau for the 2020 Decennial Census.

I have written and executed HSEEP-compliant exercises, including tabletop, functional, and full-scale emergency exercises. I participated in the Hurricane Maria response of 2016 as a liaison for the Veterans Health Administration in the Patient Coordination Cell at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois. I have also served as the federal liaison for the National Disaster Medical System Federal Coordinating Center (FCC) at the Philadelphia International Airport. I was responsible for participating in exercise and training for the FCC, including the full-scale Radiation Injury Treatment Network exercise in 2018. Additionally, I have developed, implemented, tested, and activated emergency operations plans and continuity of operations plans for government organizations. While the research design of this study was influenced by my experience in disaster planning, response, and recovery, objectivity remains essential to the integrity of the research. I recognize the significance of the literature and the information generated in the respondent interviews. However, the data was allowed to speak for itself and was not influenced by my values and experiences.

Methodology

Participant Selection

To be eligible to participate in this study, NPOs needed to have been actively involved in serving the vulnerable populations during and after a presidentially declared disaster. An assumption was that participants in my study responded honestly and did not conceal or purposefully omit any information, which could have distorted the study results. Participants indicated a willingness to participate in the study by returning a consent form by email stating that they meet the requirements of the study.

I needed each participant's email address so that I could contact them to coordinate a date and time for the semistructured interview. I identified 15 participants who worked for the NPOs located in the City and initially showed interest in participating in the study. Twelve out of 15 responded to my request for an interview, signed the consent form, and participated in the study. However, defining participant selection criteria to include employees of NPOs within the City that assisted the vulnerable populations during a disaster could also have affected the number of participants I could recruit. Therefore, individuals who did not meet the inclusion criteria were not included in the sample.

Sample Size

Yin (2018) noted that six to 10 cases should provide valid study results. The sample selection was purposeful to attain maximum variation for cross-sectional data analysis. Twenty-nine NPOs in the City were contacted via email or phone, and nine NPOs had 12 staff participate in the interviews. The NPO participation rate was 31%.

Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling, also known as subjective sampling, relies on the researcher's judgment to identify which units will be studied (Lund Research Ltd, 2012). Critical case sampling is a purposive sampling technique that is particularly useful in research where resources are limited. A single case can explain the phenomenon of interest (Lund Research Ltd, 2012). In this study, the selected NPOs' clients emanate from vulnerable populations and meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Persons over the age of 50
- Persons experiencing homelessness
- Persons who are foreign-born or whose primary language is not English
- Persons experiencing poverty
- Single mothers or young mothers

An advantage of purposive sampling is that it can give researchers the justification to generalize from the study sample (Lund Research Ltd, 2012). Critical case sampling will be used to investigate whether a phenomenon is worth investigating further (Lund Research Ltd, 2012). A disadvantage of purposive sampling is that it is prone to researcher bias. A purposive sample, created based on the researcher's judgment, does not have a good defense when alleviating possible researcher biases compared with probability sampling techniques designed to reduce such biases (Lund Research Ltd, 2012). This disadvantage can be mitigated by outlining clear criteria, whether a theoretical framework, expert elicitation, or other accepted criteria.

I identified key participants whose knowledge and opinions provided important insights into answering the research questions. The selection of interviewees is an integral part of the research process because it directly influences data quality. Identifying and gaining access to interviewees must follow a specific protocol to meet legal and ethical requirements. The interviews were semistructured, providing predetermined but flexibly worded questions. The setting in which the interviews were conducted was virtual due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Zoom Video Communications, Inc. provided an ideal interview platform, given that the virtual meeting could be recorded. Participants were interviewed via any laptop or smartphone that had an internet connection.

I ensured that the interviewee's consent, as well as that of their supervisor, if appropriate, was obtained before the interview. At the time of each interview, the purpose of the research and the approximate amount of time needed was explained before the interviewee provided written consent and began answering the questions. In addition, I was required to provide clarification of any issues of anonymity and confidentiality that might arise during the interview.

Instrumentation

A semistructured method was used to gather informative and relevant data. This method includes semistructured interviews, which employ a formalized list of questions followed by open-ended questions to clarify and expand on answers. The interviews were conducted with the directors, CEOs, or designees of the nine identified NPOs. The interview was divided into two main sections: the profile and the interview proper. The

profile contained the respondent's sociodemographic characteristics, such as name, educational background, and the number of months or years working or volunteering at the NPO.

The setting of this study was virtual, using Zoom Video Communications, Inc. or phone calls. Follow-up interviews needed to clarify information were held virtually. In-person interviews were not needed, nor were visits to the facility to review documents, as all relevant documents were delivered electronically or found on the agency's website.

Document Review

I gleaned relevant information by reviewing agency documents. The documents included NPO reports, policies, procedures, marketing materials, budget reports, grant applications, contracts that include the scope of services, memorandums of agreements, and memorandums of understanding. This part of the data collection process assisted me in understanding the role of the NPO in the community before, during, and after the disaster. In addition, I learned about the types of services provided to the community and the number and types of resources needed to provide essential services to the vulnerable population.

Interviews

The study respondents – the directors or designees of the nine NPOs in the City – were purposefully selected for the perspectives and experience they gained from assisting vulnerable populations during disasters. The interview format and protocol guide were developed before the interview process began. The minimum information from each respondent was outlined, and the appropriateness and adequacy of the protocol will be

confirmed to ensure that the research questions can be answered. A written consent form and an explanation of the research were provided to each interviewee before the dialogue began. The respondents were given as much time as needed to ask questions regarding the purpose of the study. After the interview, the participants were debriefed on the next steps of the investigation and given my contact information.

Procedures for Recruitment and Data Collection

The recruitment of interviewees occurred with the assistance of the director or CEO of each NPO. Each interviewee was active during disaster response or recovery within the last 10 years. Given that the COVID-19 (Pennsylvania COVID-19 Pandemic [DR-4506-PA]) response is continuing and has not completed the recovery stage, most interviewees were able to draw from their current experiences. Other FEMA-declared disasters in the City's county since 2010 include Pennsylvania Severe Winter Storm and Snowstorm 2016 (DR-4267-PA), Pennsylvania Severe Winter Storm 2014 (EM-3667-PA), Pennsylvania Hurricane Sandy 2012 (EM-3356-PA), Pennsylvania Tropical Storm Lee 2011 (DR-4030-PA), Pennsylvania Hurricane Irene 2011 (DR-4025-PA), and Pennsylvania Severe Winter Storms and Snowstorms 2010 (DR-1898-PA; FEMA, n.d.-c).

I used a measurable approach that involved interviews with the staff of NPOs that serve vulnerable populations. Additional interviews were unnecessary; however, three respondents were contacted via email to clarify specific answers. The qualitative data provided information on the number and severity of disaster incidents documented in Southeastern PA, the number of NPOs involved in delivering essential services to the

vulnerable population, the types of services, and the number of resources needed to sustain services throughout the incident. In addition, I sought to understand the significance of NPOs in their community during disaster response and recovery. When triangulated, this information helped explore and answer the research questions.

I collected data from as many participants as possible to reach data saturation. According to Tran et al. (2017), researchers must reach data saturation to increase the quality of collected data. Data saturation is reached when no more data can be collected to replicate the study. I expected that as much data as possible was collected using the interviews and agency documents to the point where the research could not be replicated (see Tran et al., 2017).

