



University of Manitoba

# Exploring Challenges Faced by the Charitable Food Sector in Manitoba During the First Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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## Background

COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020 (Adhanom, 2020). In response, widespread social distancing and lockdowns were implemented globally, including in Canada. These measures resulted in high levels of unemployment, as well as disruptions to businesses and organizations. Many aspects of the food system in Canada were affected, including the charitable food sector. Food banks and other charitable food organizations faced increased demand for their services, while dealing with challenges of meeting new public health requirements.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the impact of COVID-19 on charitable food organizations in Manitoba and challenges faced during the first wave of the pandemic.



Figure 1. Empty shelves at a Winnipeg grocery store, May, 2020

## Research Question

What challenges arose in charitable food organizations from COVID-19?

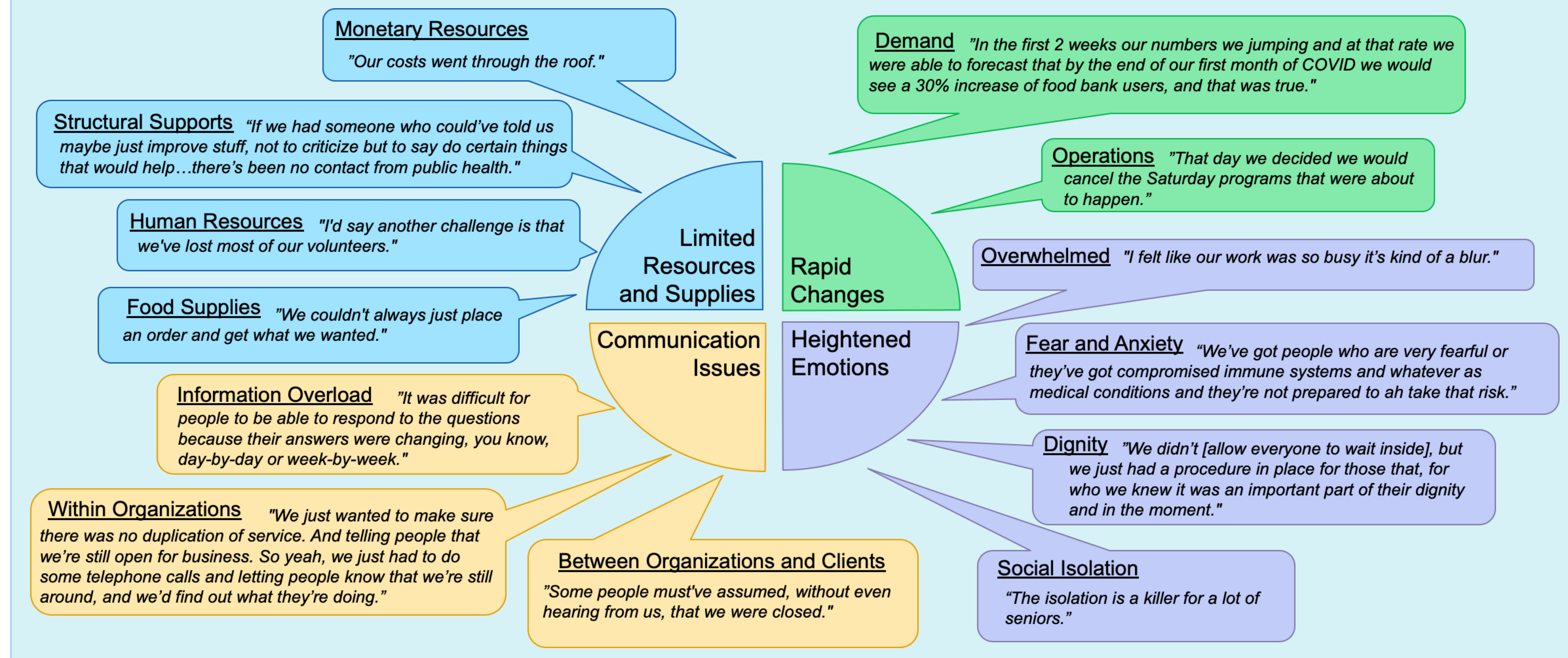
## Methods

Participants were selected from a variety of Manitoba urban, rural and northern charitable food organizations. A provincial dietitian network was used to create a list of potential organizations, who were contacted to participate. 10 charitable food directors/managers consented to data collection.

Semi-structured phone interviews took place during June and July 2020. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Thematic content analysis was used to define themes and sub-themes.



## Results



## Summary of Results

This study unveiled numerous challenges that charitable food organizations experienced due to COVID-19.

### Limited Resources and Supplies

Participants reported a number of challenges related to limited resources. This included challenges of limited human resources (staff and volunteers), food, as well as funding.

### Rapid Changes

There were rapid changes regarding demand and daily operations. These quick-passed changes contributed to communication issues.

### Communication Issues

Communication issues for the charitable food sector included problems between other organizations, within the organization, and with clients. These were all exacerbated by limited communication and support from the government.

### Heightened Emotions

Taken together, these challenges led to heightened emotions, causing tension within the organization and community.

## Significance and Future Work

This study highlights the impact the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has had on charitable food organizations in Manitoba. Results can be used to inform strategies to more effectively address food insecurity for the remainder of the pandemic.

## Acknowledgments

Undergrad Research Award—University of Manitoba; the Murphy Foundation Incorporated Indigenous Mentorship and Experiential Education Fund; Bhanu Pilli and Kelsey Man for their support.

## References

Adhanom, T. (2020, March 11). WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 11 March 2020. Retrieved October 06, 2020, from <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>