Qualitative Data Analysis Plan

The interviews provided qualitative data and were coded using the coding software MAXQDA. The qualitative data were coded to give an overall picture of the NPO's role in the Southeastern community during a disaster. The information clarified in the interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. Thematic analysis is applied to a set of data to identify common themes. The themes are identified from patterns, ideas, and topics that emerge repeatedly (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I used this technique to identify common themes in the collected data. Thematic analysis was used in this study because it provides a flexible approach that can be modified based on the research needs (see Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

Issues of Trustworthiness

“Research validity” refers to the ability of a researcher to use research methods to measure variables accurately. Reliable research means that the results correspond to fundamental characteristics and properties in the social world. The three types of research validity are construct validity, content validity, and criterion validity. “Construct validity” is the extent to which a measure adheres to the existing theories and knowledge of the subject under study (Zohrabi, 2013). For example, a questionnaire measuring self-esteem can use assumed or known traits related to self-esteem. A strong correlation would exist between the measured traits and self-esteem. “Content validity” refers to the extent to which a measure covers all aspects of what is being studied.

An example is a test that measures students' English language understanding level. The measurement would contain all aspects of speaking, writing, and reading but not listening. “Criterion validity” refers to the extent to which a measurement's outcome corresponds to other valid measures (Zohrabi, 2013). For example, third-party polling can be conducted to measure voters' political opinions. The measurement will be deemed valid if the results accurately predict the next election's outcome. This research study will be based on content validity. Therefore, I ensured that all the variables relating to NPOs and vulnerable populations were measured accurately to produce reliable results.

Several effects may threaten the validity of the study. Extraneous effects, for example, the respondents' exposure to events that might affect their response to disasters, can skew results. I ensured that all respondents were informed about the nature and purpose of the study. My efforts helped participants understand the scope of the research

questions, allowing them only to provide information that was relevant to the study. The study's validity may also be threatened by temporal effects, including fatigue and maturation (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011). One method that will ensure rigor and quality in qualitative research is reflexive practice. Suppose a researcher clearly describes the intersecting contextual relationships between the participants and themselves, such as race, socio-economic status, age, and cultural background. In that case, it increases the credibility of the findings (Dodgson, 2019). Berger explains that researchers need to focus on self-knowledge and sensitivity, monitoring "the impact of their biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on their research; and maintain the balance between the personal and the universal" (2015, p. 220).

I approached the study with an interpretivist point of view. Interpretivism is based on a naturalistic data collection approach, including interviews and observations. The focus was on understanding the role of NPOs in disaster management. If disaster response actions aimed at assisting vulnerable populations have been altered by changing circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, this change did not affect the stated objective of this study. The study's validity may have been threatened by interactions between group composition and temporal effects (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011). I structured the study so that the respondent's behavior did not affect the outcome. For example, I sampled respondents who have been involved in disaster responses involving vulnerable populations. That ensured the obtained data was from good sources.

Ethical Procedures

This study obeyed all the ethical considerations for academic research. I began by obtaining permission from Walden University to conduct the study. Once granted Walden University's approval number 02-14-22-0468489, I moved to obtain permission from the nine NPOs recruited for the study. The permission allowed me to collect data from participants representing these institutions. I obtained informed consent from the individual respondents before data collection.

When conducting the interviews, I briefed respondents on the study. We then discussed their expectations and how the study results would be used (Flege & Thomsen, 2017). Respondents were requested to sign an informed consent form as their written agreement to participate in the study. Only participants who consented to participate were allowed to proceed to the interviews. The informed consent form also confirmed that the respondents were not coerced into participating in the study.

By taking all the above steps, I met the Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements. The IRB requires that all ethical issues be considered in research involving human subjects. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) requires that all ethical issues be considered in research involving human subjects (Flege & Thomsen, 2017). The IRB states that respondents in a study should be fully informed about the research and the use of information. The IRB also requires participants to be aware of the purpose of the study, the financier, and how the funds are being used. The participants also needed to know who would have access to the findings and any potential adverse effects of their participation. According to Kim (2012), informed consent is to allow participants to

decide whether they are willing to participate in the study. The IRB also provides guidelines on the treatment of participants (Flege & Thomsen, 2017). I ensured that all respondents in the study participated voluntarily. No individual was coerced to participate in the study. For the interviews, all respondents were free to withdraw their participation without affecting their relationship with the study (Hunter et al., 2018).

During the interviews, the respondents were free to decline to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable. Furthermore, participants had the right to leave the interview at any time. No pressure was placed on respondents who decided to leave the study or refused to answer specific questions, although, in this study, no participants withdrew or refused to answer. I protected the safety of the respondents by avoiding any practices that could lead to physical or psychological harm. I also avoided causing any pain, stress, diminishing self-esteem, or anxiety to the respondents.

This study also protected participants' privacy by maintaining the confidentiality of the information provided. In addition to me as the researcher, only the chair and co-chair of this study will have access to the collected data. I also collected information that only helped to answer the research questions (Hunter et al., 2018). I refrained from collecting information not relevant to the study and remained focused on components that aligned with the study's subject. Furthermore, given that the research focused on vulnerable populations, I did not take advantage of such groups in any way when collecting the data. The information collected was not published without the respondents' authority, and this study maintained high levels of anonymity (see Hunter et al., 2018). I did not seek to collect any personal information – name, social security number, or other

personally identifiable information (PII) – from the respondents for inclusion in the study. The collected data is on my computer, with backup storage kept on Microsoft Office One Drive. The personal information was destroyed after the research had been completed and approved. The data is kept secure for five years.

Summary

The research methodology employed in this study includes the research design, target population, sampling procedures, and threats to validity. The data collected is related to the characteristics that scholars have identified as increasing the vulnerability of populations to disasters and their impacts. These characteristics are race, socioeconomic status, age, disability, and language proficiency. The qualitative case study includes data through agency documents, databases, and interviews. In my study, I focused on nine NPOs in southeastern PA that offer disaster response services to people considered vulnerable populations. I used a purposive sampling procedure to select the NPOs and the participants for the interviews. I improved research validity by eliminating threats. Content validity was used to ensure that the collected data supported the study's objectives. In Chapter 4, I will describe the case study, including the setting, the demographics of the population studied, data collection, data analysis, and the results.

Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, I review the research setting, participants' demographics, data collection, and data analysis processes of the study. Evidence of trustworthiness and study results precede a summary of the answers to the research question and transition to Chapter 5. The problem I addressed in the study was the inadequacy of resources available to vulnerable populations to respond to disasters. I aimed to investigate NPOs' role in helping vulnerable populations in a southeastern PA city recover from disasters. A qualitative research paradigm and a case study design represented an appropriate approach to exploring how NPOs respond to the needs of vulnerable populations during disasters. In addition, the experiences of multiple participants provided a holistic view of the phenomenon by collecting data, analyzing information, and reporting results.

I analyzed the differences in resources and services provided by nonprofit organizations that serve vulnerable communities in a city in southeastern PA. I also examined the roles these organizations play in community disaster response and recovery and their impact on the vulnerable populations in this community. This research contributes to existing disaster research that has identified race, socioeconomic status, age, disability, and language proficiency as factors that make populations more vulnerable and result in disparate exposure to disasters and their impacts (see Domingue & Emrich, 2019).

I intended to analyze the differences between the NPOs located in the City in Southeastern PA and the NPOs' roles in community disaster response and recovery. The central theory that grounded the study was Weisbrod's theory of government failure.

Weisbrod's foundational theory explains that the nonprofit sector has grown and developed in response to the government's failure to respond to heterogeneous preferences (Paarlberg & Zuhlke, 2019). Individuals dissatisfied with the quality level will seek services through nonprofits. Preferences for quality or quantity of services, or those that serve cultural differences, are examples of government failure to meet the minority (Paarlberg & Zuhlke, 2019). The overarching research questions were as follows:

RQ1: How many and which essential services do NPOs deliver to the vulnerable population in the City in southeastern PA during and post disaster?

RQ2: Which sources of funding are utilized by NPOs, and how many resources are needed to sustain services throughout and post disaster for the vulnerable populations in the City in southeastern PA?

RQ3: In what ways, and to what extent, do local, state, and federal governments support NPOs during pre-, mid-, and post disaster?

Setting

As the researcher, I was the data collection instrument. Yin (2018) identified a researcher's five desired attributes: asking good questions, being a good listener, staying adaptive, knowing about the research topic, and conducting ethical research (pp. 82-83). Using my mobile phone and personal computer, I collected and analyzed data from interviews, journaling, and physical artifacts such as government reports and databases of the missions, funding, and annual reports of NPOs in my home office in southeastern PA. Participants scheduled a semistructured interview after receiving an explanation of the

research via electronic mail or Zoom and reading and signing the research consent form. Unfortunately, two participants were rescheduled due to their work obligations, meetings, or other priorities. However, the rescheduling did not disrupt the study. Due to their schedule, I had several participants who needed to arrange interviews a week or more from the time of initial contact. At some point in the interviews, most participants expressed that they were extremely busy due to either short-staffing or an increased need for the NPO's services.

From the 78 NPOs, I concluded were still active in the City. I contacted 29 organizations after reading their mission statements and decided that the NPOs served vulnerable populations during disasters. Of the 29 organizations I contacted, three representatives declined to participate (10.3%), three representatives of NPOs responded and accepted to participate but did not respond to an interview request (10.3%), and 14 did not respond (48.3%). Nine organization representatives agreed to participate (31.0%). Of the nine organizations, 12 people participated in the interviews. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the organizations contacted and the resultant responses.

Table 1*NPOs Contacted*

NPO contacted	Mission focus	Response	Number of participants	The reason given for declining participation
1	Children and youth	D	0	Staffing shortage and reorganization
2	Domestic violence	D	0	Staffing shortage
3	Students – environmental sustainability	D	0	Agency mission not applicable to the study
4	Foundation	DNR	0	
5	Low-income. Employment assistance	DNR	0	
6	Mental health for families and children	DNR	0	
7	Faith-based	DNR	0	
8	Foundation	DNR	0	
9	Women and children	DNR	0	
10	Families, financial assistance, English as a second language (ESL), Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) assistance	DNR	0	
11	Faith-based	DNR	0	
12	Food insecurity – emergency assistance	DNR	0	
13	Students – food insecurity	DNR	0	
14	Faith-based	DNR	0	
15	General Population Shelter	DNR	0	
16	Faith-based (low-income, homeless)	DNR	0	
17	Women (substance abuse, trafficking, prostitution)	DNR	0	
18	Foundation	RNP	0	
19	Low-income, English as a Second Language (ESL), medical assistance, social services	RNP	0	
20	General Population Shelter	RNP	0	
21	Senior adults (>50 years old)	P	1	
22	Food insecurity	P	1	
23	Medical and mental services for low-income, under- and non-insured	P	1	
24	Housing	P	2	
25	Legal assistance	P	1	
26	Expectant mothers, ESL, foreign-born individuals	P	3	
27	Foundation	P	1	
28	Men's shelter	P	1	
29	Food insecurity	P	1	

Note. D = Declined, DNR = Did not Respond, RNP = Responded but did not Participate, P = Participated.

Demographics

Participant demographics and characteristics relevant to the study included the nonprofit sector's subclasses of specialties, background and skills, and organizational appointment. I will discuss the participants' demographics and characteristics in the next section. The participants provided informed consent after we discussed the purpose of the study and their background and experience to ensure they met the criteria for the research. A participant was a unit of analysis in the study.

The purposeful sample included 12 staff and volunteers who have worked for the NPO during a presidentially-declared disaster. The disasters discussed during the interviews included the COVID-19 pandemic and Hurricane Ida. On March 13, 2020, President Trump declared a national emergency under Sec. 501(b) of the Stafford Act. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five territories were approved for significant disaster declarations to assist with additional needs identified under the nationwide emergency declaration for COVID-19 (FEMA, 2021). Hurricane Ida, a Category 4 storm, made landfall in Louisiana on Sunday, Aug. 29, 2021. Ida brought a storm surge, high winds, and heavy rainfall to the region, leaving over one million customers without power, including the entire city of New Orleans (NASA Earth Science Division, 2021). The remnants of Hurricane Ida struck PA from August 31st to September 5th, 2021. On September 10, 2021, President Biden declared Ida a major disaster 4618-DR-PA (FEMA, 2022b).

Data Collection

Data collection started on March 1, 2022, following Walden University IRB approval (Approval Number 02-14-22-0468489). The data collection phase ended on May 20, 2022, when data from interviews, journaling, and analysis of NPO and community foundation annual reports did not produce any new themes, thereby indicating saturation. However, data saturation in themes emerged in interviews that included the most needed services from the NPOs, and hurdles faced by the NPOs during disasters, which will be discussed in the next section.

I performed methodological triangulation of the data sources to answer the research questions. I discuss in detail attaining data saturation in the Data Analysis section. During the approximate three months of data collection and analysis, I completed five tasks: making initial contact, conducting semistructured interviews, journaling, analyzing interviews, and member checking by the study participants. In addition, I documented the study methodically to develop rigor in the process and create an audit trail. Finally, I assigned each participant a code to anonymize the collected data, ensuring privacy and confidentiality. The participant codes used for data were: Participants P01, P02, P03, P04, P05, P06, P07, P08, P09, P10, P11, and P12 collected from interviews and journal notes (see Table 2). After obtaining written permission from each participant, I set up a meeting via Zoom Video Communications.

I sent the participant a calendar invitation via email with instructions on the interview and the Zoom link. Once the participant connected to the meeting, I again briefly described the process and ensured the participant they could end the interview and

decline participation in the research at any time. I also asked for permission to begin recording voice only and asked the participant to turn off their video before I began recording the interview. The interview questions (see Appendix A) were provided on the shared screen for the participant to read the questions as I read them. I remained flexible regarding the interview's scheduled date and time to provide a better opportunity for the interview as I was acutely aware of how busy people were due to COVID-19 and short-staffing. I also kept to the scheduled time of 60 minutes but allowed participants to provide more information if they had the time to continue answering the open-ended questions. I used probing questions that needed more detail to understand the meaning behind the answers. Once the interview concluded, I let the participant know when I had stopped recording and gave them time to ask me any questions off the record. Once I read the written transcript downloaded to my computer, I edited any spelling errors and clarified any words by re-listening the interviews. The participant was then emailed a copy of the transcript and allowed to clarify or edit any responses. One participant, P11, did not give a verbal interview but instead emailed responses to specific interview questions. The participant provided written permission to use their responses in my research.

Table 2*Interview Participant Table*

Recording ID	Participant ID	Permission to Record Audio	Date	Start Time (EST)	Stop Time (EST)	Duration (in minutes)
949 1089 8272	P01	Yes	3/1/2022	2:58 PM	3:58 PM	60
924 6884 1065	P02	Yes	3/2/2022	11:03 AM	12:03 PM	60
989 4211 8314	P03	Yes	3/8/2022	2:28 PM	3:19 PM	51
968 9242 9336	P04	Yes	3/8/2022	8:21 AM	9:21 AM	60
931 5022 9222	P05	Yes	3/14/2022	10:48 AM	11:32 AM	44
956 5074 0700	P06	Yes	3/15/2022	11:27 AM	12:00 PM	33
975 4525 4504	P07	Yes	3/15/2022	8:55 AM	9:18 AM	23
938 6323 5604	P08	Yes	3/17/2022	9:51 AM	10:41 AM	50
991 6973 9748	P09	Yes	3/18/2022	2:53 PM	3:45 PM	52
985 1424 5334	P10	Yes	3/29/2022	1:57 PM	2:28 PM	31
Email response	P11	Permission to use email transcript was received	3/29/2022	N/A	N/A	N/A
989 0593 6614	P12	Yes	4/8/2022	12:55 PM	1:44 PM	49

The participants' educational and career backgrounds were eclectic. When talking to the participants about their personal experiences and educational background, I found a variety of academics, skill sets, and experiences brought to the NPO where they worked. The interviewees had educational and career backgrounds in business administration, public health, advocacy, nursing, public administration, social work, law, education, engineering, and government. The participants worked in the nonprofit sector from 1 year to more than 10 years.

Data Analysis

Data collected included interviews, journaling, and analysis of the NPOs and community foundation annual reports. Data collection and analysis occurred congruently. My experience with the first semistructured interview helped as a source for comparison with other participants, which provided a template to collect valuable data and identify potential themes to explore further. Creswell (2013) identifies the four steps in the data coding process; open coding, focused coding, axial coding, and theory. As I read through each interview transcript, I developed codes during the open coding phase. Open coding is an inductive approach in which the material is coded without a predefined code list. Instead, potential codes are entered into the material while it is analyzed (see University of Helsinki, n.d.). The focused coding phase found common words, or sets of words, that were repeating across the interviews. The repeated words were categorized into code sets. Axial coding was the next phase. I focused on one category at a time in relation to other categories, the code sets, and assessing the categories to find connections that answered the research questions.

I used MAXQDA to develop the codes and code sets. Utilizing the Text Search & Autocode feature, I searched all transcripts for the code set, which covered the services provided by the NPOs to vulnerable populations. The codes I used for the interview transcripts and the frequency of mentions in the transcripts are shown in Table 3. I used the code map feature of MAXQDA to find the frequency of the codes in the transcripts. Before compiling that table, I removed all codes that were not applicable or duplicated in the same sentence. For instance, if the autocode was “female” and the interviewee referred to someone other than the vulnerable population, such as a co-worker or peer, I removed the coding for that particular instance. Next, I highlighted the participants' quotes that supported or emphasized the emerging themes during the open coding phase. The most notable quotes appear in Table 4. As the data analysis progressed, I reduced axial coding into selective coding. Finally, I organized my categories and themes and connected them to each research question.

Table 3*Autocode Frequency in Transcript*

Autocode Set	Frequency of Codes Found in Interview Transcripts
<i>Autocode Set Vulnerable Populations</i>	
Child, youth, kids, toddler, baby	64
Senior, over 50, elderly	26
Under-resourced, poor, impoverished, under-insured, uninsured, ALICE	22
Disability, disabilities, disabled, access needs, trauma	8
<i>Autocode Set Services Provided</i>	
Housing, home, rent, apartment, homeless, transient, eviction, lease, resident	223
Food	188
Medical, dental, mental health, hygiene, OBGYN, pregnancy, prescription	53
Education, educating, information	38
Religious support, ministry	4
<i>Autocode Set Race</i>	
Women, female	27
African American, Black	27
LatinX, Latin, Spanish, Guatamalen, Cuban	20
Men, male	16
English, White, Caucasian	14
<i>Autocode Set Hurdles to Overcome</i>	
Phones, laptops, monitors, tablets, computers, technology, shredder, scanner	55
Supply chain, inflation	21
Tired, burnout, short-staffed	10
Silo, Hero, lack of unity of effort	7
Lacking a coordinating body	4
<i>Autocode Set Relationships</i>	
Government, municipal, county, state, federal, FEMA, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency	170
Transform, pivot, change, mission	44
Collaboration, trust	21
Unity of effort	2

Table 4*Open Coding of Participant's Quotes*

Open Code	Participant Quotes
Dedication to the mission	“Well, I would like to say that employees have been amazing. I know that some organizations have had issues as it relates to burnout, but we did not have that issue at all, and probably because the employees had once been in their [the residents’] shoes.”
Food insecurity	“We serve all of them. What they have in common is they're under-resourced in terms of the ability to buy food.”
Food insecurity	“Mothers became teachers. Mom can't go to work because the kids are home, and so, so there was a variety of causes (of unemployment)”.
Government rules impeding the delivery of services	“And despite the mail issue they [the state government] haven't you know done anything to change that 30 day requirement but we still need to file the paperwork on time.”
Housing crisis	“And that the affordable housing crisis and all of that, the motels and hotels are full so when it [COVID-19] hit there was nowhere to place people who had been unhoused by the flooding.”
Lack of a coordinating body	“They never even convened the call much less anything else again. The agencies and the community is really left to fend for themselves which, thank goodness, they had relationships.”
Lack of unity of effort	“The other thing that it didn't become an obstacle so much it's just an interesting observation and how it was navigated and that's that in certain areas of the county there was some territorialism.”
Lack of unity of effort	“People wanted to be the hero, instead of just saying Okay, people are in need let's work together.”
Lack of volunteers due to COVID-19	“...which really put a heavy burden on staff with them basically became responsible for doing what you know, there are thousands of volunteer hours given to this organization.”
Overcoming hurdles	“...just very different approach, very different in what they were able to do, willing to do. You had some school districts, who were actually putting food on school buses and doing reverse routes to deliver food.”
Overcoming hurdles during COVID-19 quarantine	“You know, we were doing people's wills and power of medical directives, and they would literally drive in their car up to the curb, and we would do it outdoors with a notary and two witnesses.”
Overcoming hurdles during COVID-19 quarantine, Emotional support	“To take it [needed items] to their homes, like no contact or anything. We would just leave it on the front door, or they will come out and just say hi to us. Many participants don't have family or friends so they were isolated at home with their children so seeing someone else and knowing that we still were there, even if we were not doing home visits, it was it was a great relief for them.”
Solutions for food insecurity	“That was actually the one place where they almost thrived; there was lots to do, a real interest in people gardening both of their own homes, as well as supporting our farms and are raised bed gardens.”

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Validity in qualitative research means the “appropriateness” of the tools, processes, and data (Leung, 2015, p. 325). Qualitative studies must establish credibility by member checking to verify the transcript accurately and adequately records the perspective of the participants of the study (Creswell, 2013). Dependability and confirmability show that others can verify the research (Creswell, 2013). The use of MAXQDA software creates a level of confirmability. Methodological triangulation and member checking established the trustworthiness and credibility of the study results. I emailed the participant’s transcript to them within two days of the initial interview. Three of the 11 participants confirmed their synthesis reports were accurate; the twelfth participant emailed the responses to me; therefore, they did not need to check the results.

I stored the audio recordings of the semistructured interview and member checking on my personal computer and uploaded the transcripts to MAXQDA. By following the steps of interviews, member checking, accurately implementing MAXQDA software, and confirming the results, this qualitative research should be able to accomplish the purpose of this study, which is to understand the role of nonprofit organizations serving vulnerable populations during disasters.

Another tool I used to analyze data was Yin’s (2018) logic model. The logic model “stipulates and operationalizes a complex chain of occurrences or events over an extended period, trying to show how a complex activity, such as implementing a program, takes place” (Yin, 2018, p.186). For example, in looking at the role of government compared to the role of NPOs during disasters, the NPO staff become

flexible and pivot their operations to meet the mission and sometimes expand it. This mission expansion was seen during COVID-19 when many of these NPOs became distribution centers for food. The cause-effect-cause-effect patterns, as stated by Yin (2018), were demonstrated by the disaster and the resulting changes by the NPOs: to care for the vulnerable despite government restrictions, quarantine, supply chain hurdles, and staff shortages, as well as the staff's personal tragedies due to the disaster. These events then stimulated changes in procedure, staff job descriptions, and NPO's operational playbook.

Results

Research Question 1

RQ1: How many and which essential services do NPOs deliver to the vulnerable population in the City in southeastern PA during and post disaster?

The NPOs deliver a variety of services to vulnerable populations during disasters. This study's two most discussed disasters were the COVID-19 pandemic and Hurricane Ida. There were 15 notable services delivered during these two disasters, as discovered in the interview transcripts. The four most commonly discussed by the participants were housing, food, healthcare, education, and information.

Housing

The discussion of housing services required was extensive. The need for housing assistance included legal services to prevent eviction, finding a residence due to losing a home during Ida or becoming homeless for other reasons such as unemployment, eviction, or lack of affordable housing. NPOs that generally do not offer services such as

paying utility bills were being contacted to assist in paying bills for sick residents who could not work or lost their jobs. Also, housing repair was needed to prevent homes from being condemned, causing illnesses due to mold or accidents due to slips, trips, and falls. Some people requested structural repairs, such as wheelchair ramps or stairs, to access their homes. When discussing the extensive home repairs requested, Participant 04 stated, “We've had homes that have had no water in them, we had a family that was going down to the [local river] and filling up milk cartons every morning.” The basic need for clean water can be difficult to acquire during disasters. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019) has listed 12 hazards to prevent illness and injury. “Drink safe water and eat safe food” is listed and includes tips such as cleaning contaminated surfaces, throwing away food contaminated with flood waters, boiling or treating water to ensure safety, and drinking only bottled water (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). Those in vulnerable populations face limited mobility, language barriers, and limited resources, including finances, transportation, and access to materials. The NPOs in the community help the vulnerable population to meet their unmet needs.

Currently, there is a significant affordable housing crisis in the City's county. Participant 04 also mentioned the gentrification occurring in the City and how it affects the low-income and ALICE population. Participant 04 stated, “Pretty significant gentrification, and it's going on here and now as well. Most low-income families are being pushed out into the mobile home parks.” The U.S. Census reports that 69% of the population of PA between 2016-2020 owned a home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Comparatively, the owner-occupied housing unit drops to 41.5%, showing the instability

of having a residence. In addition, renters are subject to increased rent, eviction, and occupancy limitations. NPOs address the affordable housing needs among victims in the aftermath of a disaster and offer support services to assist in the post disaster recovery process (Bartram et al., 2017).

Food

The majority of the interviewees saw requests for food. Many participants stated that their NPOs had become ad hoc distribution centers for providing food for their clients as food insecurity had become a critical issue. Food insecurity was due to many reasons. Those at the poverty level of the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) population are already in a precarious financial position. As it stands now, more than four in ten United States households cannot stretch their income to meet their household needs (United Way, 2022). In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic and Hurricane Ida caused job losses. PA has a documented 2,483,301 cases of COVID-19 and 45,766 deaths from COVID-19 (Pennsylvania Department of Health, 2022). In December 2020 and December 2021, the unemployment rate of PA was 7.1% and 5.4%, respectively. Compared to the United States, the unemployment rates in December 2020 and December 2021 were 6.7% and 3.9%, respectively (The Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, 2022). For many families on the verge of poverty or homelessness, a job loss can be crippling. The NPOs in the City became a means of food distribution due to a loss of income by the vulnerable population, lack of access to fresh food, and the mandated quarantines.

The quarantines and lack of consistent public transportation prevented many from getting to the grocery stores for various reasons, such as illnesses of the transportation employees or a change in operations. As a result, school-aged children who rely on school lunches for meals were facing hunger. The National School Lunch Program served more than 168 million school lunches during the 2018-19 school year (Department of Education, 2022). Many families in the City looked to the NPOs to provide food for their families. Another complication of the COVID-19 pandemic was the government rules still in place despite the pandemic and subsequent quarantine. Participant 12 stated, “They [the government] were requiring them to go in the office to have those cards loaded, which is a huge problem in the middle of a pandemic.” Many government offices were closed or short-staffed during the pandemic. As previously stated, public transportation also became problematic. If people could not have the food assistance cards reloaded or there was a delay, they turned to the food bank, the food cupboards, and the NPOs to assist with food delivery.

Healthcare

Healthcare is a concern for many during the pandemic. As of 2020, PA has the eighth highest number of uninsured kids in the nation, with nearly 128,000 children who do not have health insurance and do not have regular access to care (PA Partnerships for Children, 2020). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2021b), PA has an uninsured population of 7.0% and 9.8% with a disability. The health care services provided by NPOs were extensive. The range included medical and dental services, prescription drugs, mental and behavioral health, vaccinations, counseling, pediatrics, nutrition

counseling, social and emotional support, and well-baby visits. Other factors for seeking assistance through the NPOs are lack of healthcare or prescription insurance, confusing information regarding COVID-19, distrust of the government, or language barriers.

Regarding the healthcare provided to the community, Participant 10 stated, “Sure, so we are a safety net provider of health care for the vulnerable population, and we knew the population trusts us and would rely on us. Our patients tell us in patient feedback surveys that you know they trust us; 98% of our patients trust us and trust us for information and reliability.”

Education and Information

As noted above, many of the population sought information regarding disaster relief services or other pertinent information through the NPOs. An important service provided by the NPOs was healthcare information regarding COVID-19. Participant 06 stated, “We had to talk about what is the way to prevent it [COVID-19]—washing their hands, providing all those resources in education. And now after that, the shot [vaccination] was approved, educating them, as well as why it is important to get vaccinated.” Trust was built for many of the vulnerable populations who were already familiar with the NPO staff in their communities. Therefore, the NPOs became the primary sources of information for many communities.

Information provided to the community was not just regarding the prevention and treatment of COVID-19. The interviews also uncovered themes of referrals. If a community member sought assistance at one NPO, the resident often asked for information on where to find other resources. For instance, a person seeking food could

also ask for information on how to treat COVID-19, where to find resources for their school-aged child who was now home in quarantine, and where to find transportation or a computer to access a mental health provider. The staff and volunteers at the NPOs were expected to have information on other NPOs that could provide specific services.

Participant 02 covered this need in his statement: “[A]nd so an example I’ll give you again is if a person needs food, I’m your person. If a person needs housing, you need to go to the housing authority. A person needs medical care, you go to [medical NPO] now. If the person needs help with the taxes, you need to go to that organization. There’s all kinds of organizations for everything. So we can get the organizations to come together and openly refer people to each other.”

Other Resources Provided

The interviews provided insight into the many services the NPOs delivered to vulnerable populations. Because of the community’s needs, some NPO staff would have to pivot their operations and utilize their funding to provide resources that were not considered routine pre-COVID and pre-Ida. The other resources provided to the community were ministry and spiritual support, emotional and social support, legal assistance, clothing, school supplies, personal hygiene items, diapers, formula, and other items for newborns and toddlers, intensive case management, furniture, and gift cards for grocery stores and gasoline. Another resource needed by the community and the NPO staff was technology services to connect with clients and providers and access federal/state service applications. The staff of the NPOs worked from home during quarantine, but many lacked the office resources to work efficiently from home during

the pandemic's beginning. Therefore, NPOs needed to either provide equipment to the staff or the staff was required to use their personal computers, phones, and the internet.

Research Question 2

RQ2: Which sources of funding are utilized by NPOs, and how many resources are needed to sustain services throughout and post disaster for the vulnerable populations in the City in southeastern PA?

NPOs offer services to disadvantaged populations, mobilize collective action, and advocate for civil rights; conducting this work requires significant resources. The government has invested in a public-nonprofit partnership model since the 1960s; this union secures social service provisions in the United States (Paxton et al., 2020). However, local, state, and federal government agencies are cutting funding, leaving nonprofits to find alternative sources of revenue, according to the 2013 study by Pettijohn et al. (as cited in Paxton et al., 2020). This shift means nonprofits increasingly rely on other forms of support, namely private donations and volunteers. As a result, NPOs must find various funding and donation sources. These sources include private dollars, community donations, faith-based donations from the congregation, local, state, and federal government grants, business donations (tangible items and dollars), and fundraising. There was a concern that the pandemic would hurt funding from routine revenue streams such as fundraising and corporate donations. As a result, NPO staff had to request grants during the COVID-19 pandemic to subsidize the increase in costs due to the influx of community needs. These grants were paid to the state and local governments, and the NPOs had to request the funds from the government or Community

Foundations. This funding took time to reach the local and state governments and, in turn, took some time to be distributed to the Community Foundations and the NPOs. Grants during COVID-19 and Hurricane Ida included the Coronavirus Relief Fund (Department of the Treasury, 2021, pp. 4182-4194), the COVID-19 Coverage Assistance Fund (Health Resources & Services Administration, 2021), Child Nutrition COVID-19 Waivers (USDA Food and Nutrition Service, n.d.), Department of Community Development grants, Department of Veterans Affairs grants, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (117th Congress, 2021), and the Hurricane Ida Disaster Response and Recovery Fund.

Participant 10 discussed the positive response from the community to continue funding the mission of the NPO. Participant 10 stated, “Well, certainly, we were concerned that economic support from individual donors would drop off, but we are very fortunate to be able to say that the community has remained committed to our mission, you know, to provide access to health care during a pandemic.” Participant 4 noted that “We have a very we have a really nicely diversified portfolio of funding. Individuals make up the biggest sector now, so we're a \$1.31-\$1.35 million operation. And so, assume around 35% are coming from individuals. And then, we have government funding, both local, state, and federal. We have churches local churches that contribute to us, and we have local businesses that contribute.” The diversity of funding streams allows the NPOs to have various resources at their disposal. However, this also requires the NPOs to dedicate staff to continuously reach out to the community, apply for grants, and seek out donations from the community and businesses.

Research Question 3

RQ3: In what ways, and to what extent, do local, state, and federal governments support NPOs during pre-, mid-, and post disaster?

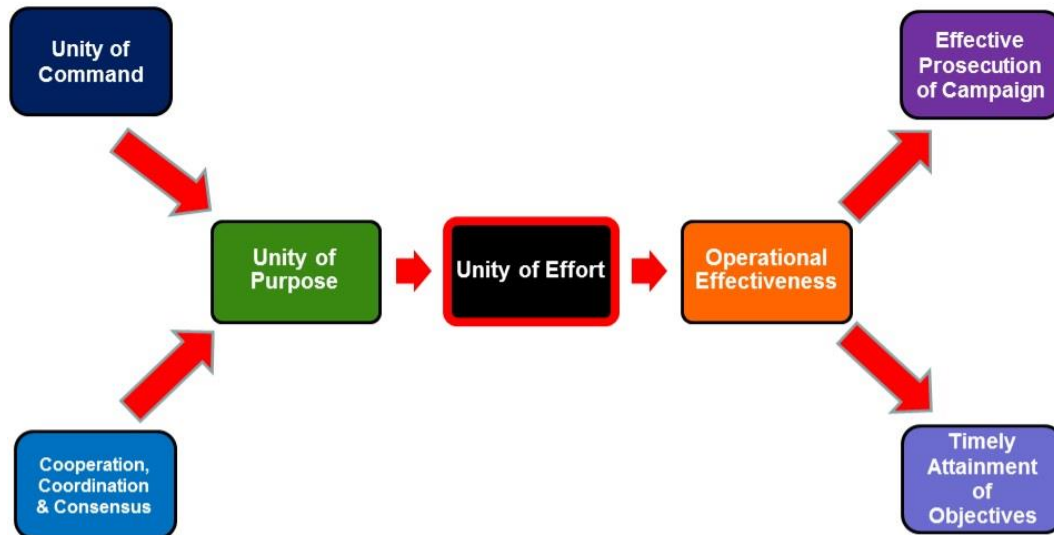
This question had inconsistent answers throughout the interviews. Some interviewees stated a close relationship with the local government, while others had little to no relationship with government staff. Most of the discussions regarding the government focused on funding. Very few non-monetary resources were provided by local, state, and federal governments. The government-provided resources included cloth masks, hand sanitizer, meals-ready-to-eat (MREs), vaccines provided by the federal government, and landfill space provided by the municipal government. In addition, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Education were mentioned as crucial partners in providing food to the needed communities. The schools were used as hubs for food distribution as well. Participant 12 described the relationship with the state government as “[Y]eah the state really pulled both ends, so basically, they would pull in the federal folks, but they would also invite the local folks, so they really were kind of the linchpin on all this.” Participant 10 stated, “[W]e have relationships at the local level with our county as well as the county health department, which is a very strong relationship.” Participant 5 also stated they had good relationships with the local and state government; “I think we have a good relationship with our local government and even our state government. We have a number of representatives that we literally could pick up the phone and get the person right on the phone.”

One of the themes that did emerge from the transcripts regarding the local government was a lack of unified command. Participant 12 stated, “I think support from the county was lacking in terms of guidance, you know, as far as the coordination, the coordination pieces early on, there was a lot of unknowns and confusion.” The NPO staff relied on one another and pre-existing relationships for information but were sometimes left to find information themselves.

Summary

In summary, NPO staff could stay on mission by pivoting how the organization served its community and utilizing various funding sources. Staff burnout was a continuing issue even after the first year of COVID-19; this caused a high turnover, loss of staff in critical positions, and some relationships within and among NPOs and government agencies were adversely affected. However, community relationships and relationships among NPOs staff provided the means to serve the vulnerable populations with food, housing, medical care, and many other services and resources they could not obtain on their own.

A hurdle faced by NPOs and other stakeholders in the community was a lack of unity of effort. The U.S. Department of Defense Dictionary of Military Terms defines unity of effort as “the product of successful unified action” and consists of ‘coordination and cooperation toward common objectives, even if the participants are not necessarily part of the same command or organization” (U.S. Department of Defense, 2008, p. 576). Figure 2 depicts how unity of effort works within a unified command.

Figure 2*Unity of Effort*

Note: Figure 2 depicts the *Unity of Effort* adapted from “Fighting against allies: an examination of “national caveats” within the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) campaign in Afghanistan & their impact on ISAF operational effectiveness, 2002-2012” by R. Kingsley, 2014, Doctoral dissertation, <https://mro.massey.ac.nz/xmlui/handle/10179/6984>.

Cooperation and coordination are the keys to the unity of effort necessary to succeed in joint operations. Possible reasons for the lack of unity of effort were the absence of a coordinating body, some agencies choosing to work independently, a lack of education and training for a pandemic, and a perceived sense of a hero complex among some organizations. One of my observations based on the interviews was a need to have less competition and more collaboration among the NPOs because there were so many services needed across the community. In addition, supply chain issues and inflation dampened progress because NPOs have limited budgets. The supply chain issues and subsequent inflation took funding from the NPOs that were not budgeted. Examples of

cost increases and how they affected the NPO's budget include an increase in the cost of lumber for repairing houses. On February 10, 2020, lumber closed at 454.50 USD per 1.000 board feet. On May 3, 2021, lumber closed at 1634.90 USD per 1.000 board feet, equating to an approximate 360% increase in prices (Markets insider, 2022).

In Chapter 5, I will describe the interpretation of my research findings, the limitations of the study, my recommendations for further research, and the implications of this research on positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In this chapter, I provide a discussion, conclusions, and recommendations based on the study's findings. Details include interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations—implications of the study and conclusions complete Chapter 5. This qualitative descriptive case study aimed to explore the role of NPOs during disasters and their impact on vulnerable populations. This descriptive case study is a story about real-world disasters and subsequent problems facing people and how they address them. It includes a concise account of the facts of the situation and commentary to explore the causes of the problems, the forces behind the solutions, the outcomes of implementation, and a connection to Weisbrod's theory of government failure. A qualitative research paradigm and a case study design represented an appropriate approach to exploring how NPOs respond to disasters and pivot their operations to meet the mission of serving vulnerable populations.

I did not use quantitative measurement, closed-ended questions, or a quantitative survey in the study design, which ruled out the quantitative and mixed-methods approaches. A qualitative method facilitates the in-depth examination of a phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Instead, I used multiple data sources, including interviews, journal entries, and physical artifacts such as government reports and databases of NPO yearly reports, grant requests, and community foundation reports.

Sample selection was purposive to attain maximum variation for data analysis. Data saturation occurred after I had saturated all data from interviews, journaling, and analysis of physical artifacts. The semistructured interviews included 18 open-ended

questions developed from the literature review related to NPOs and their services to vulnerable populations. Interviews were conducted on Zoom to maintain privacy and access to participants. A thoughtful review of my notes helped me to contain any researcher bias by using reflexivity to maintain neutrality. The analysis of government, NPO, and community foundation reports provided methodological triangulation of the data to answer the research questions while contributing to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study results. Data analysis indicated six themes: (a) housing, (b) food, (c) information, (d) education, (e) funding is primarily from private donations but requires diversity for survival, and (f) relationships with the governments were good but lacking unity. In addition, minor themes emerged from the data, which include the following: (a) adaptation of the NPO to the needs of the community; (b) the dedication of the staff and volunteers to the mission; and (c) the need for more collaboration, planning, and preparedness by the community stakeholders.

Interpretation of Findings

In this section, I discuss how the findings in Chapter 4 confirm, disprove, or extend the body of knowledge related to the role of NPOs during disasters by comparing the results with the results in the peer-reviewed literature described in Chapter 2. I analyzed and interpreted the study results in the conceptual framework within the study's data, findings, and scope. The overarching research questions were as follows:

RQ1: How many and which essential services do NPOs deliver to the vulnerable population in the City in southeastern PA during and post disaster?

RQ2: Which sources of funding are utilized by NPOs, and how many resources are needed to sustain services throughout and post disaster for the vulnerable populations in the City in southeastern PA?

RQ3: In what ways, and to what extent, do local, state, and federal governments support NPOs during pre-, mid-, and post disaster?

Research Question 1

The results for RQ1 were consistent with the primary needs of the vulnerable community after a disaster: housing, food, healthcare services, and information and education. The study by Sovacool et al. (2018) focused on rebuilding and reconstruction after Hurricane Katrina. The authors noted that the occurrence of such a hurricane revealed the families' vulnerabilities when faced with an emergency. The researchers argued that families with no assets, savings, or home insurance plans were the most affected because they could not access economic avenues to rebuild their houses. The NPOs in this study also met psychological, social, and emotional needs. Individuals who encounter disasters experience a range of negative physical, mental, and psychosocial consequences. Post disaster emotional and psychosocial problems are reported with rates significantly higher than physical health problems. Studies on post flood psychosocial and mental health impacts have reported that those who live through disasters experience higher rates of psychological distress, anxiety, depression, somatization, and post traumatic stress disorder (Kiran et al., 2021). Those with pre-existing mental disorders are also likely to experience vulnerability due to their more significant needs and disruption of supply chains and support networks (Kiran et al., 2021, p.2). Many

interviewees mentioned supply chain disruption as problematic while serving the vulnerable, as noted in Table 3.

The population demographics in my study showed that the NPOs commonly served babies and children. Katz (2018) reported that following Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans was ranked as one of the poorest neighborhoods prehurricane Katrina, which negatively impacted children's sustainability. Approximately 42% of children in New Orleans lived below the poverty line. As a result, children lacked basic needs such as education, clothing, and shelter (Lin et al., 2017). NPOs address these essential primary needs when responding to a disaster, including post disaster recovery programs (Lin et al., 2017).

Research Question 2

The findings for RQ2 aligned with previous research by Garcia and Chandrasekhar (2020), who investigated funding sources for NPOs. The NPOs in this study reported having a variety of funding sources: private donations, corporate donations, and government. Private donations from the community were the most common form of requiring the least effort and can be accomplished through advertising on low to no-cost platforms such as social media, a webpage, and even word-of-mouth. The interviewees reported word-of-mouth as the most common form of advertising. Those in the community who had used the NPO's services discussed their success with others who may also be in need. The study by Lee et al. (1999, as cited in Paxton et al., 2020) found that nonprofits hold donating events such as galas, luncheons, and charity events, but donating can be completed with minimal effort, in private, anonymously, and

according to an individual's schedule and timeframe. Therefore, donations require low levels of social engagement, and effort can be accomplished almost instantaneously. In my study, the interview participants mentioned that private donations came in the form of monetary as well as in-kind donations. Participant 2 stated, "In fact, if you look at that \$1,000,000, half of that is donations from people coming in." Private donations can also be more reliable than grants, as government grants have an expiration date. For example, the COVID-19 Child Nutrition Waivers expired on June 30, 2020. If these grants are extended, the notice to the states may be disseminated on the grant expiration date (see USDA Food and Nutrition Service, n.d.). However, it may not leave enough time to plan for new operations or apply for an extension.

Another source of funding, after grants and private donations, was monetary or in-kind donations from businesses. Businesses may be adversely affected by disasters as businesses often rely on individuals in the community to support them. In interviewing the staff of NPOs that routinely depend on business donations, small businesses unable to donate to the NPOs could not do so because of supply chain issues or a preoccupation with keeping the business open. Another hurdle was contacting businesses, as many were affected by COVID-19 and experienced periods where the business was closed. However, those businesses that remained open and could contribute to the community NPOs continued to provide support. For example, Participant 10 reported that their NPO "dispense[s] medication so it's about \$4 million worth of donated medications and then we receive in-kind donations of additional services like laboratory services diagnostic imaging and procedures through our hospital partnerships."

Maghsoudi and Moshtari (2020) found that perception of the state's role in disaster management was consistent with charitable individuals who were more impacted by victims' experiences than political affiliations. They also established that recovery programs primarily led by the government were less effective in responding to disasters than privately sponsored NPOs that were more efficient in providing relief aid to victims (Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020). One of the most efficient and effective donations for NPOs is from private entities, which significantly provide relief aid to disaster victims (see Bartram et al., 2017).

Research Question 3

RQ3 resulted in varied responses. Most participants stated they had “good” or “excellent” relationships with local, county, and state governments. However, when the NPO staff were looking for unity, guidance, and information, they expressed a need for a unified command and unity of effort by the governments and the community. Too many silos caused replicated efforts and inefficient use of resources and personnel. In the literature review, Kawamoto and Kim (2019) noted that few NPOs might be willing to work with government agencies and sometimes other NPOs. Therefore, it is crucial to be mindful of the factors that could affect NGOs’ decisions to engage in a post disaster recovery process (Choudhury et al., 2019). Hesselman and Lane (2017) investigated factors that influenced NPOs' involvement in collaborations with other NPOs organizations. The researchers studied 95 charitable organizations and established that older NPOs with large capacity and government funding were less likely to engage in collaborative efforts to support post disaster recovery programs among victims.

Limitations of the Study

In this section, I describe the limitations and reliability of my study results as evidence of trustworthiness that arose during the execution of the study. I took reasonable measures to describe the study's limitations to include quality in the research design that addressed the trustworthiness of the study results. In Chapter 1, the focus concerned three limitations of the study. The first limitation of the study is the collection of data through qualitative open-ended interview questions with the directors, chief executive officers, or designees of the NPOs. The sample size also limited the research. There is historical data about the involvement of NPOs in disaster responses. Because there are no consistent measures of involvement, I limited the study to the recent involvement of NPOs in disaster management and recovery (Valcik, 2016), Hurricane Ida, and COVID-19. Finally, the limitation on NPO involvement focused on NPOs being more proactive and responsive in helping vulnerable populations affected by disasters.

I have addressed the issue where three of eleven participants confirmed that their interview transcripts for member checking were accurate. Dependability is a criterion for trustworthiness related to the consistency of the study results. Dependability occurs if the feedback from participants during member checking of the analysis and interpretation of the findings is consistent with the interview data collected for a study. Member checking allows a participant to confirm that the analysis and interpretation of an interview were accurate and complete (Patton, 2015). The credibility of the study results improves when a participant confirms the synthesis report (Patton, 2015). Possible reasons a participant did not respond to member checking were that the participant did not remember the

interview, was too busy to reread the transcript or assumed the information was accurate. The limitations of member checking data in my study included a waiting period up until the day of data analysis, one week to one month, depending on when the initial interview occurred, for a participant to confirm by email response. I did include the data collected from the participants even if the participant did not confirm the accuracy of the transcript.

In summary, I have revised the study's limitations identified in Chapter 1 to describe the reliability of my study results. I described member checking, multiple and unique sources of data used, the interview protocol, audit trail, and restriction of researcher bias as evidence of trustworthiness that arose during the execution of the study. A researcher could decide to make my study results transferable to a study.

Implications

In this section, I describe recommendations for further research grounded in the strengths and limitations of my study and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Research on the experiences of NPOs during disasters can be advantageous to governments, NPOs, and organizational leaders. Further research regarding the importance of NPOs in the community before, during, and after a disaster can influence operational changes in community preparedness and how funding is distributed during disasters. My study's findings can potentially affect positive social change at the individual, community, and government levels. The findings of my study could add to the body of knowledge related to nonprofit organizations and how they affect the community. The study results could

provide information to explore areas for future research, and a researcher could decide whether to make the results transferable to a study.

Recommendations for Future Research

I recommend future research into exploring how NPOs serve the most vulnerable in communities during and after disasters. The community will bear the burden of the children and adults who cannot fix their homes, find medical and mental healthcare, and receive proper nutrition after a disaster if there are no services for those in need. The long-term repercussions of not helping those in need are diseases, accidents, and illnesses due to a lack of healthcare or unsafe homes due to mold or structural deficiencies. In addition, children who experience disasters may develop mental health disorders because they survived a disaster but could not receive the proper assistance they required to heal. According to (Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020), children who witness disasters have reported high depression levels. Children who lived through disasters also exhibited anxiety and social problems when interacting with others in the community (Hesselman & Lane, 2017). Such mental problems negatively affect children's well-being in the aftermath of a disaster and the need for NPOs to offer medical assistance to children (Cabral et al., 2019).

I also recommend continued research regarding the NPOs' involvement in disaster management and how NPOs fit into the unified command structure. Further research will support the importance of integrating the NPOs as a standard seat at the table in a unified command structure, leading to unified action and unity of effort. Unity of effort will lead to efficiency of resources and better use of funding.

Another study that could expand on my research compares the services available to vulnerable populations during disasters to those communities with limited resources and fewer NPOs than in my study. The City I studied is in a county with pockets of the impoverished and those in the tax bracket of 24% or higher. If NPOs rely on private donations, and a majority of the population is considered impoverished or the ALICE population, how effectively can NPOs operate relying on less private donations and more grants and corporate donations? It would be interesting to discover if the NPOs would find other funding sources not mentioned in this study or would the NPOs rely more on volunteer hours to meet their mission.

Conclusion

The importance of understanding the function of NPOs is relevant to the discipline of emergency management, primarily since most studies focus on the local, county, and state entities. This research found that NPOs play a pivotal role in serving the most vulnerable in the communities. The efforts of the NPOs, directly and indirectly, contribute to the immediate and long-term health of the community and should be considered an essential branch of the unified command during disasters.

The conceptual framework of the Four Cs (communicate, collaborate, coordinate and cooperate) can provide a basis for solving some of the barriers which decreased the efficiency of the NPOs and possibly their reach to all vulnerable populations.

Organizations may value or be better at one or more of the Four Cs. As noted by Martin et al. (2016), NGOs with some middle management structure may have the luxury of an office and a designated liaison and tend to be pretty good at cooperating and

communicating. The larger organizations, including the federal government, may not be as flexible in coordinating and collaborating. Large organizations are restricted by grant cycles, oversight, and responsibilities to multiple stakeholders. As noted in this study, smaller organizations, such as the NPOs in the City, have the flexibility to cooperate and the will to communicate but may not have the staff to coordinate and collaborate. Finding the balance between the strengths and shortfalls of the stakeholders who respond to disasters is key to the success of the response and recovery phases. The community's health depends on timely response and having the resources necessary to reacclimate after a disaster effectively.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. How many full-time staff members do you employ and how many volunteers support your agency?
2. Describe your participants' demographics, such as age, sex, race, ethnicity, and languages primarily spoken in the home.
3. How are participants referred to or how do they find your agency during a disaster?
4. What have you identified as your participants' most prominent or urgent need(s)?
5. What are the primary services that you offer?
6. Describe the mental health services that you offer during a disaster.
7. Describe the physical health services that you offer during a disaster.
8. What are the primary immediate concerns faced by participants who turn to your agency during a disaster?
9. What are your agency's sources of funding?
10. Describe the economic and resource concerns that your agency experiences during a disaster.
11. Describe the discrepancies you experience between meeting participants' needs and the resources available.
12. What cost would you place on the personnel, equipment, and consumables required to sustain the services you provide in response to a disaster?
13. How is your agency follow-up care process implemented and maintained during and after a disaster?

14. In your experience, what types of services in particular face service delivery concerns?
15. What obstacles have you encountered or observed impede optimal inter-agency relations and cooperation
16. What are the greatest service delivery challenges that you encounter in your attempts to aid participants?
17. How would you describe your agency's relationship with local, state, and federal government during and after a disaster.
18. Which support services do local, state, and federal government supply to your agency before, during, and after a disaster?

Table A1*Interview Questions Corresponding to Each Research Question*

Interview Questions (abbreviated)	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3
1. Number of personnel and volunteers			
2. Services offered	X		
3. Participants' demographics			
4. How are participants referred or find the agency			
5. Most prominent needs of participants	X		
6. Mental health services offered	X		
7. Physical health services offered	X		
8. Immediate concerns of participants			
9. Sources of funding		X	
10. Economic and resources concerns of agency		X	
11. Ch. Discrepancies between meeting participants' needs and the resources available		X	
12. Resources needed to sustain services		X	
13. Agency follow-up care process			
14. Types of service arenas that have specific service delivery concerns			
15. Obstacles among agency-to-agency relations			
16. Greatest service delivery challenges			
17. Agency's relationship with local, state, and federal government			X
18. Which support services are provided by the government			X